Ethics in the Bakhtinian Perspective and in Critical English Language Teacher Education: a Practicum Experience / Ética na perspectiva bakhtiniana e na formação crítica docente: uma experiência no Estágio Supervisionado de Língua Inglesa

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, we aim to establish a dialogue between Bakhtinian foundations and critical language teacher education, mainly regarding the concept of ethics. We analyse the discursive practices of three language student-teachers about the work developed with the film Beyond the Blackboard during their English Practicum I lessons. The study indicates the relevance of Bakhtin's theoretical framework on ethics for the area of Critical Language Teacher Education, especially because it is understood that the student-teacher needs to problematize his/her own concepts, perceive the responsibility of his/her actions, and take his/her role as an agent for change.

KEYWORDS: Ethics; Bakhtinian foundations; Critical language teacher education; Practicum

RESUMO

Neste texto, procuramos estabelecer um diálogo entre fundamentos bakhtinianos e formação crítica de professores/as de línguas, especialmente a respeito do conceito de ética. Para tanto, analisamos as práticas discursivas de três professoras-licenciandas da disciplina Estágio Supervisionado de Língua Inglesa I, de um curso de Letras Português/Inglês, sobre o trabalho desenvolvido com o filme Além da sala de aula. O estudo aponta para a relevância do referencial teórico bakhtiniano sobre ética para a formação crítica docente, uma vez entendido que o/a professor/a em formação universitária precisa problematizar suas próprias concepções, perceber a responsabilidade de seus atos e assumir seu papel de agente.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Ética; Fundamentos bakhtinianos; Formação crítica de professores/as de línguas; Estágio supervisionado

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Introduction

In the world we live in it is paramount that language teachers be educated in a way that they are able to see their classrooms as a locus of identities' (re)construction. This premise turns out to be even more urgent when it comes to language teachers who will teach in basic education. Based on that, we do believe that the role played by higher education as well as by in-service teacher education must be, among others, to encourage these professionals to critical thinking regarding their own teaching practices.

Before any discussion concerning this issue, two important concepts need to be explained briefly: subject and language. There is in the theoretical literature a wide range of perspectives that discuss both terms. For this study, we have chosen the Bakhtinian perspective[1] as we consider it appropriate to the discussions with reference to critical language teacher education. However, it is crucial to highlight that these concepts were not explored explicitly by one or another specific paper produced by Bakhtin and his Circle. On the contrary, they were spread out in different moments of their intellectual production.

Bakhtin and his Circle conceive the subject as a once-occurrent Being-as-event, who is sociohistorically situated, culturally filled and made up in their relations to other subjects. According to Faraco (2009, p.20), "Bakhtin's insistency on what is singular, unique, unrepeatable, has its basis on a comprehensive reflection about the existence of a concrete human being," and for this reason "Bakhtin stands against any tendency of monologising the human existence and denying the presence of another self with similar rights and similar responsibilities" (FARACO, 2009, p.76).[2]

In accordance with this comprehension of the *subject*, Bakhtin and his Circle[3] speak in favour of a *dialogical* conception of language, which has "its meanings produced by the constitutive presence of *intersubjectivity* […][4] in the verbal

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[1] The *Bakhtinian perspective* refers to the studies developed by Bakhtin and his group of friends and collaborators, widely known as the *Bakhtin Circle*.

[2] Original text: "[...] essa insistência de Bakhtin no trato do singular, do único, do irrepetível tem como base uma extensa reflexão sobre a existência do ser humano concreto. [...] Bakhtin se posiciona contra qualquer tendência de monologização da existência humana, isto é, de negar a existência de um outro eu com iguais direitos e iguais responsabilidades".

[3] References consulted by the authors are at the end of the paper. The footnotes have the English versions consulted by the translators whenever possible.

[4] The comments and cuts made by the authors in all excerpts are in brackets.

interaction, that is, in concrete situations where language is put into practice, in the language acts" (SOBRAL, 2008, p.231, emphasis in the original).[5] In this perspective, everything starts with the word – "*the ideological phenomenon par excellence*" (VOLOŠINOV, 1973, p.13, emphasis in the original)[6] – and dialogism constitutes itself as an intersection of discourses (voices), explicit or not. Silva (2013, p.48) claims that "ideologically, Bakhtin's group understands language as a convergency place of differences, in which the identity is built by the coexistence with diversity, with the other."[7]

By following the discussion about the role of critical language teacher education, Pennycook (2001) outlines the main characteristics of a critical praxis, namely: it problematizes what is naturalized; it is aware of its own limitations; it goes beyond the dichotomy theory/practice; it is at the same time situated and in motion; it is guided by ethics. This paper intends to emphasize this last characteristic of critical action – being guided by *ethics.* It also aims at setting a dialogue between some Bakhtinian tenets and the critical teaching education concerning this construct. Although Bakhtin and his Circle's studies were not built, *a priori*, with an educational approach, [8] we believe that this proposal of dialogue can be justified, especially, by the specificities of the philosophical project (a philosophy of the ethics act) that underlies the Circle's discussions. As Silva (2013, p.51, emphasis in the original) points out quite well,

> [t]he utterances are always connected to a human activity, which is performed by a subject who has a place in society as well as in history, that is to say, a subject who is always interacting with other subjects. For that reason, according to Bakhtin, the sign is not linguistic, but ideological, that is, it is filled with meanings which refer to a social, historical and cultural position. The term *ethics*,

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[5] Original text: "seus sentidos produzidos pela presença constitutiva da *intersubjetividade* [...] no intercâmbio verbal, ou seja, nas situações concretas de exercício da linguagem, dos atos de linguagem".

