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*English as a Lingua Franca: For a Critical Intercultural Pedagogy*

ABSTRACT:

Departing from beliefs, values, attitudes, and expectations of English teachers from three educational realities in Salvador, Brazil, and taking into consideration the competitive advantages and peculiar adversities of each context, this ethnographic work had as its main goal to investigate how Brazilian EFL teachers see themselves as contemporary language professionals, to which extent they are aware of principles and implications related to the condition of English as an international or global lingua franca, and whether their daily practice and behavior reflect these beliefs. The data were collected through a questionnaire, ethnographic class observations, and video recordings of semi-structured group interviews where topics like ELF/EIL (McKay, 2002; Seidlhofer, 2004; Jenkins, 2007), intercultural competence (Byram, 1997; Guilherme, 2002), and critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970; Crookes 2010) were discussed and approached under a more dynamic and democratic perspective. Results and considerations have proven useful and relevant not only to the discussion of methodological and political-ideological implications inherent to English education today, but especially to the reflection on issues which may contribute to the (re)construction of a more adequate profile of non-native English teachers, proposing, among other things, the adoption of an appropriate critical intercultural pedagogy capable of empowering local teachers in order to search for local solutions to the challenges contemporary linguistic education has been intensively posing to them.

*Introduction*

English is today a truly world means of communication. Never before has a language operated in a lingua franca role on such a global scale (Dewey, 2012). With the current process of globalization, the language, which according to Kachru, Kachru and Nelson (2009), is experiencing its fourth diaspora<sup>1</sup>, has been solidly spreading within the global scenario as the lingua franca<sup>2</sup> of the so-called information age, reaching in the last decades an unimagined expansion. As Phillipson (1992: 8) contends, «English has been equated with progress and prosperity», and it has acquired so much

prestige along the years that any individual who might have reached any formal educational background will feel at a great disadvantage if he/she does not speak it at least at a certain level of proficiency.

According to Crystal (1997), English is the native language of approximately half a billion people, besides being the first language spoken by non-natives, reaching, in case we consider the criterion of «reasonable competence», an approximately number of two billion speakers around the globe. Statistics has shown that, currently, for each native speaker of English, there are already four non-native (Graddol, 1997; Siqueira, 2008, 2011), which, undoubtedly, demonstrates the power and the level of internationalization reached by the language spoken by William Shakespeare, Salman Rushdie, James Joyce, Chinua Achebe, Oscar Wilde, among others. In other words, English has made its presence almost everywhere and it is being appropriated in practically every corner of the planet.

For Kumaravadivelu (2006), the most distinctive trace of the current stage of globalization is the electronic communication, especially due to the notable expansion of its most prominent catalyst, the internet. In just a few years, the global computer network has become «the major engine that is driving economic imperatives as well as cultural/linguistic identities».

(Kumaravadivelu, 2006: 131), and has been made into a unique source which connects millions of people from all parts of the world in a matter of seconds, most of the time, using English, so far the language of globalization. As a consequence of this process, Rajagopalan (2002) points out that English has ended up being turned into a high-valued global commodity, especially in countries like Brazil, where teaching and learning the language has become a great business «around which is building up a truly powerful fetishism that the mavericks of the marketing world have been quick to exploit» (Rajagopalan, 2002: 115).

In view of such a scenario, the world feels compelled to learn English. According to Seidlhofer (2011: 7), «for the first time in history, a language has reached truly global dimensions, across continents, domains, and social strata». Fishman (1998-1999: 26) reminds us that «whether we consider English a “killer language” or not, whether we regard its spread as benign globalization or linguistic imperialism, its expansive reach is undeniable, and for the time being, unstoppable». Such a remark may be put into questioning, but it is still reasonable to affirm that the global expansion of English has not yet showed significant signs of deceleration. So, instead of arguing in terms of the past why it has reached such a condition, we have to look ahead and deal with the implications of the phenomenon, especially those related to its pedagogy. Or, as Jenkins

(2000: 4) would advise us, we had better find «ways in which we can make the language more cross-culturally democratic, under the ‘ownership’ (in Widdowsonian terms) of all who use it for communication, regardless of who and where they are».

