



Lgbtqia+ agenda and Critical Literacy: a proposal for activities in English language classes

Pauta LGBTQIA+ e Letramento Crítico: uma proposta de atividades em aulas de língua inglesa

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ABSTRACT: Recently, the LGBTQIA+ agenda has received attention from researchers in Critical Applied Linguistics, since language education makes it possible to promote the coexistence of young people with diversity. However, the school curriculum is still quite conservative, and administrators and teachers see the topic as highly complex. This paper, anchored in theoretical notes from Critical Literacy, discusses a systematized proposal of activities developed in an English class of a vocational computing course integrated into High School at a federal public institution in Brazil. Carrying out the activities raised reflections around the fact that, from a critical perspective, texts approaching themes concerning gender identities can contribute to an education committed to a more inclusive and egalitarian society.

KEYWORDS: Homosexuality. English Language Education. Federal Institutes. Integrated High School.

RESUMO: Recentemente, a pauta LGBTQIA+ tem recebido atenção de pesquisadores da Linguística Aplicada Crítica, uma vez que a educação linguística possibilita promover a convivência dos jovens com a diversidade. No entanto, o currículo escolar ainda é bastante conservador, e gestores e professores veem o tema como altamente complexo. Neste artigo, ancorando-se em apontamentos teóricos dos Letramentos Críticos, discute-se uma proposta sistematizada de atividades desenvolvidas em uma aula de Inglês de um curso técnico de informática integrado ao Ensino Médio em uma instituição pública federal no Brasil. A realização das atividades suscitou reflexões em torno do fato de que, de uma perspectiva crítica, textos que abordam temáticas sobre identidades de gênero podem contribuir para uma educação comprometida com uma sociedade mais inclusiva e igualitária.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Homossexualidade. Educação Linguística em Inglês. Institutos Federais. Ensino Médio Integrado.

Artigo recebido em: 10.01.2023

Artigo aprovado em: 13.02.2023

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1 Introduction

Not long ago, Brazilian education suffered attacks devised by an extreme right-wing government that reduced investment in research and undertook political-ideological persecution of teachers. In this scenario, social inequalities increased due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Chancel et al., 2022). Also, the then government took advantage of "the fear, insecurity, and loneliness of the population to, for example, disseminate strong scientific denialism" (Jucá, 2022, p. 14). It is a fact that "public education in all its spaces and forms of realization" suffered attacks (Jucá, 2022, p. 13)¹, observing "an insistent and intense action by neoconservatives in the elaboration of important documents of the Brazilian educational legislation" (Lima; Hypolito, 2019, p. 1).

Despite the defeat of the extremist government in the last elections, there are still manifestations of racism, misogyny, homophobia, and classism in Brazilian society. Because of this, it is imperative that families, educators, and politicians who believe in human diversity fight against all forms of manifestations of hatred, as these aim to humiliate and shame their victims (Menezes De Souza; Monte Mór, 2019). To this end, the teaching agency ["recognition and socioculturally constructed and shared attitude of the teacher to act in their professional context" (Silvestre, 2016, p. 183) "against situations of inequalities (social, epistemic, educational)" (Silvestre, 2017, p. 192)] is fundamental in promoting change movements.

In language education², researchers such as Menezes de Souza (2011), Jordão and Fogaça (2014), Monte Mór (2015), Mattos (2017), and Duboc (2017), aligned with Freire (2013), defend projects and activities that focus on the practice of Critical

¹ All translations of texts originally written in Portuguese are mine.

² Term used in place of "teaching-learning" to highlight "the philosophical-educational-linguistic-critical character of new practices and theories concerning foreign languages" (Ferraz, 2019, p. 215).

Literacy(ies)³ as a pedagogical strategy to teach and learn “to deal with conflict situations and confrontations with differences” (Menezes de Souza, 2011, p. 138).

To face homophobic discourses in Brazil, texts focusing on the LGBTQIA+⁴ agenda should be present in schools. In this way, this paper discusses a systematized proposal of activities developed in English language education in a class of a vocational computing course integrated⁵ into High School at a federal public institution in Brazil. Guided by theoretical notes from the Critical Literacies (CLs), it is demonstrated how to act subversively in the gaps of the school curriculum (Duboc, 2017) and develop *criticism* with young people, aiming at a meaningful education committed to ethics and social well-being (Liberali, 2010).

