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Advanced Research in English Series

## Applied Linguistics Questions and Answers: Essential Readings for Teacher Educators

Programa de Pós-Graduação em Inglês  
Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina

ARES | Advanced Research in English Series

# Applied Linguistics Questions and Answers: Essential Readings for Teacher Educators

Rosane Silveira | Alison Roberto Gonçalves  
| Orgs. |

## ARES | Advanced Research in English Series

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# Table of Contents

Applied Linguistics: Questions and Answers from Brazilian Researchers \_\_\_\_\_ 5

Rosane Silveira | Alison Roberto Gonçalves

Applied linguistics “made in Brasil”: A guessing game \_\_\_\_\_ 13

Clarissa Menezes Jordão

How can we teach English as a lingua franca locally? \_\_\_\_\_ 26

Eduardo Henrique Diniz de Figueiredo | Sávio Siqueira

Developing critical language education with multiliteracies in the context of initial teacher education in a public Brazilian university \_\_ 54

Alessandra Coutinho Fernandes

Reading myself as I read... myself: New notes on multiliteracies \_\_\_\_ 77

Ana Paula Martinez Duboc

“And they all get put in boxes and they all come out the same”: What does our understanding of language have to do with educational practices? \_\_\_\_\_ 88

Ana Paula Marques Beato-Canato

The influence of language conceptions on language teacher’s practices \_\_\_\_\_ 105

Adriana de Carvalho Kuerten Dellagnelo | Maria Ester Moritz

Pronunciation teaching of non-native languages: Moving beyond native varieties \_\_\_\_\_ 115

Ronaldo Manguiera Lima Jr.

English language education and critical citizenship \_\_\_\_\_ 127

Daniel Ferraz | Camila Fonseca

What Counts as Applied Linguistics: A Review of Publications in Consolidated Applied Linguistics Journals in Brazil and Abroad \_\_\_\_ 141

Rosane Silveira | Ubiratã Kickhöfel Alves

About the Authors \_\_\_\_\_ 161

# English language education and critical citizenship

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## 1. Introduction

Brazil—like many other Western countries—has faced challenges of all sorts in the past decade (from 2010 on): Political crises (e.g., the impeachment of President Dilma, which was considered by many Brazilians a *Coup d'État* in 2016), immense economic and social differences that have led to disenfranchisement of most Brazilians, lack of investments in education (in Brazil, public higher education has been under attack, and faces a serious economic crisis), and, most severely, conspicuous manipulation from social media experts and mass media enterprises. In this regard, Jessé Souza (2015, p. 6, our translation) asserts that “the owners of the newspapers, the publishers, universities, and television channels are the ones who decide in the judicial and political realms”. Souza (Ibid.) contends that

Only by mastering all these structures can one monopolize the natural resources that should belong to everyone and exploit the work of the immense majority of non-privileged in the form of profit, interest, income of land or rent. The sum of these capital incomes in Brazil is largely monopolized by the richest 1% of the population. It is the work of the remaining 99% that transfers money to the pocket of the richest 1% (our translation)<sup>1</sup>.

Indeed, it is noticeable that mass communication in Brazil is controlled by the powerful groups which adopt their policies at the service of neoliberalism. In relation to the great mass media (the television), TV news programs, soap operas and commercials have not only targeted profit and sales, but also had an enormous influence on Brazilian politics.

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<sup>1</sup> From this citation on, we will translate all authors who published in Portuguese (see references).

More recently, social media has emerged as powerful mass media communication as elections in some countries around the world (USA, 2016, and Brazil, 2018 are some examples) have been decided with the impact of social media.

Provided that education plays a pivotal role in not only challenging these discourses/ contexts, but also promoting social transformations that encompass social change, justice, and equity, one might ask what education itself has done in order to question mass and social media control, lack of educational investments, and political decisions that maintain social inequities. In relation to language education, teachers need to ask themselves: What kind of knowledge do students take home when they leave the classroom? What do they actually learn? Are we teaching the teachers' contents or the students' contents? Are citizenship, critique, culture, economy, sociology, politics, ethnicity and gender themes that should be debated/included in language education?