Besides the internet, another factor which has massively contributed to the global spread of English is the ELT industry, which far from being just a simple and neutral acronym, it sponsors and promotes a global multibillion business, highly competitive and solely oriented by the adoption of a *Standard English* conceived in the hegemonic centers, United Kingdom and United States, to be sold and taught to millions of eager learners from around the world.

Due to the great potential and development of the ELT area, more and more English teachers/educators, native and non-native, are being formed, especially in the so-called periphery countries, where these professionals get their degrees not only at the tertiary level, but also in innumerable programs offered by hundreds of language centers spread around the globe. Although the ELT remarkable expansion and structure seem to be founded in an environment of apparent neutrality, several authors like Phillipson (1992), Pennycook (1994, 1998, 2001), Rajagopalan (1999, 2004, 2005), among others, criticize them for being basically oriented by a sense of domination. Phillipson (1992), for example, has repeatedly called our attention to the way the ELT industry has been contributing to the global diffusion of English in an acritical and apolitical manner, which, according to him, it has been conducted as a monumental effort to impose an imperialist agenda. In his view, «the legitimation of English linguistic imperialism makes use of two main mechanisms in relation to educational language planning, one in respect to language and culture (anglocentricity), the other in respect of pedagogy (professionalism)» (Phillipson, 1992: 47).

Apparently indifferent to these more ample and sensitive matters, including the emergence and consolidation of important research areas, today in constant dialogue with the science of language, like World Englishes, Critical Pedagogy, Cultural Studies, Education for Citizenship, to mention a few, English departments from many universities, courses and programs on foreign language teacher education and development (pre-service and in-service), curricular structures, besides professionals with a large teaching experience, still align themselves with a refractory profile which guarantees very little or no room whatsoever for critical discussions concerning English as an international language (EIL) or as a lingua franca (ELF) and its ideological, political, and pedagogic implications.

In this sense, Pennycook (1990: 303) calls our attention to such a fact, pointing out that «a major lacuna in second language education is its divorce from broader issues in educational theory». According to him and Lange (1990), to a certain extent, this practice reflects the highly theoretical preparation of the language teacher, commonly connected to traditional linguistics and anchored in a conscious detachment from education in general.

However, still in Pennycook's view, «the nature of second language education requires that we understand our educational practice in broader social, cultural, and political terms», and, for him, «it is to critical pedagogy that [...] we could most profitably turn to extend our conception of what we are doing as language teachers» (1990: 303). In the same line of thought, Moita Lopes (2005: 6) reminds us that in Brazil (and in many countries), the teaching of English as a foreign language has followed such a path for a long time, in other words, «we continue teaching languages totally distanced from social, cultural, historical, political-economic issues». For the Brazilian applied linguist, the English teacher nowadays is so crucially positioned in the new world order that he/she is left with only two main possibilities to choose from: he/she either contributes to his/her own marginalization making a point of seeing him/herself merely as 'a language teacher,' with no connection whatsoever with social and political issues, or he/she perceives that, as someone who works with language, he/she is fundamentally involved with the political and social life (Moita Lopes, 2003; Gee, 1994).

Besides that, even pedagogic issues are to be scrutinized and reconsidered once we understand that settings where English is used as a lingua franca comprise a high degree of linguistic and cultural diversity (Dewey, 2012). As Jenkins, Cogo, and Dewey (2011: 305) postulate, the pedagogic implications of ELF include key areas like «the nature of the LANGUAGE SYLLABUS, TEACHING MATERIALS, APPROACHES and METHODS, LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT and ultimately the KNOWLEDGE BASE of language teachers (as cited in original)».

Anchored in such points and arguments, it is our objective in the article to demonstrate in a synthetic way how the current process of teaching and learning English as a global lingua franca can (and should) establish a broader and more beneficial dialogue with general education and other fields of knowledge which support and promote critical approaches to language teaching. Besides that, drawing on findings and results from our doctorate research study with Brazilian teachers of English from different instructional realities in Salvador, Brazil (Siqueira, 2008), we propose the

adoption of a critical intercultural pedagogic of ELF/EIL which, among other aspects, takes into consideration the political nature of linguistic education and is entitled to contribute to help contemporary English educators face the challenges that more than ever will come their way (Siqueira, 2011).

