



9º Simposio de Ensino de Graduação

EMPOWERING STUDENTS THROUGH CRITICAL PEDAGOGY IN EFL CLASSES IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN BRAZIL THROUGH TEACHERS AWARENESS

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1. Introdução

The English language has an important place in the world scene today, it is the most important language in academic issues, it is widely used in business, and it can also be seen everywhere in the streets and on the Internet. Sometimes called as Lingua Franca, English is taught in public schools in Brazil, to 10 years old children.

Articles and papers, like the NCP (National Curriculum Parameters), point that, due to issues like space and teachers' training problems, English teaching in Public Schools in Brazil is being harmed.

After reading about the work of Paulo Freire's Critical Pedagogy Approach, hereafter CPA, I visualized an alternative to the way that the English is being taught, using CPA as an empowerment tool.

CPA intends to increase students' capacity of thinking by themselves and about the world around them; so students are able to acquire knowledge while knowing what they can do to make their reality better using this knowledge. CPA also considers the students' world inside the classroom; it means that the students can be more involved and interested about the classes.

English Education is very important in children's development, not only because of the linguistics and cognitive aspects, but also the cultural awareness that can be achieved. So, English as a Foreign Language, hereafter EFL, class should have a teaching/learning process that leads students to learn not only the language, but also all the culture that comes with it. And I am not talking about the culture of one or two countries, but the world's culture, a culture as globalized as this language is, and in a way that it could help in children development and to make them critical people.

When Critical Approaches are used in EFL classes, what happens is a kind of mix of two important tools of empowerment, the EFL with CPA; so the Critical view of things can be introduced to children lives, while they learn a Language that can help in their mind and linguistic development, a language that can also help in their career; and there is also the culture awareness acquirement, that will make them aware people.

For this to happen it is necessary that teachers change their actual role, from unmotivated teachers to Cultural Educators, and do more than just "transfer" knowledge to the students. So these cultural educators should be prepared to act in this way, by developing their career, their knowledge, being updated with the researches and that are being made, so they will be able to provide students what they really need.

I intend to discuss in this paper how CPA can bring great results in the EFL classrooms and in the society around the students, when empowering them through the teacher awareness about the approach, and showing to the teacher new ways of conceiving EFL education, and the education as a whole.

2. Objetivos

Theoretical Framework

The theories that are going to be used in this paper are the works of Paulo Freire about CPA, articles and theories about EFL, and studies that discuss the reality of EFL in Public Schools in Brazil.

English in the world

First of all, it has to be considered the importance of the English Language in the world.

English became a language that is used in any country in the world for academic and business purposes; although some people don't like to use the term *Lingua Franca*, English is considered as a *lingua franca* in the world. When people with different first languages need to talk to each other, the language chosen for this communication is almost often English. "Only one in four users of English in the world is a native speaker" (CRYSTAL, 2003, apud SEIDLHOFER 2005, p.339).

For people to get a good job nowadays English is a major requisite, especially in multinational companies, or in hotel and touristic places. So, even if we do not consider pedagogic and cognitive perspectives, learning EFL is fundamental, and it is better that it occurs in the school, that is the time for the children to grow up and develop knowledge, at the same time that this child learn to communicate and respect differences, that is the basis of speaking a foreign language.

National Curriculum Parameters

The NCP was created in 1998; with the intention of involving schools, teachers, parents, governments and the whole society in the debates about education in Brazil. It respects the difference between the regions inside the country, but tries to establish a point in common, in order to guarantee students development.

The part of the document that is going to be used in this project is the one that concerns foreign language learning, and that also point the issues in English education in Brazil.

The document recognizes that foreign language education in Brazil has serious problems, since the language is not considered important to learn it, and in some places it is not part of the curriculum inside the school. In places where the foreign language is though inside the classroom, it happens in a crowded classroom, with no resources, no technologies, what create an environment where teachers cannot work well, and give students the attention they need. In some cases teachers are not prepared to give classes.

Although the NCP recognizes the problems in foreign language learning, they give some guides with the intention of offer teachers and schools new thoughts about education, and help them to improve the way of teaching foreign language. So this knowledge can be meaningful and useful to the learners, and really contribute for they development as aware adults.

English in Brazil – Public Education

Some researchers show that the EFL classes in Public Schools in Brazil are passing through problems with the teacher preparation, and schools structure.

In an academic work made in Parana, south of Brazil, Perin (2003, p.115) says that the reality of the English Language Education is not positive, although students consider learning the language important for their careers, they do not have respect for it, and do have respect for the teacher; Bernardo (2007) and Santos (2001) had the same results in their academic work in Aracaju and in Para. They found the same problems that the NCP pointed out; crowded classrooms, little time to teach, unprepared teachers, and so on.

Charlot (2005, p. 76) says that the effective learning only is possible when there is the desire to learn, and when the learner is participant in the process; just like Paulo Freire says about education, the student must be an active member in the learning process, the learner must want to learn it, and construct the knowledge with the teacher, so everything will be meaningful for each student and teacher. What happens in Brazil is that most of the times students know that they must learn a foreign language, for them to get a good job; but it is the only reason that they see. They ignore the importance of acquire cultural skills, because in EFL classes they do not have enough motivation.