Within these contexts and based upon the Applied Linguistics Q&A Sessions event organized by Dr. Rosane Silveira (USFC) and Dr. Alison Gonçalves (UFPR) in 2020, this chapter aims at problematizing language education and critical citizenship by revisiting concepts enticed in ELT (English Language Teaching)/EFL (English as a Foreign Language) and English Language Education. Thus, the first section discusses the differences between ELT (or EFL) and language education. The second part explores the concept of citizenship and its role in pedagogical practices. Theory and data are interrelated in both sections by means of the analysis of final papers produced by undergraduate students. To conclude, we suggest three brief political-philosophical-educational orientations for teacher educators.

## 2. Context and Methodology

This chapter aims at problematizing language education and the concept of citizenship by preservice teachers of a *Letras* course. To accomplish this goal, we share data from a teaching practice experienced during a one-semester course in an undergraduate teacher education program. Of qualitative/interpretative nature, and based upon documental analysis, the chapter seeks to foster critical reflection and local-global debates on how critical education can contribute to the development of citizenship and social transformation at a local level.

The experience to be shared took place at a federal public university located in the Southeastern region of Brazil, in an English Teacher Education undergraduate program. The course English Language Teaching Project III was designed for students of the third term, and comprised 30 classes with meetings twice a week for one hour per meeting. The group was formed by 32 students who worked collaboratively in smaller groups of 4 or 5 students. All identities were preserved.

The course focused on Critical Literacy and Language Education and aimed at promoting a meaning-making experience based on collective work and debates over pedagogical

practices. One of the evaluation criteria was the production of a “Pedagogical Project for Change”. The students organized their projects into final papers that will be partly shared and analyzed along this chapter. The course aimed at opening pedagogical possibilities that promoted new notions of citizenship, that is, notions that corresponded to the students’ perceptions within their own communities of practice. And, considering that communities are hybrid and diversified social spaces that incorporate global and local values, the course invited all students to engage in a democratic project so as to seek pedagogical alternatives for social transformation.

During the semester, students were expected to decide what kind of change they would like to engage with at a local level, and design an English teaching pedagogical project to be applied in their own communities of practice. The projects should aim at citizenship and social transformation, and should also have a language/linguistic focus to be studied and explored. For the purposes of this paper, we selected some excerpts from these projects to share, and we here give special attention to the transformations they aimed at, being: 1. “Mean Girls and a Project for Change (Group A); 2. Visual identity: Perceiving you through art and culture (Group B); 3. Problematizing families in the teaching of English (Group C); 4. Critical English teaching for younger children: Working in peripheral areas (Group D); and 5. Women’s roles and rights in society since the old centuries (Group E).

In the following section, as language education is highlighted, a few excerpts from the projects designed by the preservice teachers join the debate.

### 3. Neoliberalism *versus* language education in Brazil

For Giroux (apud BLOCK *et al.*, 2012, p. 16), there is no doubt neoliberalism<sup>2</sup> “is the driving force of society, that it unleashes the most brutalizing forces capitalism and it is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of neoliberal capitalism”. We believe that the presence of neoliberal education can be observed in the search for qualification rankings, in the proposal of education for certification (professional, international, linguistic proficiency) and in the rush for privatization of education, for example, public higher education in Brazil. Education is currently being shaped to respond to the needs of a large post-industrial economy that requires labor, reinforced by the government policy (STEVENSON, 2010). “Education is simply reduced to a set of skills to be transmitted by institutions that arguably increase the possibility of getting a ‘better’ job” (Ibid., p. 346). For Block, Gray, and Holborrow (2012, p. 7), “[n]eoliberalism appears in the now commonsense framing of education exclusively through presumed ideals of upward individual economic competition.” In this context, the individual is responsible for his/

<sup>2</sup> “Neoliberalism, for all its apparent sweep, is at root an economic theory. It came to prominence in the particular economic conditions of the late 1970’s, and was articulated by specific social interests. Neoliberalism, in this respect, was an economic template whose dictates seemed to provide answers to a spiralling crisis and, for the controllers of capital, chimed with their need to restore profit levels.” (BLOCK; GRAY; HOLBORROW, 2012, p. 15).



her own education, and has to face a market-driven educational agenda that sets targets, standards, competition and productivity through a meritocratic mindset that results in social exclusion and marginalization. Furthermore, while the individual keeps focused on self-improvement, he/she diverts attention away from social concerns and responsibilities that could push citizenship forward to enable social transformation to take place.