### 1. *Critical Pedagogy (CP)*

What has ELT to do with critical pedagogy? As Jeyaral and Harland (2014: 344) highlight, «critical pedagogy is based on the premise education can make the world a better place». For Shin (2004), once we work with linguistic education, especially English in the contemporary international context, be teachers or teacher educators, we are to engage ourselves in a practice which is to lead us into understanding and reinforcing the social, economic, political, and ideological implications of our profession. In other words, we need to challenge the predominant ‘technicism’ so dear to our area and *do* critical pedagogy.

Contrary to what one might think, critical pedagogy is not a theory or a method, but a way of life, it is a form of *doing* teaching and learning (Akbari, 2008), it is teaching with an attitude (Pennycook, 2001). Once critical pedagogues see schools as cultural arenas where distinct social and ideological forms find themselves in constant conflict, what they shall be seeking is society transformation through education, including language teaching. For Guilherme (2002), CP is a way of living which questions in depth our roles as teachers, students, citizens, human beings. Because of this, she argues that «it is impossible to give simple prescriptions about how to *do* CP» (Guilherme, 2002: 19). Such a feeling is corroborated by Wink (1997: 103) who goes beyond, affirming that he doubts we can teach someone to *do* CP: «We do not *do* critical pedagogy; we *live* it», completes the author.

The basis of CP, as highlighted by Guilherme (2002), shall not be attributed to a single theory. Despite the several ramifications both in Europe and the US, it was the work by Paulo Freire, the remarkable Brazilian educator, which has made the Latin American experience one of the most prominent and celebrated in the area of CP around the world. In this sense, Guilherme (2002: 23) postulates that the crucial role played by Freire’s thought in CP, always keeping in mind the Latin American context where he founded and developed his educational theory and practice, explains CP’s non-Eurocentric stance, «in spite of his adoption of some

European and North American philosophical and educational theories». It is for this reason, therefore, that several authors recognize Freire, especially because of his pioneering work in 'critical literacy' with the poor populations of the Brazilian northeast in the 1960, as «the founder of CP».

CP's main concern is power in the social and educational contexts, says Santos (2002: 10). It surely «worries about "how" and "to which interests" knowledge and cultural formations are produced and distributed, acting as instruments of legitimation of hegemonic forms of power». Therefore, under this perspective, CP seeks to foment citizens' critical capacity, empowering them to resist, in a limited way or not, the effects of power. In the author's view, with its emancipatory ideal, more than recognition of injustice, CP looks for «alternative ways of change thorough solidarity» (Santos, 2002: 10).

In general education, or educational theory, as preferred by Pennycook (1990), CP offers a rubric under which it is possible to find the most useful understandings for fundamental social, political, and cultural issues related to the area. In the same line of reasoning, Rajagopalan (2003) also reminds us that the critical pedagogue, by nature, is someone who disturbs and disrupts the general *status quo*. In his/her task of stimulating the critical view of his/her learners, of fostering a critical posture, the critical educator «has always been and will always be a threat to consolidated powers». (Rajagopalan, 2003: 111) Consequently, in Freire's thought, one of the most powerful weapons available to the critical pedagogue is 'conscientization' (*conscientização*)<sup>3</sup>, which, in his own words, it is «the most critical look of reality, which "unveils" it in order to get to know it and the other myths that cheat [people] and help maintain the reality of the dominant structure» (Freire, 1980: 29). At all levels, education is to be mostly transformative rather than stubbornly reproductive. ELT shall not go on immune to this.

## 2. *Critical Pedagogy and ELT*

As well-known, English has reached the status of today's global lingua franca not for the significant increase in the number of its native speakers, but, essentially, due to the exponential growth of the number of individuals the world over who are aware of the advantages of speaking the current language of international communication. As aforementioned, because of such a demand, the ELT industry, as any huge transnational corporation, has been experiencing a never imagined development and

expansion. Phillipson (1992, 2003), one of the most acid critics of this segment, on several occasions, calls attention to the power, the ideological grounds, as well as its consequences, in his view, still obscure. In search of an awareness development which would result in the adoption of a critical posture related to the global spread of English, especially by those directly involved with linguistic policies and education, he states that,

«English has acquired a narcotic power in many parts of the world, an addiction that has long-term consequences that are far from clear. As with the drugs trade, in its legal and illegal branches, there are major commercial interests involved in the global English language industry». (Phillipson, 2003: 16)