2 Literacy(ies): theoretical and practical notes

In Brazilian Applied Linguistics (AL), studies and academic events on Literacy(ies) have increased exponentially. Despite the different terminologies of the term *literacy*, the interest in this paper is to focus the discussion on CLs. Thus, before presenting its characteristics and strategies, it is crucial to understand what the *critical* dimension means (Monte Mór, 2015; Duboc; Ferraz, 2018).

The critical paradigm (Freire, 2013; Habermas, 2014) brought advances to the research in language education by encompassing technical, practical, and emancipatory interests. The critical stance means that the construction of knowledge

³ The term critical literacy(ies) can be translated as *letramento(s)* or *letramento(s) crítico(s)*, being those plural forms a very recent use, distancing themselves from the genesis of the studies on ‘letramento’, which was first connected to research on Portuguese (as a first language)” (Duboc; Ferraz, 2018, p. 238, authors’ emphasis).

⁴ LGBTQIA+ (Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual/Ally, and more). Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/21/style/lgbtq-gender-language.html>. Accessed on: Apr. 19, 2023.

⁵ According to Pacheco (2020, p. 12), Integrated High School enables “education that encompasses all dimensions of the human being, not fragmenting the understanding of natural and social phenomena, articulating curricula with social practices, overcoming the simple acquisition of instrumental skills, without understanding their role in the productive process”.

started to go hand in hand with the process of contributing to the evolution of society and of growing and developing the other (Liberali; Liberali, 2011) and of promoting modifications in the environment being researched (Bortoni-Ricardo, 2008). Liberali *et al.* (2022, p. 180, authors' emphasis) explain that

critical implies the movement of reality transformation through reflection based on the inseparability of theory and practice, a research structured from the real needs of participants, and the reflection on/in action that enables different viewpoints to be developed.

In this sense, it is essential to note that criticism is committed to promoting the emancipation of individuals through valuing solidary attitudes towards difference and plurality. Criticism also invites the community, teachers, and students to assume an ethical attitude of incompleteness in the world and to learn to deal with their ignorance and that of others (Menezes de Souza; Monte Mór, 2018).

According to Duboc and Ferraz (2018, p. 238), the publication *Constructing Critical Literacies*, edited by Muspratt, Luke, and Freebody (1997), represents the seminal work that "situates CLs as an emerging concept stemming from Critical Theory and the Freirean Critical Pedagogy". Luke and Freebody (1997) received a strong influence from the works of Paulo Freire in the 1970s and 1980s. Because of that, they consider that CLs, when applied to education, could function as a political strategy for the liberation and emancipation of underprivileged groups. Duboc and Ferraz (2018, p. 238) state that Freebody (2008) conceives CLs "as the development of abilities that would enable people to read the institutional and social practices critically by acknowledging the situated and social text and language construction". In other words, CLs would imply revealing the meanings of the text by questioning its *status quo* (Duboc; Ferraz, 2018). Duboc (2017, p. 219-220) explains that Critical Literacy

not only seeks to read the author's perspective, understanding why a text was written the way it was written, but above all, seeks why I read the way I read, because the meanings I produce may be different from the meanings that other subjects will produce precisely because they are influenced by their social contexts.

The traditional notion of CLs linked to Critical Theory and Critical Pedagogy has been problematized from more recent philosophical reflections, as postmodern society has manifested itself as socially and culturally quite complex (Duboc; Ferraz, 2018). To represent the complexity of the world, the French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari have applied the metaphor of the *rhizome*, indicating that it is a type of vegetable without a specific shape and in which it is not possible to identify where its parts begin and end. Therefore, when teachers face this complexity, they must assume responsibility for dealing with the general confusion that arises from this context. Also, teachers should ethically reflect on their responsibility in the face of didactic choices and not get carried away by the trap that, because everything in the world is complex, then it is not necessary to be critical of the possibilities (Menezes de Souza, 2011).

From a broad and practical perspective, the *critical* aspect present in CLs has been disconnected from an agenda committed to the idea of emancipation, of *revelation* and turned to the problematization (Pennycook, 2001) and the reading of the world and ourselves (Menezes de Souza, 2011). In this direction, one undertakes CLs by "reading while reading ourselves, that is, being aware all the time of how I am reading, how I am constructing meaning [...] and not thinking that reading is a transparent process, what I read is what is written" (Menezes de Souza, 2011, p. 296). Thus, traditional critical awareness is overcome and re-signified towards critical awareness beyond naive thinking and common sense (Menezes de Souza, 2011). Let us observe Table 1.