There is a paradox in relation to neoliberal education provided that, at the same time it focuses on progress, modernity, and individualism—and promotes the motto “you can win”—, it goes back to neoconservative ideals by reinforcing traditionalisms (in Brazil, this can be seen in the movements School without Party, National Plan of Literacy, or the militarization of schools). For instance, military education reinforces the idea that “quality education is not for all”, and promotes a very undemocratic idea that “I know what’s best for you, you don’t.” In the words of Block *et al.* (2012, p. 7), educational reform, for example, “embraces the twin legacies of neoliberalism and neoconservatism” and in the words of Apple (2004), neoliberalism and neoconservatism must always be analyzed as if the two sides of a coin:

Today is no different than in the past. A “new” set of compromises, a new alliance and new power bloc has been formed that has increasing influence in education and all things social. This power bloc combines multiple fractions of capital who are committed to neo-liberal marketized solutions to educational problems, neo-conservative intellectuals who want a “return” to higher standards and a “common culture,” authoritarian populist religious conservatives who are deeply worried about secularity and the preservation of their own traditions, and particular fractions of the professionally oriented new middle class who are committed to the ideology and techniques of accountability, measurement, and “management.” (APPLE, 2004, p. 15).

Traditional schooling is the desire of neoconservatives (in Brazil, this explains the return of traditional military schools for primary and secondary levels). In this sense, Trilla (2006) states that “[...] in traditional schools one tries to teach reading and writing through a discourse that lacks real content, a content that does not raise interest neither from the teacher nor the student” (TRILLA, 2006, p. 41). In this regard, our students mention the lack of context knowledge in schoolbooks:

Group D: A clear example of the problems caused by the discrepancy between the materials for English learners and the reality of students is when young students are learning about Seasons. So, that five-year old girl, who grew up in the Coast of Brazil, sees in her English book the name “winter” accompanied by a beautiful drawing of... Snowflakes. How could this little girl make that sense in her head? She never saw snow. Maybe she’ll never see it. Winter is usually warm here. And the final result is that: for her, nothing in that language will make any sense because it has nothing to do with the reality she knows (p. 8).

The traditional education has been questioned by many language educators in Brazil. These scholars have claimed that even though traditional education has played an important role in the language teaching/learning field, it does not account for

contemporary social transformations anymore. This group of scholars (gathered in a National Project on Literacies<sup>3</sup>) has differentiated traditional education (ELT, EFL, ESL) and language education, claiming that the latter would better suit contemporary times by offering students the possibility of: 1) Critiquing traditional models of education; 2) participating in the design of their own local/global education; and 3) negotiating knowledge in more horizontal ways. Even though many teachers tend to understand that there is no problem with traditional education (it is in fact a huge tendency in Brazil nowadays as we see the wave of neoconservatism and traditionalism gaining strength in political discourses), it is recognized that in addition to traditional schooling, other educational perspectives have emerged.

In this sense, bell hooks<sup>4</sup> (2003, p. 8) contends that “[w]hereas the conventional dominator classroom remained a place where students were simply given material to learn by rote and regurgitate, students in the progressive classroom were learning how to think critically”. The author goes on to argue that critical education (progressive education in Freirean terms) asks students to open their minds and expand their critical awareness, therefore becoming able to identify ideologies of domination. Building on hook’s thoughts, we believe that our pedagogical practices in this course led students to design and co-create very meaningful projects (projects within language education perspectives). A brief description of each project<sup>5</sup> follows:

– “Mean Girls” and a Project for Change (Group A): The project aims to discuss issues that are present in high school students’ lives, such as the beauty standards imposed by society and the dictatorship of beauty, which is when people, mostly women, have to seek perfection to fit into beauty patterns (p. 4);

– Visual identity: Perceiving you through art and culture (Group B): This project aims to work with visual literacy in English classes with students of the 1st year of high school. Therefore, the proposal is to work with arts and culture(s) of countries in which English is the official language, but countries that are not commonly discussed in the classroom because they are less widely publicized by the media in general (p. 2).

– Problematizing families in the teaching of English (Group C): This project aims to explore the family context of each student and shows them the different possibilities of family construction and those that already exist in society nowadays (p. 2).