Rajagopalan (2004) is another scholar who approaches the peculiar linguistic and cultural phenomenon which he came to label it World English. According to him, the expansion of English is neither a neutral nor an apolitical process, and because of that, it is imperative a drastic revision of ELT pedagogic practices. As he contends,

«[...] ELT practices that have for long been in place need to be reviewed drastically with a view to addressing the new set of challenges being thrown at us by the phenomenon of WE. Up until now a good deal of our taken-for-granted ELT practices have been threatened with the prospect of being declared obsolete for the simple reason that they do not take into account some of the most significant characteristics of WE». (Rajagopalan, 2004: 114).

Although many researchers have been for some time already bringing about these issues with a certain frequency, it is plausible to affirm that a more intense dialogue between language teaching and critical pedagogy, its premises and practical implications, is a fairly recent initiative. As pointed out by Akbari (2008), the great majority of the discussion has been limited to CP's theoretical bases and intentions, and very little has been done to really connect CP with the language classroom universe (Crookes, 2010). As stated by Ortega (1999: 248), such a disparity can be credited to a certain elitism perpetuated in the area, culminating with a myopic professional orientation characterized by the lack of sociopolitical awareness, and, therefore, «a dismissal of the political nature of second language teaching within the FL profession». For the author, it is way past time we engaged in a «politically responsible language education», or as Crookes (2013: 5) defends, we «need a language teacher with energy, experience, and a vision of social change».

Besides that, experience has shown us that Applied Linguistics (AL) itself has been given very little importance to CP, its principles and arguments, which, for Kumaravadivelu (2006), sounds totally paradoxical. In his opinion, once CP seeks to relate the 'word with the world', language with life, and if AL is said to be a field which poses great interest in "problems of the real world", how to refrain the two areas from approximating and dialoguing? A possible explanation to the problem reveals both the lack of access to knowledge related to Critical Applied Linguistics (Pennycook, 2001) and the absence of a greater professional articulation in terms of initial education and continuous development of FL teachers who, traditionally, are not used to attending (re)qualification programs theoretically oriented by a critical-reflective perspective. Awareness to such a complexity will make us perceive a «need for activism towards S/FL teaching as a true profession with social goals and political responsibilities» (Ortega, 1999: 243).

But not everything is bad news. As time passes by, especially with the consolidation of the transdisciplinary character of AL, in FL education, for instance, we begin to see emerge certain room for dialogue with important fields of study like CP and Culture Studies. This makes us realize that it is vital to rethink and reconceptualize teaching practices traditionally oriented by methodological principles and processes imported from the hegemonic centers of knowledge and solely designed for communication. As Ortega (1999: 249) points out, «hegemonic beliefs and attitudes in FL education are crucially related to nested notions of nativeness and standardness». In many ways, as already mentioned, these deep-rooted practices need to be challenged, including those which take as reference only the cultural aspects and values of the target language/community, disregarding any political or ideological concern that should support the FL teaching profession.

As for English, today a denationalized and re-nationalized language, the theme holds great relevance, and, even though still in a small scale, it attracts the attention of the common teacher. As Gee (1994) argues, English teachers, whether they realize or not, occupy a central position in the most crucial educational, cultural, and political themes of these contemporary times. Once we conceive our educational practice in broader social, cultural, and political terms, keeping in mind that ELT is far from being an ideologically neutral enterprise, our classrooms can naturally serve as the ideal space for teachers and students empower themselves and be able to relate ELT with the real world, aiming at, mainly, a more active and more critical participation in the ever growing planetary community.



A PhD research study with Brazilian teachers of English working in different educational settings in the city of Salvador, Brazil, synthesized in the sequence, aims at discussing the questions aforementioned, and, from a local perspective, tries to shed some light on the role of the teacher in this complex scenario of English as a lingua franca and the need to privilege the emergence of the intercultural speaker of today's world language.