[6] VOLOŠINOV, V. N. *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. Translated by Ladislav Matejka and I. R. Tikunik. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973.

[7] Original text: "ideologicamente, então, o grupo de Bakhtin pensa a linguagem como um lugar de convergência de diferenças, em que a identidade se constrói pela convivência com a diversidade, com o outro".

[8] Except for the manuscript: BAKHTIN, M. M. Dialogic Origin and Dialogic Pedagogy of Grammar: Stylistics in Teaching Russian Language in Secondary school. *Journal of Russian and East European Psychology*, vol. 42, no. 6, Nov-Dec 2004. pp.12-49. Available at: <http://www.tandfonline.com /doi/abs/10.1080/10610405.2004.11059233>. Access on: June 1, 2015.

therefore, refers to the human being's life, not to what is right or wrong.[9]

Taking these arguments into account, we aim specifically at analysing the discursive practices of three student-teachers who attended the course *English Practicum I*, from a Portuguese-English teacher education programme (*Letras Português-Inglês*), about the film *Beyond the Blackboard*. In other words, our objective is to reflect on possible contributions of the activity with this feature film to critical language teacher education by considering, above all, the concept of ethics according to the Bakhtinian perspective.

This text is divided into the following parts: the introduction; the theoretical framework about the possible dialogue between critical language teacher education and Bakhtinian tenets; the description of how this study has been developed; the synopsis of *Beyond the Blackboard*; the analysis on the discursive practices of three student-teachers concerning the activity done with the feature film and its relationship with the English Practicum I; and our final remarks about this study.

1 Critical Language Teacher Education and Bakhtinian Tenets: Dialogues on the Construct *Ethics*

According to Pessoa (2011), research about critical language teacher education has been mainly based on Critical Applied Linguistics as well as on Critical Pedagogy. In this study, we give special emphasis on what Pennycook (2001, 2002), Moita Lopes (2006, 2012) and Celani (2009) state about critical teacher education and, above all, their conceptions on the term *ethics*. Besides this discussion, we make reference to some Bakhtinian principles which are examined by Sobral (2008; 2009; 2013), Faraco (2009), Geraldi (2010) and by Bakhtin himself (1984;[10] 1990;[11] 1993).

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[9] Original text: "[o]s enunciados estão sempre ligados a uma atividade humana, desempenhada por um sujeito que tem um lugar na sociedade e na história, ou seja, um sujeito que sempre está em interação com outros sujeitos. Por isso, o signo para Bakhtin não é linguístico, mas ideológico, ou seja, é carregado de sentidos que dizem respeito a uma posição social, histórica e cultural. O termo *ético*, então, refere-se à vida do homem, e não ao certo e ao errado".
[10] BAKHTIN, M. M. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Translated by Caryl Emerson. Minneapolis, MN: The University of Minnesota Press, 1984.
[11] BAKHTIN, M. M. Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity. In: BAKHTIN, M. M. *Art and Answerability:* Early Philosophical Essays. Transl .by Vadim Liapunov. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1990. pp.4-256.

Pennycook (2001) draws our attention to the fact that many studies in Applied Linguistics conceive the classrooms as neutral places. Nevertheless, the author highlights that whatever is said and done in the classroom can be socially and politically understood. However, he also argues that the classroom is not simply a reflection of what takes place beyond its walls. This same scholar agrees with Canagarajah (1993) on the issue that classrooms own a relative autonomy, that is, they are at the same time social and cultural domains within themselves and are interconnected to the outside world.

Pennycook (2001) supports the claim that it is necessary to understand how language classrooms are related to social, cultural, political and ideological factors, and besides that, it is vital that we go beyond the macro and micro dichotomies. The greatest challenge is to comprehend classroom contexts without reducing them to simple reflections from a social order and to avoid considering them as having free-will, since everything we say, do and think is affected by social relations of power. This way, the classroom is seen as a microcosm of a wider social and cultural world, which does not only reflect and reproduce this world, but it is also able to change it. Moreover, Pennycook (2001) strenuously defends that it is essential to realize that the classroom is also a social domain, in which power relations happen all the time and, for that reason, anything that goes through this context (from the material used to discourses produced) needs to be understood as social and cultural practices that have further implications. Thus, taking into consideration that the language classroom walls are permeable, what is done and said within this context has the potential to promote changes.

Based on Gee (1993) and Corson (1997), Pennycook suggests that the critical praxis should settle itself on a conception of ethics which is not constrained to a superficial viewpoint related to professional behavior. On the contrary, it should grasp the effects of what we say and do to other people. Consequently, this author puts forward three fundamental ethical principles: equal treatment, respect for persons, and benefit maximization. That means laying emphasis on an ethical perspective which values our responsibility towards the others and recognizes the fact that ethical decisions do not take place out of power relations.

As claimed by Pennycook (2001, pp.8-9), critical praxis needs

> to operate with some sort of vision of what is preferable. [...] Such preferred futures, however, need to be grounded in ethical arguments for why alternative possibilities may be better. For this reason, ethics has to become a key building block for critical applied linguistics.

The same scholar also states that "this is not about establishing a fixed and normative moral position but rather of seeking new frames of ethical thought and conduct, or as Kearney (1988)[12] puts it, 'the ethical demand to imagine *otherwise*' (p.364)" (PENNYCOOK, 2001, p.173, emphasis in the original).