– Critical English teaching for younger children: Working in peripheral areas (Group D): The objective of this project is a different approach, created specially to teach English to children from 3-5 years old in public day-care centers in local peripheral areas. With a specially designed material, we want to take English to children from low-income families, in a way that may be more meaningful and related to their realities. For that purpose, we created

<sup>3</sup> National Project of Language Teacher Education: Literacies, Multiliteracies, Technologies, Culture and Languages. Available at <http://letramentos.fflch.usp.br/sobre>. Retrieved on 21 March 21.

<sup>4</sup> bell hooks’ name has been published with lower case letters.

<sup>5</sup> Students’ papers were produced in English and their original writing was here preserved.

Léo, a character inspired by the children we want to teach (p. 3).

– Women’s roles and rights in society since the old centuries (Group E): This project aims at recognizing the role of women in society, as we have noticed how rare it is to hear about a milestone carried by a woman, but we know that many women played key roles in society (p. 1).

In each of these projects, students came up with themes and discussions that are relevant for their local contexts. Moreover, hooks’s (2013, p. 8) assertion that students should come to positionings via “their own capacity to think critically and assess the world they live in” seems to encompass all the projects above. For hooks, progressive educators “must take up issues of imperialism, race, gender, class, and sexuality because they heighten everyone’s awareness on the importance of these concerns” (2003, p. 8). Thus, the projects highlight a larger educational commitment that invited students to reflect and respond to their surroundings (DUBOC, 2014), taking an active role in meaning-making processes.

For Monte Mór (2014, p. 19), “the ideas of critical citizenship and a critical language education project for Brazilian schools have been crucial since the 1990s”. Monte Mór has problematized the area of English language education in Brazilian elementary and secondary schools “from a philosophy of education perspective”. Along with Morgan, she has investigated “the interpretive habitus of university students, proposing curricular changes and a differentiated literacy at the university and schools.” (MORGAN; MONTE MÓR, 2014, p. 19). For Menezes de Souza (2011), beyond traditional/neoconservative teaching, the contemporary language educator needs to deal with the complexities imposed by social transformations. The following section addresses (some of) these complexities.

#### 4. Citizenship and social transformation through critical language education

Currently, a considerable amount of debate has taken place in educational contexts, at local and global levels, through which much has been problematized regarding the relevance of language teaching practices. As mentioned in the previous section, language teachers, researchers and theorists have been questioning the traditional ELT/EFL approaches that are focused on the teaching of structures and vocabulary without taking into consideration the students’ previous knowledge, as well as their own experiences, interests, necessities and their contextual realities.

In this regard, the debates are leading educators to (re)signify the goals and the curriculum of formal education, mainly in respect to the teaching of a foreign language (in this case, the English language), moving far beyond the traditional teaching of a language and taking the curriculum as a path to provide the means for the fostering of active citizens and to develop their social awareness (BRASIL, 2006). And yet, in order to develop social awareness, this kind of educational proposals encompass a new sense of citizenship; not the normalized nationalist perspective that establishes individuals’ rights and duties, but one involving their political engagement in society.

Some authors defend a “citizenship education” (ANNETTE, 2009; KAHNE; WESTHEIMER, 2003; STEVENSON, 2010) or even a “citizenship education otherwise” (ANDREOTTI; AHENAKEW; COOPER, 2012) as a way to promote social transformation. “Citizenship education raises questions about the need for students to move beyond an individualistic conception of citizenship and develop a model of democratic citizenship education” (ANNETTE, 2009, p. 151).

Citizenship, thus, comprehends the social relations an individual establishes and constructs within a community, and since these relations are multiple and heterogeneous, they also involve the tensions and conflicts that constitute every sphere of a community. Annette (2009) advocates for citizenship as having multiple underlying political identities based on gender, race, ethnicity, social exclusion, etc. Therefore, it is reasonable to state and claim its political hallmark that goes far beyond the formal political participation of voting.

In consonance with the author, we defend a form of citizenship rooted in a political engagement within the community, which enables active citizens/individuals to work collaboratively in order to reconfigure society at a local level. It is important to state that community is hereby understood as a diverse and democratic space of social engagement, political participation, and shared responsibility at a local level.