### *3. English as a global lingua franca: for a critical intercultural pedagogy*

According to Medgyes (1994), for a long time, ELT researchers have been showing some reluctance in investigating and writing about the English teacher/educator, be he/she native or non-native. For this author, «'Learner-centredness', the buzzword of the 70s and 80s, implied that teachers should keep a low profile in the teaching/learning operation» (Medgyes, 1994: X). As a consequence of such a practice, research studies which focused on the teacher were pushed from a central to a peripheral position. Much has been written about the learner, being the teacher left aside, and in this specific area, restricted to a secondary position. The research conducted and presented here takes an opposite path. We assumed there was a need to understand the implications of teaching an international language, calling attention to the critical intercultural perspective which, in our point of view, should orient the current teaching practice in periphery countries like ours, and to the questioning and reformulation of historically consolidated concepts that have proven anachronistic in light of the new world order. Our motivation then was to investigate and understand how local teachers of English from a Brazilian megacity would see themselves professionally, how they would behave in this new context of teaching English as a global lingua franca, and which would be the most meaningful challenges to be faced and dealt with in such a scenario.

Under a qualitative research paradigm, we have established a theoretical construct based on four main pillars: (1) the context of English as an international language and the pedagogic implications to each setting, (2) the language and culture relationship and its relevance in the process of teaching English as a global/international lingua franca, (3) the teacher's intercultural competence, and (4) the adoption of a critical ELT pedagogy aiming at a sociopolitical action of an ideological, reflective, and transformative nature. Fifteen teachers were selected and data were generated through three different instruments: (a) individual questionnaire, (b) ethnographic

observation of two classes per teacher, and (c) two video-recorded collective semi-structured interviews. In the long run, we had five teachers from the tertiary level, five from primary and secondary public and private systems, and five from English language institutes. The data were treated separately, according to each instrument, so we could carefully analyze the questions raised in the study on three different occasions, including the teacher in action. A fourth moment and final phase corresponded to the triangulation of the data.

The research questions were the following:

1. How does the teacher see his/her position and conducts his/her practice in the context of English as an international language (ELI) in Salvador, Brazil?
2. Does the setting where the teacher works (university, regular school, language institute), with their curricular objectives and idiosyncrasies, determine the adoption of different postures on the part of teacher in his/her daily classroom practice?
3. Does the teacher understand his/her ELT practice as a political and ideological act?
4. Does the teacher recognize the particularities and methodological implications of teaching a global language?
5. What would the most appropriate EIL teacher profile be in such a context?
6. What is(are) the most adequate pedagogy(ies) to EIL teaching in Salvador, Brazil, and what challenges would the adoption of this(these) pedagogy(ies) represent to the contemporary teacher?

The data triangulation pointed to some routes of redefinitions concerning the reality of the teachers who participated in the study. Through the answers to the questionnaires, the discussions in the semi-structured interviews, and the classroom observations, interesting regularities emerged, allowing us to make some interesting elaborations, and, in parallel, raise a few problematizations related to each of the pillars which supported the academic work.

As for the first theoretical pillar, *the context of English as an international lingua franca*, we could see from the answers and discussions that the traditional competences such as solid fluency, linguistic and methodological knowledge, sociability, creativity, flexibility, among others, several new competences were added to the profile of the contemporary teacher. To mention a few, they should have familiarity with information technology, sharp critical sense, respect for diversity, openness to (un)(re)learn, constant search for (re)qualification, intercultural sensibility, sociolinguistic view,

ample awareness of new ELT trends, readiness to make mistakes and capacity to reflect on his/her own practice. In many ways, this has demonstrated a high level of maturity in relation to recent demands which have been imposed on these professionals.

We could also verify that the difference between teaching a foreign language (FL) and a lingua franca (LF) or an international language (IL), along with the political and pedagogic implications, is something already accepted by the informants, and relatively consolidated among them. However, the data have shown that ELF/ELI-aware teaching proposals and initiatives are still very diffuse. As Jenkins, Cogo and Dewey (2011: 305) would argue, «there has been little discussion of what an ELF-oriented pedagogy might actually look like, and little consideration of what teachers might do in order incorporate an ELF perspective».

In fact, these teachers do conceive the English class as a democratic space for discussion and reflection on what happens in the world outside, but they still seem to be entrapped in the eternal dilemma of either putting into practice those peculiarities which go against ELT traditional procedures or simply give in to the sole resistance shown by learners, colleagues, and even superior staff like coordinators and administrators. The latter, it is plausible to say, do not seem to be interested in themes usually taken by them as ‘too revolutionary’, ‘utopic’, ‘fictitious,’ ‘disturbing.’ Because of that, teachers either ignore the topics or, voluntarily, opt for being loyal to the historical discourse which does not propose the development of the learner’s ability to speak, listen, read, and write in order to produce counter-discourses, refute, debate, question, in other words, very little is done to deviate from the «empty blah, blah, blah of the communicative class» (Pennycook, 1994: 301).