The ethical stance defended by Pennycook (2001) appears to be consistent with the constitutive alterity principle of the subject discussed by Bakhtin and his Circle, which is clearly expressed in the following words: "I cannot manage without another, I cannot become myself without another; I must find myself in another by finding another in myself" (BAKHTIN, 1984, p.287).[13] Furthermore, the Bakhtinian philosophy conceives the lives of human beings "as a sequence of *ethical* acts, responsible and responsive" (SOBRAL, 2013, p.111, emphasis in the original).[14] As believed by Bakhtin (1993, p.18),

> [t]o understand an object is to understand my ought in relation to it (the attitude or position I ought to take in relation to it), that is, to understand it in relation to me myself in once-occurrent Being-as-event, and that pressupposes my answerable participation, and not an abstracting from myself. It is only from within my participation that Being can be understood as an event, but this moment of once-occurrent participation does not exist inside the content seen in abstraction from the act *qua* answerable deed.

These arguments imply that the subject – in their uniqueness – is responsible *for* something/somebody and acts responsively *to* something/somebody. As Sobral (2009, p.124, emphasis in the original) points out:

> Bakhtin emphasizes the agent's responsibility and participation. The term "responsibility" means answering *for* one's own acts, the act of

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[12] KEARNEY, R. *The Wake of Imagination.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988.
[13] See footnote 10.
[14] Original text: "como uma sequência de atos *éticos*, responsáveis e responsivos".

answering *for*, and responsiveness means answering *to* somebody or to something by being faithful to the Russian word '*otvetstvennost*', which designates the responsive aspect as well as the agent's responsibility for their own act. The "responsible' act involves the act content and its process, and in addition to them, the agent's valuation/evaluation towards their own act.[15]

Moita Lopes (2006), in turn, declares that the word *ethics* might be the most repeated one in the current literature regarding Social Sciences and the Humanities. That is why he claims that ethics and power are the new pillars of Applied Linguistics. In his opinion, "considering the existence of alternatives and meanings, it is legitimate to prefer some and refute others […]. However, the relative question to which meanings we should prefer still remains" (MOITA LOPES, 2006, p.103).[16] The author suggests that "the choice must be based on the exclusion of those meanings that cause human suffering or meanings that do damage to others" (MOITA LOPES, 2006, p.103).[17]

Moreover, Moita Lopes (2012, p.10) argues that

what the language teacher desires is the students' engagement in the discourse so that they can hopefully use it to make ethical choices about the social world which reflects the possibility of refuting any kind of human suffering.[18]

We believe that the same issues must be expected from teacher educators. As Celani (2009, p.11) highlights, "those who are responsible for teacher education need to be aware that the teacher must be educated to deal with ethical tensions as well as the challenges they are going to face throughout their career in teaching,"[19] which are frequently not few.

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[15] Original text: "Bakhtin destaca o caráter da responsabilidade e da participatividade do agente. O termo "responsabilidade" une o responder *pelos* próprios atos, o responder *por*, e a responsividade, o responder *a* alguém ou a alguma coisa, sendo fiel à palavra russa *otvetstvennost'*, que designa o aspecto responsivo e o da assunção de responsabilidade do agente pelo seu ato. O ato "responsável" envolve o conteúdo do ato, seu processo, e, unindo-os, a valoração/avaliação do agente com respeito a seu próprio ato".
[16] Original text: "tendo em vista alternativas e significados existentes, é legítimo preferir uns e refutar outros [...]. Contudo, permanece a questão relativa a quais significados devemos preferir".
[17] Original text: "a escolha deve se basear na exclusão de significados que causem sofrimento humano ou significados que façam mal aos outros".
[18] Original text: "o que se deseja como professor(a) de línguas é o engajamento do aluno no discurso, com a esperança que possa usá-lo para fazer escolhas éticas sobre o mundo social que espelhem a possibilidade de refutar qualquer tipo de sofrimento humano".
[19] Original text: "quem é responsável pela formação docente precisa conscientizar-se de que o professor deve ser educado para lidar com as tensões éticas e os desafios que encontrará ao longo da profissão".

Once again we can establish a relationship between the points discussed and the conception of Bakhtin respecting the ethical act, which implies taking full responsibility for the actions performed towards the other. For the Russian theoretician, "acting is always being committed, acting is always being interpellated by the other from the *ethical* point of view, acting is always being drawn to responsibility and responsiveness" (SOBRAL, 2008, p.232, emphasis in the original).[20] As maintained by Bakhtin (1993, p.40), "that which can be done by me can never be done by anyone else," since we are unique beings and unrepeatable. This way, Bakhtin defends the *non-alibi in Being* – "which underlies the concrete and once-occurrent ought of the answerably performed act" (BAKHTIN, 1993, p.40). According to Bakhtin (1993, p.42, emphasis in the original),

> [a]n answerable act or deed is precisely that act which is performed on the basis of an acknowledgment of my obligative (ought-to-be) uniqueness. It is this affirmation of my non-alibi in Being that constitutes the basis of my life being actually and compellently given *as well as* its being actually and compellently projected as something-yet-to-be-achieved.