Kahne and Westheimer (2003) advocate for a citizenship education aiming at social transformation and democracy. We interpret social transformation as a path to fundamentally deconstruct the way we are used to looking at the social world. In this sense, it means disrupting with naturalized and conventionalized forms of meaning making and recognizing new possible ones. In order to stop reproducing ethnocentric/epistemic and apparently depoliticized knowledge that maintain social inequities in the world, it is essential to recognize and legitimate local processes of knowledge construction, as well as their own historical, cultural and political nature. We strongly believe education should meet the needs of learners as individuals actively involved in their communities.

Education can be deeply engaged in constructing public spaces for students to experience what Annette (2009) calls ‘active citizenship’ by giving students the opportunity to listen to one another and to develop a sense of attachment and responsibility not only in terms of the classroom, but in terms of “community organizations with which schools are connected” (TODD, 2007, p. 600).

It is essential to make students understand their own implications in the lives of others. The responsibility that arises from being implicated and “imbricated in each other” (DE LISSOVOY, 2010, p. 284) and in a community produces an engagement that (re)signifies and reconfigures the social relations, leading to a horizontal and democratic agenda that meets the needs of the local context. This is exactly what our students’ meaning making in the projects reveal:

Group D: It is known that for children to get interested in English classes the content must be meaningful for them. When it comes to young learners, the content must be meaningful and also very interesting in order to make them curious. But what about kids from marginalized and neglected places in Brazil? What should be the pedagogy used in classes? And what about the teaching material? Should teachers use the teaching materials provided by the schools or should they prepare their own activities? How to disrupt the traditional language teaching idea and make children think outside the box when teaching topics such as colors, weather, plants, vegetables, fruits and so on?

Todd (2003) reflects over the work of the philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, which speaks to the responsibility each one of us has in relation to the other we meet and engage within a community. Todd defends an engagement that comprehends the preservation of the alterity of the other through a “nonviolent relation to the Other” (Ibid., p. 2). She states that the encounter with otherness involves complex layers of affect and conflict. Thus, the idea of a politically engaged citizenship demands listening to the other so it is possible to build relationships that better meet the needs of every person within a community. To listen—in the sense of preserving the alterity of the other, embracing the difference and learning from it and from the other, through a receptivity that De Lissovoy (2010) identifies as “a genuine opening to the other”—is paramount. This is portrayed in the “Teenage Bullying and Beauty industry” of Group A:

Group A: Schools are the place where the values learned at home are consolidated, and regarding beauty patterns the same happens, the girls who do not fit the standards are bullied and considered out of place and “uncool” by the people around them. In the teenage years we see the biggest difference among groups. In school, groups do not mix with each other, for example the *emos* do not hang out with the “fashionable” people; the jocks do not hang out with the punks, we see that the separation happens even based on race (p. 9).

To select such themes (fashion, bullying, beauty industry, difference) the students from Group A are thinking at their future teen students at the same time they are listening to themselves (they are also young learners). Listening represents a commitment against violence, and it arouses a democratic citizenship that can open possibilities for social transformation, since it reconfigures the power relations within the community. In this respect, our students contended that

Group C: Our duty as teachers is to provide the students with the biggest amount of information that we can and let them decide for themselves what they want to believe in or not. So, in this project we presented all the possibilities of family constitutions that we know and also gave room for them to tell us what they know about it and along with that teach some English grammar structures (...) Nowadays we see much information about family in general but we do not think about the people who do not have the traditional perspective of it. For Freire (1987), the teacher should consider his or her students as beings that move in and with the world, participating

directly in the relations of power that sustain it. So, if they have this power, they should have all the information they can have to make the best decision to all of us (p. 9).

From the moment one engages in a relation with the other, a sort of attachment takes shape, which leads to being responsive and, by extension, responsible for the other. Todd (2007, p. 597) asserts that “justice does not rest on how well laws, or rights, are articulated, but on how individuals are responded to”. In this sense, we hereby defend a notion of political and democratic citizenship that is not only connected to what is settled by laws, but to a responsible and responsive attitude towards the community one lives in and interacts with. It is a political awareness taken to the daily social practices and social relations one builds at the level of his/her local experiences.

We believe that social transformation starts from a local level and can be enabled by a project through which the differences are dialectically integrated (CANDAU, 2008). This democratic project for social transformation can, therefore, be thought and undertaken by the individuals actively involved in their communities as perceived in Group B’s claim for more critical perspectives in relation to visual culture and media:

Group B: Nowadays we realize that as a result of the various technological advances and globalization, we have access to a lot of information and in several different forms coming from the most varied media. As a consequence, new pedagogical practices are necessary, not only to bring the information students receive from their school environment, but also to offer them opportunities to analyze the information they receive from both texts, images, and videos in a critical and conscious way (...) we seek to broaden students’ perceptions and offer them opportunities to deconstruct the presented “truths” so that they can analyze the role of its socio-historical and cultural context during this process (p. 4).