Concerning the second theme of the study, *culture teaching in the ELF/EIL context*, we noticed that, although informants brought up interesting assumptions on the topic and placed themselves in favor of a systematic teaching of language and culture, or even *language as culture*, contradictions came up. As Baker (2011: 62) states, «the cultural dimension to language has always been present in language pedagogy, even if it is not always explicit». During discussions, especially, several of them stated categorically that, despite recognizing the intimate relationship between language and culture, for them it would be extremely difficult to teach this element in the EFL class if the teacher never had any living experience in a native country or if there was never specific training for such a task to be carried out on a daily basis.

A deeper analysis into the matter has shown then that there is still a

long way for a better understanding of what it means to teach a denationalized language where, it is reasonable to affirm, there is plenty of room for the encouragement of intercultural reflections among learners (Sung, 2013). In general terms, when we talk about culture and ELF/EIL teaching, what really matters is not to discuss the essential character of this element in the pedagogic process or when to approach it. The challenge for the practitioner is to find out 'how' to really take culture as something intrinsic, inherent to the plural linguistic system he/she is teaching and, in a proactive way, make good use of it. Besides that, it is crucial to critically analyze the cultural content of textbooks which tend to present cultural aspects as packages of static information normally emulating and/or reinforcing the values of the target culture(s). As we all know, once a language becomes international it gets free from the custody of nations and cultures (Smith, 1976; Widdowson, 1994). An ELF-aware classroom is surely not to neglect such a fact.

As for the *intercultural competence*<sup>4</sup> the teacher needs to develop in order to foster it in his/her students, the study has shown that they are aware of the need to work under such a perspective, although several of them demonstrated some insecurity and, to a certain extent, a surprising ignorance towards what it means to teach English assuming the role of an intercultural teacher. Although they are aware that in almost all contexts the regular FL student does not seem to care for intercultural issues or show any motivation for the theme, the data allowed us to postulate that our informants are, in many ways, still very distant from an overall comprehension of what an interculturally competent teacher would be or do. However, it is possible to affirm that they are open to learn how to conduct their daily classroom practice employing specific methodologies and activities which, in some way, would substantiate an interculturally sensitive pedagogy of English, which, among other things, respects and privileges local learning culture(s) and learners' needs. A productive way to bring to foment such a competence in the regular EFL teacher is made clear by Sifakis (2009: 256), for whom we could begin

«by raising pre-service and in-service teachers' awareness of the communication value of ELF-related accommodation skills, with the aim of empowering themselves and their NNS learners as valid intercultural communicators, as opposed to maintaining a perspective that views EFL learners as deficient users of a language that is wholly 'owned' by its native speakers».

For the last theoretical pillar, *a critical pedagogy of ELF/EIL and the role of the teacher*, the study has signaled that our teachers seem to be more critical in theory than in practice. Their conceptions and beliefs concerning the issue manifest more clearly in the discourse, in the open discussions, during the occasions in which they voice consistent opinions about the importance of the contemporary teacher, native or non-native, incorporate in his/her daily practice principles and expectations of a transformative language pedagogy, concerned with the human being and the environment where he/she lives. In other words, a pedagogy distanced from the conception of 'banking education', heavily criticized by Freire (1970) in general education, and that, unfortunately, still predominates in most EFL classes around the world.

We could verify that our fifteen respondents, apart from the context where they work and their learners' specific objectives, concerning their assumptions, beliefs, and theoretical references, are, although slowly, becoming aware of the central position they occupy in the pedagogy of English as a global lingua franca and of the pressing revisions and changes in posture that the process has been triggering. However, although they might have incorporated a few particularities which would differentiate them positively and competitively from other ELF practitioners, such as the relative comprehension of the implications of teaching a global language and their status of «(inter)(trans)cultural brokers», in the terms of Lima and Roepcke (2004), the teaching of English in our context still reflects very little of these perceptions and conceptions, especially those which can potentially contribute to the adoption of a critical intercultural pedagogy of English as a global lingua franca.