The role of agency played by the subject is clearly noticeable. As stated by Faraco (2009, p.21, emphasis in the original), "by realising their uniqueness […], this subject cannot be indifferent to it; they are compelled to position themselves and to anwer it […]. Thus, living is acting and acting in relation to everything that is not *me*, but in relation to the *other*."[21] In the opinion of Geraldi (2010, p.289), by studying the Bakhtinian subject, "we are agentive: it is only when we act that we are what we are."[22]

Two other important Bakhtinian concepts which are related to this ethical commitment to the other are *exotopy* (when putting myself in the other's place) and *the excess of seeing* (when contemplating the other out of myself). Both concepts were at first discussed to cope with the author's care concerning aesthetics. However, these two Bakhtinian concepts do not only help us to understand the aesthetics creation, but also the human relations. Regarding this specific issue, Bakhtin (1990, p.56) states:

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[20] Original text: "agir é sempre comprometer-se, agir é sempre ser interpelado pelo outro do ponto de vista *ético*, agir é sempre ser chamado à responsabilidade e à responsividade".

[21] Original text: "ao se perceber único [...], este sujeito não pode ficar indiferente a esta unicidade; ele é compelido a se posicionar, a responder a ela [...]. Nesse sentido, viver é agir e agir em relação a tudo o que não é *eu*, em relação ao *outro*".

[22] Original text: "somos agentivos: somente agindo somos o que somos".

> [t]his ever-present excess of my seeing, knowing, and possessing in relation to any other human being is founded in the uniqueness and irreplaceability of my place in the world. For only I – the one-and-only-I – occupy in a given set of circumstances this particular place at this particular time; all other human beings are situated outside me.[23]

In other words, for Bakhtin, the conception of exotopy goes beyond the simple action of putting oneself in the other's place in order to try to understand the other's volitional sphere and their axiologies about the world that surrounds them; this very action also involves the need to feel what the other feels and at the same time acting in relation to them by showing that there is responsibility towards their existence. Taking these issues into account, understanding the other by means of their own view represents the necessary and indispensable excess of seeing required by all essentially unique and dialogical social interactions.

By considering all the discussions generated so far, we notice that some Bakhtinian tenets – ethical/responsible act, once-occurrent Being-as-event, non-alibi in Being, the excess of seeing, exotopy, among others – dialogue with the ethics viewpoint of Pennycook (2001) and Moita Lopes (2006), for both of them define ethics as a way to respect and to put oneself in the other's place. This is the conception of ethics which has grounded the research field of critical language teacher education. Based on these conceptions, we agree with Pennycook (2012) when it comes to the language teacher educator's main goal, which is to assist language teachers to develop a critical teaching practice. Thus, the practicum period, for example, must be extended so that it becomes *praxicum*,[24] "in which teacher-learners develop the continuous reflexive integration of thought, desire and action" (PENNYCOOK, 2012, p.138). In other words, the student-teachers who are in higher education need to learn how to problematize their conceptions as well as to realise the responsibility for their own acts and, consequently, to assume their roles as agents.

In the following section, we present our study in detail.

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[23] See footnote 11.

[24] This term was coined by the author, and it means the combination of the word "*practicum*" (when it refers to the internship taken by student-teachers at university) and the word "*praxis*" (when it means a critical reflective action).

2 Contextualisation

In this paper, we present part of an action-research (ELLIOTT, 1991), which problematizes pre-service critical language teacher education. This is a longitudinal study (2012-2017) conducted by the first author of this text in her own practice as a teacher educator in a Portuguese-English teacher education programme (*Letras Português-Inglês*) of a public university in the state of Goiás,[25] a Midwest state of Brazil. In 2012, she was the professor of the *English Practicum I* course of that institution.[26] At the beginning of the school year, the class was composed of 20 female students and three male students, but, throughout the year, three female students dropped out of the university.

As language teacher educators, we are responsible for problematizing with our students the ethical conduct discussed above. Therefore, throughout the school year, different activities were proposed in order to contribute to the students' critical education. In this paper, we focus our discussion on one of the resources used: the film *Beyond the Blackboard*. Student-teachers were asked to watch the film in advance,[27] and afterwards, it was discussed in class. At the end of the discussion, they answered the following written question (henceforth Q1): "Relate the film *Beyond the Blackboard* to your (future) practice as a language teacher." At that time, the student-teachers were about to begin their field experience, where they would observe English classes in public Junior High Schools. In the written exam of the second term, after having completed the observational period, they answered another question (henceforth Q2): "Relate the film *Beyond the Blackboard* to the English classes observational period. If you think you cannot relate them, justify your answer." In addition, student-teachers reflected on the relation between the film and their (future) teaching practices several times, even without the request of the teacher educator. Many of these reflections could not be registered because they occurred in informal meetings and conversations during class. However, there is a record from two sources: 1) the final reports produced by the

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[25] The research project is temporarily suspended because the coordinator professor is on leave (2014-2015).

[26] The course, with a schedule of 2 hours/week, is offered in the 3rd year of the undergraduate programme, which lasts for four years and is taught in the evening (part-time programme). Concurrently, students must carry out 100 hours off campus supervised teaching practice. This is the first field experience for most of them.

[27] They were asked to watch the film at home.

end of the supervised teaching practice; 2) a reflective session (audio recorded and transcribed afterward) on the last day of class, focusing on the evaluation of the course.

In this study, we attempt to understand the student-teachers' discursive practices about the film *Beyond the Blackboard* and its relation to critical teacher education and to Bakhtinian foundations. Therefore, we use the answers to the two proposed questions, the final reports (henceforth FR) and the transcription of the reflective session (henceforth RS) as empirical material. Due to the lengh of this text, we will focus our analyses on the discursive practices of three student-teachers: Sara, Karen and Tatiane (fictitious names). The three were chosen due to their recurrent remarks about the film on the four sources of empirical data. However, it does not mean that the the other student-teachers' voices are fully consonant with the three selected nor that they are not relevant. On the contrary, all of them brought important reflections, each one in their own way.