It is important to highlight that the world is getting more and more diverse each day, since individuals are immersed in the context of globalization and thus are influenced by both global and local events and dynamics, and it is the plurality of identity crossings which characterizes the hybridity and heterogeneity of the subjects; however, one cannot ignore the hierarchy that regulates this relation, validating global values and marginalizing local histories.

Sousa Santos (1997, p. 14) defines globalization as “the process by which a particular condition or local entity extends its influence to the whole globe, and in so doing it develops the capacity to designate another social condition or rival entity as local”. The local hegemonic power, then, achieves the status of global or universal by relegating the underprivileged local to a position of subalternity and marginalization. Such exclusion is nowadays reinforced by a neoliberal project that divides groups and communities that could work collaboratively, forcing them to compete as individuals.



The citizenship defended here has more to do with an engagement that preserves and legitimates one's own cultural identity(ies) rather than unsettles it/them, revealing the way in which one's identity(ies) reflects a social and political positioning within a particular community and a particular history. As reinforced by Menezes de Souza (2012, p. 75), "the Other, the apparently 'different', is seen as the locus of a perspective" that is here supposed to be preserved and taken into consideration within community relations and constructions.

This epistemological position that seeks to question the knowledge-power relation and to open up spaces for legitimating local and subaltern histories and constructions is articulated by current decolonial perspectives, which are here understood as a path and a "praxis toward an otherwise of thinking, sensing, believing, doing, and living" (MIGNOLO; WALSH, 2018, p 4). The decolonial idea of re-existing (instead of just resisting), goes beyond the 'acting against' and makes room to embrace new challenges, new perspectives and new constructs. Nowadays, there has been a wide amount of debate on whether the world is currently going through a period that could be described as a neo-imperialist, neo-colonialist, or neo-liberalist. And if we consider that the world is still suffering the effects of imperialism or colonialism, the decolonial perspectives have dislocated and decentered the knowledge-power relation which has produced oppression and marginalization over the centuries. Thus, it is an emancipatory project that opens up space for a politics of difference which enables local discourses and histories to coexist and participate in local and global dialectic and dialogic constructions.

Wright (2012, p. 61) recognizes the work of Paulo Freire as inaugural for the entire postcolonial field, since "critical pedagogy has always used a broadly non-Western, often postcolonial perspective in order to highlight the overlap between centers of power and the localized production of education discourse claiming universal worth". Moreover, Freire's critical pedagogy is committed to grassroots democracy and invested in genuine social transformation. Freire supports the importance of critical thinking so the oppressed can not only reflect but also act over the world to transform it. "Without praxis, it is impossible to overcome the oppressive-oppressed contradiction" (FREIRE, 1987, p. 21). This idea of transformation reached through the praxis of the subaltern breaks down the benevolence that seems to underlie the notion of global citizenship.

The OCEM (BRASIL, 2006) proposes an important reflection for language and teacher education as it aims at a dialogue between local and global through which the students can develop citizenship by seeking to comprehend their own position in society (BRASIL, 2006). By understanding their locus of privilege or exclusion, and by getting in contact with other persons, contexts, cultures, histories and languages, the students might develop a sense of responsibility to their own context/community, making it possible to think and act towards social justice.

"Authentic education is about the mutual process of becoming" (STEVENSON, 2012, p. 148). Thus, critical education involves an engagement in a democratic dialogue (listening to

and being responsive to others) in which both (and all) sides aim at opening possibilities for social transformation. This is the citizenship education we believe in.

## 5. Conclusion

Grounded by a pedagogy that regards theory and practice as interconnected, this chapter aimed at nurturing new pedagogical practices that emerge from the local needs and interests in order to foster language education engaged with critical citizenship and with opening possibilities for social transformation. By having the groups of preservice teachers develop their own knowledge construction through democratic debate, we believe ourselves to be engaged with our own local contexts of practice, which means a turn from talk to action (hooks, 2003) which definitely and positively transforms us as teacher educators and individuals engaged in our communities of practice.