In reality, with the study, we have realized that our ELT classrooms, including those which count on well-intentioned teachers, fully aware of an ELF/EIL pedagogy as an eminently political enterprise, still reproduce the traditional scenario globally conceived and designed for the incorporation and development of methodologies that usually ignore the local learning culture(s) and learners' specific needs and objectives.

As we already know, much has been said about the fact the CP is a very positive initiative to be considered for FL education, though, for its detractors, it is still highly theoretical. However, it is not a new concern by several scholars engaged in critical ELT, who insistently have been calling attention to this, and indeed devising work on the practicalities of CP in the area of linguistic education (Crookes, 2010, 2013). As Kanpol (1999 as cited in Crookes, 2013: 12) would point out years ago, «something must be done about making critical pedagogy's ideas at least pragmatically accessible». And

as Crookes (2013: XIII) would remind us, «English is the most powerful language and the language most deeply involved in international lineages of power and privilege». It is exactly because of this, and other important factors, that, in our view, CP is to play a crucial role in ELT, contributing to make teachers, students, and all stakeholders involved aware of the fact that what encompasses this entire educational process goes beyond the mere acquisition of a global cultural capital, but, in many ways, is to «take seriously our hopes for improvement in the direction of goals such as liberty, equality and justice» (Crookes, 2013: 1).

#### 4. *(In)Conclusion*

The research study synthesized in this article, among several things, has shown that the ELT profession in these post-modern times has become more complex than ever. English spread around the world, and whether we have clearly realized or not, the phenomenon has been offering excellent opportunities for us, workers in the field, to question and rethink innumeros imposed and consolidated ELT assumptions, beliefs, values, and pedagogies, and, therefore, granting us with the unique opportunity to critically reconstruct them based on local realities and imbued in a local flavor.

In a nutshell, the answers to our research questions have made us conclude that our teachers seem to be more critical in theory than in practice, they commonly engage in reflection, but this is turned into little action, they are totally in favor of enforcing a relationship between critical pedagogy and FL teaching, but feel they lack the theoretical background, and that they are underqualified to carry out such a task. Our informants are aware of the fact that teaching the current global lingua franca cannot take place in a neutral or uncritical way. They assure it is difficult to systematize the teaching of culture as much as it is to engage themselves in a daily practice based on principles of critical pedagogy. They also believe it is not a simple thing to see themselves as intercultural professionals, and though in class there are always opportunities to approach issues which could raise and foster students' critical intercultural awareness, they seem not to feel empowered enough to disturb the previous lesson plan and move away from the expected linguistic content to be covered.

From the results, we can affirm that the most adequate ELF/EIL pedagogy to a context like ours, a country located in the periphery of English, should be the one that, above all, recognizes and seeks to unveil in the ELT class the complexities inherent to the current condition of English as global

lingua franca which, among several functions, connects speakers from all parts of the world, in its majority, non-native users, with an emphasis on its *intercultural* use (Sifakis, 2006: 156). Besides that, such a pedagogy shall be aligned with the specific objectives of each local program, being sensitive enough to critically challenge certain methodological canons which seem to be untouchable throughout ELT history. An ELF/EIL pedagogy is to assume its mixed condition, its local character, counting on well-formed educators and constantly (re)qualified by linguistic education programs founded in critical and transformative approaches. These programs, besides contributing to improve and refine their linguistic knowledge, can also help them become better ELT professionals, having them become empowered and aware of their fundamental political role in the process of combating homogenous and homogenizing thoughts and behaviors and in the construction of discourses which will surely lead their students into exercising their local/global citizenship through the world's global lingua franca. In other words, a pedagogy capable of empowering local teachers in their search for local solutions to the challenges contemporary linguistic education has intensively brought to these professionals.