3 The Film: A Redemptive Narrative?

Inspired by a true story, *Beyond the Blackboard* portrays the young American teacher Stacey Bess confronting her own fears and insecurities as she struggles to gain attention and respect from her students, their parents, and school board administrators. When she gets her first teaching job, Stacey realizes it is not at all what she had expected. She is assigned to teach in the 'No Name School,' a space in a homeless shelter that is supposed to be a classroom. The children are all ages, many from broken families, thrown together in a "classroom" lacking essentials like desks and books. Even in the face of so many challenges, Stacey does not give up the job. On the opposite, she appears to be persevering, reflective and sensitive, and finds in her own students the strength to overcome the many obstacles placed in her way. Stacey may be regarded as a reference of a critical teacher, who understands her classroom as a microcosm of society, maintains an ethical stance of concern for the other, is sensitive to the suffering of others and manages to transform her context through her dialogic discourse and pedagogical praxis.

As Fischman and Sales (2010, p.14, emphasis in the original) explain, "when an individual teacher overcomes all systemic failures by the tenuous strength of his

conscience and by his heroic and 'organic' deeds," a *redemptive narrative* is created. According to the authors, these redemptive narratives provide the basic discursive structure of most characters of movies such as *To Sir with Love* and *Dangerous Minds*. In a way, *Beyond the Blackoard* might have traces of a redemptive narrative. However, a key feature of this film is that it is based on a true story, with the testimony of the real teacher at the end of the film, which, in our view, indicates much more commitment and desire for education and social justice for her real students than the all-powerful heroine teacher from the redemptive narratives (FISCHMAN; SALES, 2010).

Next, the empirical material is analysed and discussed.

4 *Beyond the Blackboard*: Language Student-Teachers' Discursive Practices

Bakhtin (1993, p.32) states that "the living word [...] does not know an object as something totally given: the mere fact that I have begun speaking about it means that I have already assumed a certain attitude toward it – not an indifferent attitude, but an interested-effective attitude." Based on this statement, we believe that the student-teachers' discursive practices (living words) about the film (object) and their own professional education can contribute to the debate on the critical role of language teachers.

Altogether, the analysis of the student-teachers' assertions points out that working with the film *Beyond the Blackoard* in the *English Practicum I* classes before the beginning of their field activities proved to be relevant. Working with the film made them aware of the difficulties they might face and also made them reflect on their possible attitude towards the obstacles. That is evident in Karen's discursive practices, repeated at three different times:

[1]   [...] *Teacher Stacey ended up being a mirror to us as language teachers* because we faced many barriers, including the "rejection" of the students towards this language. *It's up to us, as teacher Stacey*, to overcome the barriers and obstacles [...].[28] [29] [Q1]

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[28] The empirical material used in this study is originally in Brazilian Portuguese since the English Practicum I lessons are taught in that language due mainly to students' limited linguistic repertoire in English.

[2]   [...] Watching the film before we began our field activities was very useful because *in a way it has prepared us for this first contact with the school, so that it would not be so full of surprises* (...).[30] [Q2]

[3]   The film provided us a good basis for beginning the practicum activities because *the field school reality had much to do with the film*, both regarding the physical structure and the teaching staff, like the teacher previous to Stacey.[31] [RS]

Excerpts [1], [2] and [3] seem to resonate the words of Figueredo (2007, p.244, emphasis in the original): "comprehending the 'other,' which can often represent a so distant and strange form of human nature, is, perhaps, the way for us to understand our own nature."[32] When trying to understand Stacey's actions in that context, Karen ends up comprehending her role as agent in the search for changes in the context that she would also face during the practicum. Also, Stacey ended up becoming a critical teacher reference, who imagined *otherwise* (PENNYCOOK, 2001) and believed in each student's potential, although their socio-historical conditions contradicted their future possibilities. Stacey's ethical conduct has often served as an inspiration to the student-teachers during the practicum, making them believe that they would be able to overcome the difficulties encountered. The following excerpts, from different moments of Sara's reflection, give evidence of this analysis:

[4]   [...] I also see Stacey's flexibility [...], the teacher's sensitivity in noticing the students' needs and reflections (...). *These are the points that I hope to take to my practice: flexibility, sensitivity and reflection.*[33] [Q1]

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[29] Original text: "[...] A professora Stacey acabou se tornando um espelho para nós como professores de línguas, pois enfrentamos muitas barreiras, inclusive a "rejeição" por parte dos alunos com relação a esse idioma. Caberá a nós, assim como a professora Stacey, transpor as barreiras e vencer os obstáculos [...]".

[30] Original text: "[...] Ter assistido ao filme antes de iniciarmos nosso estágio foi de grande valia, pois de certa forma o filme nos preparou para que este primeiro contato com a escola não fosse tão carregado de surpresas [...]".

[31] Original text: "O filme deu uma base boa pra gente entrar no estágio porque a realidade da escola-campo que a gente estava tinha muito a ver com o filme, tanto em termo de estrutura como em termo de professores regentes também, como a professora anterior à Stacey".

[32] Original text: "compreender o 'outro', que muitas vezes pode representar uma forma tão distante e estranha da natureza humana, é, talvez, para nós, o caminho para entendermos nossa própria natureza".