Table 1 – Two types of critical consciousness,

Traditional critical consciousness	Critical consciousness redefined
<p>Critical Pedagogy</p> <p>Focus on the writing of the text: How did the <i>Other</i> produce the meaning?</p> <p>All readings are homogeneous, equal.</p> <p>Power divided between dominant and oppressed.</p> <p>Reading as <i>consensus</i>.</p> <p><i>Why did the other write like that?</i> <i>Why does the other say X and mean Y?</i></p>	<p>Critical Literacy</p> <p>Focus on reading the text: How does the <i>I</i> produce meaning?</p> <p>The readings/writings will only be equal if they are produced by readers/writers from equal social collectivities. Otherwise, they will be unequal.</p> <p>Power is distributed among all, but in unequal ways (Foucault).</p> <p>Reading as <i>dissent</i>, conflict.</p> <p><i>Why did I/he understand like that? Why do I/does he find this natural/obvious/unacceptable?</i></p>

Source: adapted from Menezes de Souza (2011, p. 296, author's emphasis).

The critical awareness promoted by the CLs enables the students to perceive that the naive knowledge constructed when reading a text, which is personal, evokes a collective of equals that may not represent what we think or are. That said, it is crucial to allow students to reformulate this naive knowledge, leading them "to perceive as an *illusion* this appearance that we are all individuals... because we think that each of us has a personal opinion, but our personal opinions have a history in the communities to which we belong" (Menezes de Souza, 2011, p. 293). In this way, it is possible to problematize prejudices considered natural by a community that has yet to learn or even ignores the existence of different individuals.

These reflections on language education lead to the following conclusions:

1. Expansion of the idea of criticism.

2. Understanding of problematization as a movement that displaces reader and author.
3. Development of an agency positioned in more localized practices.

These conclusions can be summarized by the phrase, "We read the other as we read ourselves" (Duboc; Ferraz, 2018, p. 240). Therefore, currently, language scholars advocate for a more realistic and situated perspective of CLs in language education so that the agentic capacity of individuals does not compromise with any revolutionary act. Despite this new direction regarding CLs in AL, Duboc and Ferraz (2018) point out that they found few metaphors to designate more local and less totalitarian projects in critical language education.

From this point on, it is worth reflecting on the practical dimension of working with CLs in the foreign/additional language classroom. When asking how to put CLs into practice, Duboc (2017, p. 211) draws attention to the need for language teachers to be aware of everything that happens around them, thus being able to act, through their pedagogical action, in the classroom gaps. These gaps are "fruitful moments to learn, reflect, problematize," and overcome the mere observation of facts. Thus, in the CLs proposal, working with reading and the production of meanings allows students to understand how privileges and erasures manifest in social practices and become aware of their trajectory by transforming it. In this vein, CLs constitute a philosophical stance or attitude, not a pedagogy or teaching method (Duboc, 2017).

Duboc (2017, p. 226) emphasizes that "if, on the one hand, the idea of promoting critical literacies in the gaps of our classrooms offers us flexibility and creativity, on the other hand, it cannot be read as anything goes or an irresponsible practice." Then, showing students the multiplicity of meanings in language in a systematized way "can constitute an important critical exercise, including for the education of less violent and prejudiced individuals, as we come to value heterogeneous knowledge and

perspectives" (Duboc, 2017, p. 227). The following section discusses activities to promote critical awareness among High School students.

3 Activating Critical Literacy(ies): a proposal for activities on the LGBTQIA+ agenda in English language education

For decades, a strictly linguistic perspective prevailed in language teaching and learning, excluding social and political issues such as sexuality from the classroom (FERRAZ, 2019). However, based on the complexity of the globalized world, which demands different relationships with social phenomena and events (Menezes de Souza, 2011), the documents that guide Brazilian education, such as the *Curriculum Guidelines for High School* (OCEM-LE) (BRASIL, 2006), when paying attention to the demands evidenced in the students' discourse, suggest rethinking language education through the bias of social practices.