All too often the underlying limitations of a research/pedagogical practice are left unexplored or unchallenged. There are many limitations and self-critique in relation to this kind of work. One might question to which extent our pedagogical practices also imposed themes (citizenship, social transformation), actions (to write a final project) and evaluation (students were graded), and to this extent, were authoritarian. In this sense, we inquire what critique is after all. In this sense (critical) language education challenges us to rethink the very idea in which teacher and teacher educators determine what critique means (Should students accept and repeat the professor/teacher's views of critique? Are we imposing one single view of critique?). These questionings are essential attitudes of any work targeting critical citizenship.

Also, it is important to mention that written final projects do not grasp all the relevant talks, discussions, frustrations, tensions and overlaps that occurred during the course. These were certainly precious learning for both students and teacher educators.

To conclude, we would like to suggest three brief political-philosophical-educational orientations for teacher educators in order to encourage them (and ourselves) to refuse safety and to take the risk of making language education more meaningful to all individuals involved:

- a. Invest in other forms of teacher education:

According to Freire (2000), democratic knowledge is never incorporated authoritatively, since it is only democratic as a common achievement of the work of the educator and the student through a horizontal dialogue. May our practices disrupt with "the danger of a single story" (ADICHIE, 2009) which is often reproduced through conservationist practices that perpetuate the hegemonic system. "Stories matter. Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign, but stories can also be used to empower and to humanize. Stories can break the dignity of a people, but stories can also repair that broken dignity".



Our communities are formed by many overlapping stories. Education can, thus, depart from the epistemic position of learning from and with the difference (TODD, 2003), in the sense of preserving heterogeneity and enabling other forms of existence and knowledge construction that diverge from the conventionalized ones, in a democratic practice committed to the local context, promoting an open space of multiple discourses and opinions that listen and respond to one another dialectically.

b. Act politically:

Andreotti (2012, p. 25) states that “education is about preparing ourselves and those we work with to enlarge possibilities for thinking and living together in a planet that sustains complex, plural, uncertain, inter-dependent and unequal societies”. The author also defends that we are all implicated in the problems we are trying to address: “we are all both part of the problem and the solution (in different ways)” (Ibid.). Then, it is imperative that educators turn attention to their own practices in order to move towards an education that breaks down with repeating historical mistakes and commits itself with the challenge of engaging with critical citizenship by legitimating local histories (and stories) and their political agendas so as to join a democratic project for social transformation. This corroborates hooks’ assertion in which

[w]e need mass-based political movements calling citizens of this nation to uphold democracy and the rights of everyone to be educated, and to work on behalf of ending domination in all its forms—to work for justice, changing our educational system so that schooling is not the site where students are indoctrinated to support imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy or any ideology, but rather where they learn to open their minds, to engage in rigorous study and to think critically (hooks, 2003, p. 13).

c. Keep hope alive:

As Andreotti (2012) defends an idea of ‘hopeful skepticism’ that questions the common sense and seeks to expand perspectives through a political engagement with local agendas, we believe in a language education project that refuses to reproduce systems of domination and takes an active role in constructing democratic knowledge together and in consonance with all the participants involved in the educational process. By legitimating local discourses, we reinforce the idea that all stories matter, and thus inaugurate a space of hope and empowerment that makes social transformation possible.

Therefore, by believing that it is possible to invest in such democratic alternatives and to create new ones, we hope all educators can engage within their own communities of practice in order to make education a critical citizenship project oriented towards justice. “My hope emerges from those places of struggle where I witness individuals positively transforming their lives and the world around them. Educating is always a vocation rooted in hopefulness” (hooks, 2003, p. 13). However risky it is to assume ‘universal’ orientations for language education and teacher education, this chapter (and these educators) hopes

for better times in Brazilian education. We also believe that projects such as the Q&As in Applied Linguistics<sup>6</sup> promoted virtually by the Federal Universities of Santa Catarina and Paraná (UFSC and UFPR) have invited us to think language education otherwise.

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<sup>6</sup> Retrieved from [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FpULnJB1fB8&ab\\_channel=PPGIUFSC](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FpULnJB1fB8&ab_channel=PPGIUFSC). Access 21 March 21. This is the first event of Q&As. For more, click on the other Youtube videos with the same title.

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