Once the reflection on the possible adoption of a critical intercultural pedagogy of English as a global lingua franca is made clear, it is important to mention that, based on the analyses and results of our investigation, in order to reach such an objective it would be crucial to count on ELF-aware professionals who, among other aspects, engage themselves in:

- approximating linguistic education to general education, therefore to the socio-political issues intrinsically related to the process of educating people;
- recognizing and conducting ELT as an eminently political activity;
- conceiving language as an essential social and ideological instrument and not as a package of grammatical rules to be memorized;
- rejecting methodologies which privilege practices oriented towards a linguistic education of a 'banking' nature, in a Freirean sense;
- seeking concept re-signification, re-evaluation of ELT paradigms, questioning methods and procedures solely based on models oriented towards *standardness* and *nativeness*;
- enrolling with a certain frequency in *development* rather than *training* programs, trying to expand knowledge that goes beyond methodological tools;
- analyzing critically the context he/she is inserted in, taking into consideration the highly sensitive nature of the role of English in the world today;

- investing in the development of his/her critical intercultural competence in order to be able to foment similar ability in his/her learners;
- comprehending the fact the English today is what with its speakers, native and non-native, do with it;
- preparing the learner to become an international speaker of English who is able to operate both at a global and local level, an intercultural/transcultural speaker of the language;
- defending and supporting initiatives of democratization of the access to English;
- combating deep-rooted myths, canons, prejudice, xenophobia, imperialisms of all types, especially those related to language;
- helping students to produce, not reproduce, knowledge and discourse; seeing ELT through a SOL (Speakers of Other Languages) perspective (Shin, 2006);
- conceiving and implementing interculturally sensitive curricula, syllabi, and methodologies which truly reflect learners' realities and attend to their specific goals;
- developing and/or implementing critical approaches which contribute to learners' self-perception as human beings and critical citizens;
- defending the access to foreign languages, especially a powerful language like English nowadays, as a human right not as a privilege of those few who can afford 'to buy' it.

In sum, English is here, on the streets, on the media, frantically navigating on the inforoads of the Internet, bombarding our eyes, our ears, our lives. In the current circumstances, ignoring the global language is a virtually inconceivable act. Not because we would like or are overeager to speak fluently the language of the United States or Britain, but because we want to speak with the United States, Britain, and the entire world at the same level of equality. People all over the world wish to dominate this language, acquire it, and use it in their favor, and their own way. It is because of such a scenario that many changes are called upon, especially when it comes to the noble and highly complex task of those who, in all corners of the planet, will set their hearts and minds to teach the global language of our current times.



<sup>1</sup> In *The Handbook of World Englishes*, Kachru, Kachru and Nelson (2009) discuss the spread of English through four diasporas. The first diaspora, according to them, refers to its local spread towards Wales, Scotland, and Ireland. The second one refers to the advance towards the colonies of North America (United States) and Oceania (Australia and New Zealand). The third, the one that transplanted English in new linguistic, cultural and social contexts, heavily founded in the British colonial enterprise in Africa, Southeast Asia, and the Caribbean. Finally, the fourth diaspora of current times, when English, in several ways, has become the global lingua franca and it has been spreading all over the world, being analyzed through different perspectives, generating innumerable debates and elaborations, especially at the conceptual level in which, recurrently, it is possible to see a proliferation of terminologies and notions to conceive and study the phenomenon and its uses (McKay, 2002; Jenkins, 2007; Cogo, 2008; Siqueira, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> There are currently several assumptions and conceptions to the term *lingua franca*. We conceive a *lingua franca* as the language of contact and communication between linguistically distinct groups or members of groups in relations to international commerce and other more extensive interactions. The view we adopt here takes English as a lingua franca, but not as a neutral language, devoid of its political, ideological, and cultural loads. As much as Jenkins (2007) and Seidlhofer (2011), our conception of lingua franca considers both native and non-native speakers as legitimate users of the language.

<sup>3</sup> For Freire (1996: 183 as cited in Guilherme, 2002: 32), «a person who has reached conscientization has a different understanding of history and of his or her role in it. He or she will refuse to become stagnant, but will move and mobilize to change the world».

<sup>4</sup> Baker (2011: 62) discusses the concept of intercultural awareness (ICA), which, in our view, is an important element of an overall intercultural competence. We subscribe to his words when he argues that in the contemporary language educational context, ICA is more relevant than simply cultural awareness (CA). We also agree with the author when he says that despite the fact of being very important along decades, CA «needs re-evaluation in the light of the more fluid communicative practices of English used as a global lingua franca», which, on the other hand, make ICA «a more relevant concept for these dynamics contexts of English use».

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