Language is fundamental in communication and the establishment of power relations and thus becomes a means to develop students' creativity and critical awareness. As an instrument of power, a person can apply language to the practice of symbolic violence and acts of death (Ferraz, 2019). In this way, all this complexity triggers the teacher's responsibility for the need to think about ethics so that teachers and students learn to deal with dissident values within the same classroom without this reverberating in practical violence and the desire to eliminate/murder individuals who are different (Menezes de Souza, 2011).

Faced with this problem, considering the assumptions of Critical Applied Linguistics (CAL) that connect "to questions of gender, class, sexuality, race, ethnicity, culture, identity, politics, ideology, and discourse" (Pennycook, 2001, p. 10), the teaching of English contributes to the development of students' citizenship through CLs, since they aim "to learn how to relate to the world and to think about the world in different ways than traditional ones" (Mattos, 2017, p. 174). Still, according to Mattos

(2017, p. 189), they encourage the selection of topics that allow students to exercise critical awareness on "issues related to our society [...], empowering these learners and qualifying them for future social practices that seek change while learning the English language".

To promote the exercise of citizenship, work with humanistic values, and respect for life, I defend the visibility of the LGBTQIA+ agenda in English language education in High School, as it is a theme that circulates in the speeches of students and other speeches outside the classroom. After conducting research based on the postulates of the CLs to develop students' criticality about sexuality and gender, França and Ifa (2021, p. 13) reflected that the promotion of debates in the classroom through language education "provoked the reconstruction of worldviews."

Discussing the LGBTQIA+ agenda in the school environment is still uncomfortable and complex for teachers, administrators, and the students' families. In fact, "the school curriculum is still very conservative, maintaining male, white, heterosexual identities as the ideal representation in the school environment, disregarding or minimizing the suffering [...] of less represented identities" regarding the problems "of race, gender and sexuality" (Sene, 2017, p. 7). Given this, teachers should not impose the discussion on the subject or approach it from a single point of view. However, they can include both legitimized and excluded identities of race, gender, and sexuality in the problematizations that they carry out in the classroom "because when the students cannot find themselves in the social world described by the teachers, it is as if life did not exist" (Sene, 2017, p. 15).

Therefore, the teachers' role in choosing CLs as a strategy for promoting citizenship and overcoming common sense seen by the students as something natural and of a personal/individual nature is to deconstruct the dichotomies between us versus them, promoting dialogues between dissent and spreading visibilities (Ferraz, 2019). In other words, for Menezes de Souza (2011, p. 293), CLs are committed to the

mission of enabling students to "reflect on history, on the context of their knowledge, their common sense" and "to realize that for someone who lives in another context, the truth may be different."

These considerations allow us to ask: *How to problematize the LGBTQIA+ agenda in the English classroom through the guidelines of the LCs?* To answer this question, it is essential to state that the practice of CLs in language education requires taking language as a social practice. For this purpose, in 2019, when I taught English in a class of vocational computing course integrated into High School, I selected two multimodal texts whose theme dealt with the LGBTQIA+ agenda. Next, I contextualize these texts and describe the development of activities guided by the systematization proposed by Duboc (2017) and the ethical dimension of working with CLs in the classroom (Menezes de Souza, 2011).

Specifically, the first text *Brazil Newspaper Publishes Gay Avengers Kiss on Front Page to Defy Evangelical Mayor*⁶ addresses the controversy surrounding the attitude of the then mayor of the state of Rio de Janeiro, Mr. Marcelo Crivella, who is an evangelical, when he decided to collect from the Rio de Janeiro Book Biennial all copies of the comic book *Avengers: The Children's Crusade* published by *Marvel*. The text in question made direct reference to this controversy by reproducing the cover of the edition of the *Folha de São Paulo* newspaper (published on September 7, 2019), which, in turn, reproduced the image of the book's gay characters (Wiccan and Hulkling) kissing, to challenge the neoconservative and homophobic mayor. Because it is a multimodal text, that is, having a multiplicity of semiosis and languages, when accessing the link available, the students could either read the tweet from the *Folha de São Paulo* newspaper or watch the video (publicity bulletin) and read a written

⁶ Available at: https://www.huffpost.com/entry/marcello-crivella-brazil-avengers-marvel-rio-de-janeiro-homophobia_n_5d74635de4b06451356f5ddd. Accessed on: April 11, 2023.

message destined for the state of São Paulo about Crivella's decision that because the books had *sexual content*, they should be collected, sealed with black plastic and identified.

Figure 1 – *Marcel's* gay kiss on the cover of *Folha de São Paulo* newspaper.