[33] Original text: "[...] Vejo também a flexibilidade de Stacey [...], a sensibilidade da professora em perceber as necessidades dos alunos e as reflexões [...]. São esses os pontos que espero levar para minha prática: flexibilidade, sensibilidade e reflexão".

[5]   The film was a very important starting point for me [...]. *I think that seeing Stacey's route regarding her pedagogical practice was very interesting, it helped me a lot to reflect during my own practice.*[34] [RS]

[6]   [...] By knowing Stacey Bess and her students' story, through the film (based on a true story) *Beyond the Blackboard*, it was impossible not to relate it to our expectations, and later, to the experiences we have had during the practicum. [...] Stacey had a vision about what it meant to be a teacher and placed many expectations on the school for which she had just been hired to teach. But she was extremely surprised, disappointed and frustrated [...]. For a moment, she thought about quitting. But an aspect that has become essential in her practice, *and which has influenced me in mine*, was her ability to take a deep breath and reflect about the needs of those who composed her classroom. [...] *During the field experience, when I went through some difficulties in relation to the classes I was teaching, I remembered Stacey at various times. I got to watch the film a few more times to remember her route and seek in her reflections and attitudes during her pedagogical practice some "inspiration" to reflect on my own practice as well, and not to accommodate with the unpleasant situations that I was exposed to.*[35] [FR]

Sara's reflections seem to be in line with Bakhtin's argument about the importance of contemplating the other out of myself (*excess of seeing*), moving me from the *self* to the *other* (*exotopy*), but with the imperative need to return to my own self. As the Russian philosopher points out,

[t]he life situation of a suffering human being that is really experienced from within may prompt me to perform an ethical action, such as providing assistence, consolation, or cognitive reflection. But in any event my projection of myself into him must be followed by a *return* into myself, a *return* to my own place outside the suffering person, for only from this place can the material derived from my projecting myself into the other be rendered meaningful ethically,

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[34] Original text: "O filme pra mim foi um ponto de partida muito importante [...]. Acho que ver o percurso da Stacey em relação à prática pedagógica dela foi muito interessante, me ajudou muito a refletir durante a minha prática".

[35] Original text: "[...] Ao conhecer a história de Stacey Bess e seus alunos, através do filme (baseado em uma história real) "Além da sala de aula" (Beyond the Blackboard), foi impossível não relacioná-la às nossas expectativas, e mais tarde, às experiências que tivemos na realização do estágio. [...] Stacey tinha uma visão a respeito do que era ser professora e depositou inúmeras expectativas em relação à escola para a qual acabava de ser contratada para lecionar. Mas ficou extremamente surpresa, decepcionada e frustrada [...]. No primeiro instante, ela pensou em desistir. Mas um traço que se tornou essencial em sua prática, e que me influenciou na minha, foi sua capacidade de respirar fundo e refletir a respeito das necessidades daqueles que compunham sua sala de aula. [...] Durante a aplicação de meu projeto, quando passei por algumas dificuldades em relação às aulas que estava aplicando, me lembrei em vários momentos de Stacey. Cheguei a assistir algumas vezes mais ao filme, para relembrar o percurso percorrido por ela, e buscar nas suas reflexões e atitudes durante sua prática, alguma "inspiração" para refletir a minha prática também, e não me acomodar com as situações desagradáveis a que fui exposta".

cognitively, or aesthetically. If this return into myself did not actually take place, the pathological phenomenon of experiencing another's suffering as one's own would result – an infection with another's suffering, and nothing more (BAKHTIN, 1990, p.26, emphasis in the original).[36]

In contemplating Stacey's praxis, Sara puts herself in the protagonist's shoes and manages to bring to her own practice what she believes essential to her critical teaching: "flexibility, sensibility, and reflection." Sara not only experiences the other's pain, but also turns to herself, recovering her place as a (future) language teacher.

The film seems to have drawn the student-teachers' attention to the importance of their roles as (trans)formative agents in the lives of their (future) students, which corroborates the argument made by Pennycook (2001) that what happens in the microcosm of the classroom provokes destabilizations which go beyond that context. It also confirms the Bakhtinian argument of the non-alibi in Being, underlying the perception that each subject is unique and, as such, ethically responsible for their acts. Tatiane's discursive practices show a desire "to make a difference" and the recognition of her role as an agent:

[7] [...] I believe that regardless the place I am in, I'll be able to share knowledge and *make a difference in the classroom*.[37] [Q1]

[8] The film has inspired me a lot when choosing the groups that I will teach in the practicum, because the groups are very difficult, but they challenged me as a professional, and it contributes for *my wish to do the right thing, to make a difference in the students' lives, who, in my opinion, really need a professional who sees them not only as students, but also as people*.[38] [Q2]

[9] This film was a landmark in my personal and professional life, [...] it was like an inspiration for me, because *I had a different view of my students*. When I entered the classroom, I didn't see the students just as students who were there to learn, *I saw them as subjects who had the same things that I had, who had a story, an ideology, and a subjectivity that made each of them different*. I realize that behind each look, each

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[36] See footnote 11.

[37] Original text: "[...] Vou acreditar que independente do lugar que eu esteja, eu poderei compartilhar conhecimento e fazer a diferença em sala de aula".