Grigoletto (2003) analyzed EFL pedagogical material published between 1993 and 1998, written by Brazilians material designers for Brazilians students, and concluded that this material does not take in to consideration the personality of the Brazilian student, and the importance for them to have their own identity space inside the foreign language education; this material also excluded the cultural differences that exist in the world, which does not allow students to compare different life styles, and different cultural perspectives. And according to CPA students must be incited to see the real world and think about it.

EFL Methods and Freire's CPA

There are a lot of approaches and methods of teaching English that are used by each teacher in different ways, depending on how the dynamics of the classroom works.

See a description of the development of EFL methods:

...the Direct Method was enthusiastically embraced in the early part of the twentieth century as an improvement over Grammar Translation. In the 1950s the Audiolingual Method was thought to provide a way forward, incorporating the latest insights form the sciences of linguistics and psychology. As the Audiolingual Method began to fade in the 1970s, particularly in the United States, a variety of guru-led methods emerged to fill the vacuum created by the discrediting of Audiolingualism, such as the Silent Way, Total Physical Response, and Suggestopedia. While these have declined substantially by the 1990s, new 'breakthroughs' continue to be announced from time to time, such as Task-Based Instruction, Neurolinguistic Programming, and Multiple Intelligences, and these attract varying levels of support. (Richards and Roger, 2001, apud Vystav?lová, 2009, p.9).

The CPA does not come to give teachers rules, but to make teachers aware about the importance of helping their students become critical people; CPA is a way of conceive education, and it helps teacher on preparing a class, does not matter what EFL method or approach is he/she going to use, that could guide students on a critical point of view, and to know for what they are learning this content. The teacher will play the role to guide the students, be an authority without authoritarianism.

In the Critical Pedagogy philosophy the teacher must not only teach, but always learn; while students not only learn, but they are always teaching too. It is like a cyclical process, and where everyone's experiences are considered in the educational process, so the conversation will be meaningful. Everybody has an important role in the educational process.

Freire1 says it is important to have skills, but we have to know for what we have the skills. So, there is no focus on grammar, or communication; the focus is on the reflection, and you can do it through the English Language.

Teaching is not transferring knowledge; more than that, teaching is creating possibilities to the production of the knowledge by the student. The teacher creates a possibility to the construction of the knowledge. And he/she must do it with the students. The students cannot do it alone, and the teacher should not just transfer the knowledge to them; the right process is: working together, involving the students in the construction of a meaningful knowledge.

Learning a foreign language, and learn the foreign culture, help people to find themselves, looking to other people. A person must recognize her/himself as a unique individual in the world, not better, nor worse than anyone, just a different and unique one. And recognize that the differences that make the world so big and so rich; recognize her/his role in the world development, what to do to contribute in a positive way. When learning a foreign language, this person starts to see these things, and to be aware about what is really important. The English Language has the advantage of being used in all over the world, and to allow people connect to everywhere they want, or need to. With all this responsibility, English teachers must be critical, aware, and take care of what they do inside classrooms, because they are helping citizens of the world. How these citizens will be formed depends on what the teachers, society, government and themselves do in education.

3. Desenvolvimento

Methodology

In order to better develop this study it is necessary to review articles and theories about EFL methods and approaches, which will enlighten us about the teaching/learning process.

Once we are going to discuss teacher awareness about CPA, it is fundamental for us to know how much they know about it. So an interview is going to take place in the school that the researcher teacher is making her internship in the current semester. Some teachers will be asked to answer some basic questions about CPA and about Freire's work. In case the teacher does not know anything about it, will be offered him/her a leaflet, with an abstract about the subject, and some references to future research; in this offering will be analyzed the interest of the teacher in improving their knowledge, by analyzing their attitudes among the questionnaire, and their interest in the leaflet, and in getting these information. The intention is to measure, at least in a local point of view, how teachers want to develop their work, and to do this work as a cultural educator, that has influence in the society.

The data collected after the questionnaire and the analysis of teachers' attitudes will be compared to the behavior that CPA preaches.

Questionnaire Model

QUESTIONÁRIO

1. Em qual abordagem/método você baseia suas aulas? Ou há mais de uma?

2. Por qual motivo você a(s) utiliza?

3. Conhece o trabalho de Paulo Freire?

Sim ()

Não ()

4. Você conhece a Pedagogia Crítica?

Sim ()

Não ()

5. Já utilizou as ideias da Pedagogia Crítica em suas aulas?

Sim (). Qual foi o resultado? Positivo () Negativo ()

Não (). Já pensou, ou gostaria de tentar esse trabalho? _____

6. Caso não conheça, ou caso queira aprofundar seu conhecimento, gostaria de receber um material informativo básico sobre a Pedagogia Crítica e o trabalho de Paulo Freire?

Sim ()

Não ()

4. Resultado e Discussão

The results of this project will contain the questionnaire's feedback, and the questionnaire was not applied yet.

5. Considerações Finais

The conclusion is going to be made after the project development, and after the questionnaire is applied.

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