Source: <https://twitter.com/folha/status/1170317922440531968>

The second text, *Book with Gay Character Banned from Monroe School Book Fair*⁷, addresses an issue like what happened in Brazil. The text refers to the case involving the book *Captain Underpants and the Sensational Saga of Sir Stinks-a-lot* by Dav Pilkey and published by *Scholastic Books*. The book, whose main character Harold becomes an adult, discovers himself gay, and marries, was part of the 2015 Book Fair realized at *Arborwood Elementary School* in Monroe, Michigan, United States. When preparing the bookshelves, the fair organizers received an alert from the publisher stating that a selection of books could be controversial for the institution. That is because the fair proposes that students, who are children, have autonomy when choosing and buying the books they want to read. Nevertheless, in the case of *Captain Underpants*, the

⁷ Available at: <https://www.clickondetroit.com/news/2015/10/23/book-with-gay-character-banned-from-monroe-school-book-fair/>. Accessed on: April 17, 2023.

autonomy the book fair intended to create in students caused a group of conservative parents from the school community to question the event organizers.

I approached the texts from the perspective of CLs “as culturally produced units of meaning, constructed in specific social and historical moments, establishing and being established by the interplay of many discourses” (Jordão; Fogaça, 2014, p. 74). Therefore, the reader actively positions himself or herself to understand the world while interpreting the text. When it comes to language education in the classroom, students need to have the opportunity to establish multiple connections in understanding the text and themselves as agents of social practices (Jordão; Fogaça, 2014). It is relevant to consider that for CLs, “the process of construction of meaning has to do not with the text, but with the relationship between the contexts of reading and the contexts of text production” (Menezes de Souza, 2011, p. 297). With this, Menezes de Souza (2011) wants to elucidate that the written and read text will only be the same if the writing and reading processes come from individuals who share the same collectivities. For example, suppose a Brazilian reads a text written by another Brazilian. In that case, it will be easier to understand, which may not happen when reading a text written by a foreigner in an unshared language.

For CLs, reading is no longer about finding out the author's intention but rather implies learning to take responsibility for our responses, actions, and interpretations in the face of the discursive representations evidenced in the text. In this process, the complexity of the rhizomatic world influences the analyses, actions, constructions, reconstructions, and constant adaptations (Menezes de Souza, 2011). In practice, through a didactic systematization, in English language education, students, guided by a teacher whose attitudes embrace the CLs, understand and produce meanings by addressing the text with questions such as:

What am I doing here, reading this text? Where does the text speak?
What reality is presented/constructed in this text? From whose

perspective is this reality constructed? What does the text privilege? What does the text erase (fail to say)? Whose interests does the text respond to? If the text were written by another subject or in another place, what would be the difference? Why do I read this text like this? Why does the other read this text like this? (Duboc, 2017, p. 220).

These questions are helpful for the teacher to expand his/her pedagogical practice through the CLs, which imply the decoding of the social, political, and ideological contexts of language practices. Duboc (2017, p. 226) proposes re-signifying English classes to allow "students to compare what is familiar to them with what was not familiar to them until then." She emphasizes, however, "that the simple contact with the new is not always characteristic of a critical work, with the need to problematize these issues with our students" (p. 226). Table 2 details possible systematized planning (stages of pedagogical actions) guided by the CLs:

Table 2 – Action steps for Critical Literacy in the language classroom.

(1) <i>Experiences with the known</i> : activities that trigger students' experiences, knowledge, interests, and perspectives based on what is familiar to them.
(2) <i>Experiences with the new</i> : activities that put students in contact with new experiences, inviting them to know what is unfamiliar and to think from a distinct perspective.
(3) <i>Conceptualizations</i> : the teacher explains, argues, or describes activity's objectives.
(4) <i>Local and global connections</i> : awareness of the multiplicity of meanings at different scales (the meanings will differ depending on the local or global scope where one speaks).
(5) <i>Expansion of perspective</i> : expansion of the worldview through awareness of the heterogeneity that influences language (I say this for these reasons; the other for others).
(6) <i>Transformation</i> : activities that develop the 'transposition' of the expansion that took place to new situations in different contexts, contributing to the education of ethical citizens.