[38] Original text: "O filme me inspirou bastante ao escolher as turmas que irei desenvolver o estágio, pois as turmas são muito difíceis, mas me desafiaram como profissional e isso corrobora para uma vontade de acertar, de fazer a diferença na vida daqueles/as alunos/as, que a meu ver, precisam muito de um/a profissional que os/as veja, além de alunos/as, mas como pessoas".

gesture, many things can be said, and *it's up to the transformative teacher to have this more sensitive view*.[39] [FR]

We agree with Vitanova's (2005) argument that the recognitition of human agency – of which teaching is an integral part –, given by the Bakhtinian concept of subject, creates expectations that changes are possible. As Bakhtin (1993, p.42) puts it, "[t]he ought becomes possible for the first time where there is an acknowledgement of the fact of a unique person's being from within that person; [...] where I assume answerability for my own uniqueness, for my own being." Excerpts [7], [8], and [9] indicate that Tatiane recognizes her *uniqueness* and, accordingly, her responsibility as a language teacher-subject.

We believe that the work with the film, coupled with other activities done along the school year that have not been mentioned here, aroused in the student-teachers the need to have an ethical commitment with the teaching profession, which requires respect, responsibility and concern for the other. The following excerpts, taken from Karen's, Sara's and Tatiane's final reports, illustrate that they showed a critical stance towards their Practicum experiences:

[10]   In the peer-teaching sessions, I was desperate when I saw the sample lessons that were given, when I saw students' indiscipline, the teacher's awkwardness when talking to the students. I was a bit shocked with all that and, after each peer-teaching session, I got more desperate, but it was in the peer-teaching sessions that I felt the need to be different. I perceived that those students needed to truly understand what English teaching was, that it wasn't just that "code decoding" they were used to. [...] The English Practicum made me have another perspective on my foreign language teacher education. In spite of my constraints [proficiency in the English language], I perceived how we can make a difference in people's lives.[40] [Karen]

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[39] Original text: "Esse filme foi um marco na minha vida pessoal e profissional, [...] foi como uma inspiração para mim, pois eu tive um olhar diferente sobre os/as meus/minhas alunos/as. Quando eu entrava em sala de aula, eu não via os/as alunos/as somente como estudantes, que estavam ali para aprender, eu os via como sujeitos que sentiam as mesmas coisas que eu, que tinham uma história, uma ideologia e uma subjetividade que os/as difere de cada um. Percebo que por trás de cada olhar, cada gesto, pode-se dizer muita coisa, e cabe ao professor/a transformador/a ter esse olhar mais sensível".

[40] Original text: "Na semirregência, me desesperei ao ver os modelos de aulas que eram dadas, ao ver a indisciplina dos alunos, a falta de jeito da professora ao conversar com os alunos. Fiquei um pouco chocada com aquilo tudo e a cada semirregência eu me desesperava mais, mas foi na semirregência que senti a necessidade de ser diferente. Percebi que aqueles alunos precisavam conhecer "realmente" o que era o ensino de língua inglesa, que não só aquela "decodificação de códigos" a que eles estavam habituados. [...] O estágio de língua inglesa me fez ter uma outra perspectiva quanto a minha formação em língua estrangeira. Apesar das minhas limitações [proficiência na língua inglesa], percebi o quanto podemos fazer a diferença na vida das pessoas".

[11]   I'm happy I've shown them not only different ways of learning a foreign language, but also a different attitude from other teachers that they (unfortunately!) are used to having at school. In fact, something that made me reflect a lot was the way these students are treated in the context where they live. In some moments I was surprised with the lack of organization and with the students' discipline in the school as a whole, and after observing and reflecting a bit more I got to the conclusion that the social context [material and cultural resources] where they live in should not be especially blamed for how they sometimes behave. The way they behave and treat people reflects how they are treated. It's no use expecting an irreproachable behavior from someone who is often used to being treated badly. It's no use requiring respect from someone who is not respected. I believe these students realize that they are not treated as they should. And the way they treat those around them is just a reflection of this. I could see it in my lesson observation sessions and later in my lessons, and everything was confirmed when, in the final questionnaire, (fortunately!) some students pointed out my "politeness" and "promptness" as positive aspects of my lessons. *At least regarding this aspect, I'm sure I made a difference for them on those days that I was with them in class.*[41] [Sara]

[12]   [...] *as long as I'm in class, I'll always have this critical and sensitive stance towards my student,* since what we sometimes expect is that someone looks at us and offers help. It's easy to judge the other without knowing what is happening inside each one. [...] *Being a teacher is working relentlessly for a more just world.*[42] [Tatiane]

This desire to make different, so common in the student-teachers' discourses, seems to come from the perceptions of what Bakhtin considers "*centripetal forces* (the ones which try to impose central verbaxiological over real plurilingualism) and *centrifugal forces* (the ones that continually erode the centralization tendencies, through

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[41] Original text: "Fico feliz por ter mostrado a eles não apenas algumas formas diferentes de se aprender uma LE [língua estrangeira], mas também uma postura diferente de outras que eles estão (infelizmente!) acostumados a ver dentro da escola entre os que estão ao redor deles. Algo que, a propósito, me fez refletir muito, é a forma como esses alunos são tratados no contexto em que vivem. Em alguns momentos me surpreendia com a falta de organização e disciplina dos alunos da escola em geral, e após observar e refletir um pouco mais, cheguei à conclusão de que o contexto social [recursos materiais e culturais] em que eles vivem não é, especificamente, o único culpado pela forma como eles se comportam, por vezes. O comportamento e tratamento que eles dão às pessoas é um reflexo da forma como eles são tratados. Não adianta esperar um comportamento exemplar de alguém tão acostumado a ser tratado com grosserias. Não adianta exigir respeito de quem não é respeitado. [...] Creio que esses alunos percebem que não são tratados como deveriam. E a forma como tratam os que os cercam é só um reflexo disso. Pude perceber isso durante minhas observações, mais tarde em minhas regências, e tudo me foi confirmado quando, no questionário final, (felizmente!) alguns alunos destacaram minha "educação" e "prestatividade" como pontos positivos durante as aulas. Pelo menos nesse ponto, tenho certeza absoluta de que fiz alguma diferença para eles durante os dias em que estivesse com eles em sala de aula".