Source: adapted from Duboc (2017, p. 222-223)

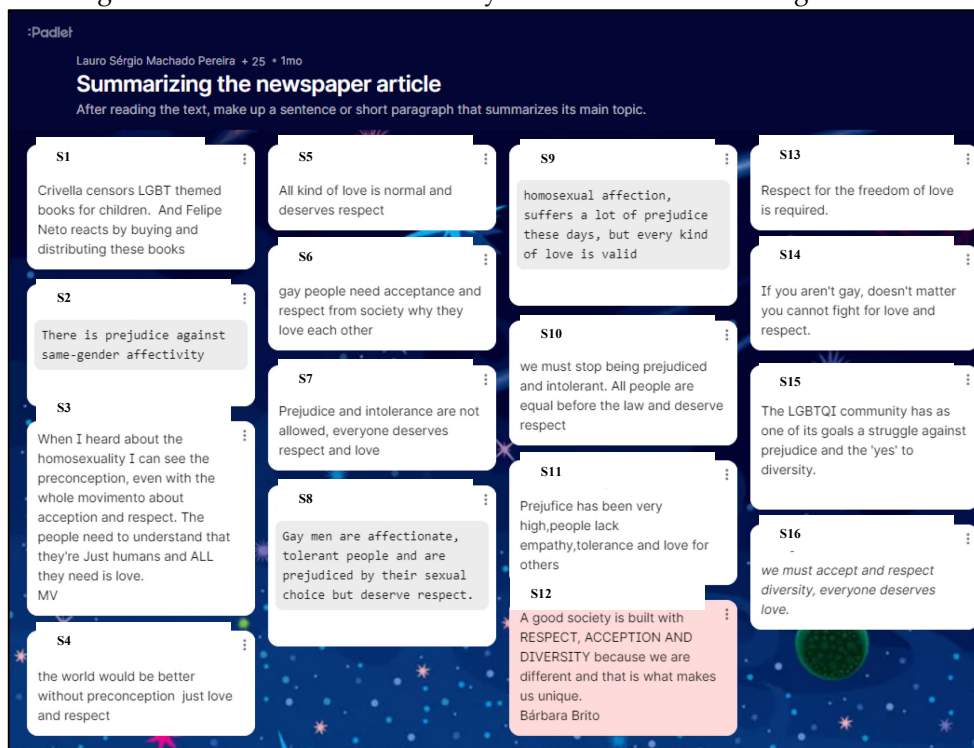
Figure 3 - Triggering students' experiences with the known.



Source: author's archive (September 2019).

In the stage of **experiences with the new**, the students read the first text. Before that, they answered the questions: (i) *Do you know some books which have LGBTQIA+ characters?* (ii) *Can you mention some?* (iii) *What is your opinion about allowing kids and teens to choose the books they want to read regardless of the theme?* (iv) *Should authorities ban books with gay characters from being sold in fairs and bookshops? Why?* (v) *What is your opinion about what happened at the book fair in Rio de Janeiro last week?* In the discussion about the answers to the questions, I projected images of some homoaffective comic books characters such as *Northstar, Batwoman, Mystique, Wiccan and Hulkling, John Constantine, Catwoman, Shatterstar and Rictor, and Deadpool*. Then, individually, the students elaborated on a synthesis, typed it in the *Padlet* application, and read it to the class. Among the elaborated syntheses (Figure 4), only S1 successfully fulfilled the task of summarizing, which is not noticeable in the other students' responses, whose statements took on a more subjective tone and personal opinion.

Figure 4 – Summaries elaborated by the students after reading the texts.



Source: <https://padlet.com/lauropereiraifnmg>

Then, I proceeded to the **conceptualization** stage, informing the students that the selected texts constituted social practices external to the textbook, as well as presenting the objectives of the class, which were: (i) to problematize the LGBTQIA+ agenda from an intercultural perspective (Brazil and the United States) through the analysis of two multimodal texts and (ii) to use English language resources to summarize news articles and express opinions about them.

In the **local and global connections** stage, which intends to broaden the students' perspective on the subject, allowing them to perceive the differences in meanings and reactions from the same problem, the objective was to show that although the texts dealt with controversies involving the prohibition of books with gay characters, these had repercussions on different practices. In Brazil, the controversy came from a public figure (Pastor Crivella), while in the United States, it came from a group of conservative parents. In this regard, the question *How do the differences in*

contexts of *production* and *reading* of the text affect your understanding? (Menezes de Souza, 2011, p. 299, author's emphasis) was also applied to the classroom. Subsequently, I asked the students to compare the struggle for the LGBTQIA+ cause, the conquest and guarantee of rights, and the cases of violence involving this community in both countries to problematize possible differences. Students watched the video '*Captain Underpants*' book banned from local book fair¹⁰ and read the second text. Finally, they exercised their listening comprehension of the video by answering a quiz¹¹ in the *Kahoot* application.

Aiming at **expanding perspectives**, I proposed that the students reread the two texts and identify statements whose authors were in favor or against the banning of books from the shelves at fairs. In the first text, the students highlighted the statements (i) *Books like this need to be wrapped in black sealed plastic with a content warning displayed on the outside* and (ii) *Guys! We need to protect our children (from homosexuality)*, both by Marcelo Crivella. In the second text, they highlighted the opinions of two mothers, Kimberly Rose: (iii) *If you're in this world, they should know about that regardless. I mean, (parents) should have that conversation before it's brought up*, and Sherika Watkins: (iv) *I think at this kind of age a parent should be involved with them because they're so young that they maybe need to be explained what this is about*. Despite the controversies of these statements, I discussed with the students that when critically observing them, it is possible to reflect that due to individual experiences, the people who uttered them perceive them as natural and devoid of prejudices that could affect the other based on their differences.

In this way, guided by the conception of CLs as a philosophy "that values the difference in history, origin, place of each social interpreter," [...] and that would have

¹⁰ Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RheYR_dhNUI. Accessed on: April 18, 2023.

¹¹ Available at: <https://create.kahoot.it/details/1b814161-30eb-4b0a-a6c9-3fc8732bd3dc>. Accessed on: April 18, 2023.

"as a service to the student to present and speak in these norms as points of arrival, and involve the participant in the conflicting and painful process of confrontation" (Menezes de Souza, 2011, p. 298) in the face of different evaluative conceptions, I sought to expand the activity by drawing students' attention to the importance of learning to live with the dissent as a strategy for coping with violence. In practice, I divided the class into four groups to assign a statement to each of them to develop arguments in Portuguese to justify their position in favor or against banning books in their original contexts of production and circulation. In this activity, students were able to put themselves in the other's shoes and rethink their answers (Duboc, 2017), which is in line with the ethical dimension inherent in CLs, necessary in all curricular and pedagogical practices (Menezes de Souza, 2011).

In the **transformations** stage, the students researched, in different media, at least two news items addressing cases of discrimination, prejudice, or violence, which occurred in Brazil and abroad, whose involved people had representation in the acronym LGBTQIA+. Then, students should investigate the motivations for such occurrences and how the competent authorities treated and conducted the cases. With this, the objective was for the students to act critically in each case by elaborating a proposal in the form of an advertising report to be disseminated in different media and social networks to alert people to the importance of combating hate speeches towards LGBTQIA+ groups. As demonstrated, students not only exercised communication strategies when using language as a social practice but also contributed to the transformation of society.

4 Closing remarks

Considering the intensification of hatred manifestations and violent acts directed at minoritarian identity groups evidenced in the Brazilian scenario in recent years, language teachers can use their teaching agency, understood as an attitude of

collective struggle against situations of inequality, to promote change movements in the places where they work.

Fundamentally, the LGBTQIA+ agenda should be present in language education in English under the guidance of Critical Literacies, which takes the text as a social practice that, by proposing students exercise a critical look at themselves and the world, contribute to citizenship and social welfare.

That said, this paper aimed to answer the question: *How to problematize the LGBTQIA+ agenda in the English classroom through the guidelines of Critical Literacy?* To this end, while working in a vocational computing course integrated into High School at a federal public institution, I developed Critical Literacy activities based on multimodal texts whose themes dealt with the LGBTQIA+ agenda in Brazil and the United States, more specifically the banning of literary works with gay characters from book fairs.

Following systematized plans (steps of pedagogical actions) prepared by researchers from Critical Applied Linguistics, which connects with gender and sexuality issues, the activities focused on the stages of experiences with the known, experiences with the new, conceptualizations, local and global connections, expansion of perspective and transformation.

Developing and applying the activities made it possible to perceive that Critical Literacy contributes significantly to expanding the focus of language education, in the sense that because society finds itself in a globalized world, increasingly complex and technological, language classes must not configure spaces that work only with linguistic-communicational issues, but that also engage with localized discussions of social, cultural and political themes.

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