[42] Original text: "[E]nquanto eu estiver em sala de aula, eu sempre terei este olhar crítico e sensível para o meu aluno, pois, às vezes, o que esperamos é que alguém nos olhe e nos ofereça ajuda. É muito fácil julgar o outro sem saber o que se passa ali, dentro de cada um. [...] Ser professor é trabalhar incansavelmente por um mundo mais justo".

several dialogical processes)" (FARACO, 2009, p.69-70, emphasis in the original).[43] Particularly, excerpts [10] and [11] indicate that the student-teachers perceived centripetal forces in that school context (*the teacher's awkwardness when talking to the students; someone who is often used to being treated badly*), that is, they perceived the predominance of the teacher's monologizing and imposing discourses when dealing with her students. These perceptions showed the desire to act otherwise (*The English Practicum made me have another perspective on my foreign language teacher education; (fortunately!) some students pointed out my "politeness" and "promptness" as positive aspects of my lessons*), and it means that they tried to adopt a dialogic and decentralizing attitude towards the students, common to centrifugal forces.

Finally, excerpt [12], as well as all the others analyzed here, reiterates what Ponzio (2010) considers the *Bakhtinian revolution*: to dislocate the *I* from the center and bring the *other* from the margin. As a matter of fact, Tatiane seems to realize the importance of bringing the student to the center, perceiving them as a socio-historically situated and culturally impregnated subject. In general, the student-teachers' discursive practices about the film *Beyond the Blackboard* and their experiences in the English Practicum I (both at the university and the field school) seem to indicate that they are engaged in the ethical commitment with the teaching profession, which involves a continuous reflexive integration of thought, desire, and action (PENNYCOOK, 2012).

Final Considerations

With this text, we can share a teaching experience with English teachers' educators that we believe to have been relevant. As already mentioned, the work done with the film *Beyond the Blackboard* in the course English Practicum I seems to have brought relevant problematizations in the student-teachers' critical education.

We know that a critical education of English teachers is not limited to what has been discussed here. On the contrary, there are many other aspects to be exploited. However, ethics is an essential aspect of critical perspectives in education. As Santos (2010, p.10) puts it:

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[43] Original text: "forças centrípetas (aquelas que buscam impor certa centralização verboaxiológica por sobre o plurilinguismo real) e forças centrífugas (aquelas que corroem continuamente as tendências centralizadoras, por meio de vários processos dialógicos)".

Education must be inseparable from ethics. Ethics is the required path to education. The aim is to educate new human beings, capable of assuming the responsibility for their world, but especially for the others. They should be conscious human beings, who have the real reflective practice that leads to the construction of a more just, cooperative, and human world. They should be teacher human beings, who interact with the world and with the others, knowing how to combine reality, truth, life, education, ethics and, above all, utopias. If education is not utopic, the world will continue with no advances or goals [...].[44]

The Bakhtinian philosophy of the ethical act suggests, according to Sobral (2008), a study of human actions in the social and historical world, which is susceptible to changes. Besides, ethics in the perspective of the Bakhtin Circle points especially to the importance of recognizing the role that the other exercises not only in the constitution of who we are, but also in the encouragement of attitudes concerning what affects us. Thus, we perceive that the dialogue between ethics discussed both in the area of critical language teacher education and in Bakhtinian studies becomes even stronger, since both defend the responsibility and responsiveness of our acts towards those who share the same social domains as us.

It is in this sense that we comprehend the positions assumed by the student-teachers who participated in this study, since their conceptions about teaching practice had significant destabilizations after they conversed with the universe of values represented by the characters of the film they watched. We believe that Sara's, Karen's and Tatiane's discursive practices point to the desire to develop actions that show not only a responsible and responsive stance, but, above all, an ethical stance regarding teaching.

As Vitanova (2005) states, it is in the uniqueness of Being that human agency takes place and, accordingly, the hope for the future. Thus, we cannot fail to believe in the potential of micro and isolated actions. If we can bring changes to our contexts, our classrooms, which may potentially multiply in our student-teachers' practices, we

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[44] Original text: "A educação deve ser ponto inseparável da ética. A ética é caminho obrigatório da educação. O intuito é formar seres humanos novos, capazes de assumirem a responsabilidade pelo seu mundo, mas principalmente pelos outros. Seres humanos conscientes, portadores da verdadeira prática refletida que leva à construção de um mundo mais justo, solidário e mais humano. Seres humanos docentes, que interajam com o mundo e com os outros, sabendo unir realidade, verdade, vida, educação, ética e, acima de tudo, utopias. Pois se a educação não for utópica, o mundo continuará igual, sem avanços e sem metas [...]".

believe that our effort will be worth. Considering the discussion made in this article, we end our reflections emphasizing the importance that more dialogues be made between the Bakhtinian and the critical language teacher education perspectives.

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