

# Plurilingualism and Critical Literacies in the Teaching of English in Higher Education

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This work aims at discussing the concept of critical and plurilingual English teaching within the context of the Interdisciplinary Higher Education Program recently implemented at the University of Campinas, Brazil. This program aims at widening possibilities for public students to have access to Higher Education. The teaching of English as a foreign language is part of the curriculum and one of the challenges faced was to design a language course that meant to be meaningful to students and able to develop the necessary knowledge and literacies for active citizenship as well. A discursive approach to language was adopted and, this way, Bakhtinian theories, re-contextualized to the educational field, support the claim for the development of critical literacy in the process. Along with the concept of multiliteracies, linked to the notion of speech genres, the idea of a plurilingual, plurivocal, and pluristylistic language teaching is theoretically discussed and briefly illustrated. The results show that such an approach successfully led to meaningful and critical practices in the language classroom in Higher Education.

*Keywords:* plurilingualism, speech genres, multiliteracies, English language teaching, Higher Education

## Introduction

The intense social transformations which we are living today, result of the arrival of new technologies and the complex processes of globalization, have been, in the past few decades, quite emphasized and problematized in the most varied areas of applied research, not only in Brazil, but also abroad. In the same way, the interest in investigating the impact of what has been called new technologies on the materialization of new epistemologies in the teaching of languages has continuously increased.

Expanding ideas from previous works regarding language education (Rocha, 2012a, 2012b, 2013) and taking into account social, cultural, and technological change, this paper aims at discussing possible designs for the teaching of English as a foreign language in Higher Education, which respect the discursive nature of language, acknowledge the new forms of meaning making and can, therefore, be seen as more appropriate to our contemporary times. This topic proves to be relevant once there has been considerable debate in the past years concerning the importance of problematizing language education and its relation with pluralism—in terms of languages, values, cultures, and semiotic resources. Such discussions are certainly important when it comes to approaching language teaching from a more critical perspective, which questions theoretical frameworks linked to ideas of unity and uniformity.

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The theoretical reflections developed here are linked to the disciplines of English language, which are part of the Interdisciplinary Higher Education Program (ProFIS, in Portuguese), implemented at the University of Campinas, Brazil, in 2011. ProFIS is a two-year-liberal-arts program that prepares graduate students from Public High School for university education,<sup>1</sup> covering languages, social and biological sciences, the humanities, and technology.

In this paper I support the idea that issues regarding language, culture, society, and power cannot be seen or dealt with separately. I therefore stand for a critical approach to English for academic purposes (Benesch, 2001) for I understand that global Higher Education has to be guided by principles that show concern for equity (Unterhalter & Carpentier, 2010) and the development of democratic consciousness (Abdi & Carr, 2013). I also believe that bakhtinian views and the notion of speech genres are valuable theoretical perspectives when it comes to language pedagogy and curriculum planning (Shields, 2007).

Based on such ideas and in order to discuss principles for teaching English in the named Program, I firstly discuss new media and a democratic approach to education. I then attempt to rescue the main characteristics of a critical and plurilingual approach to the teaching of the English within Higher Education (Rocha, 2013). I go on to discuss issues regarding new literacies and the notions of transculturality and regenring (English, 2011) for the sake of a language education oriented to social participation.

### **Critical Language Teaching and Its Relation With Plurilingualism, Transculturality, and Multiliteracies**

By problematizing society and education, acknowledging the complementary nature of their constitution, we distance ourselves from a clearly positivist paradigm, which imposes pedagogical practices oriented by the rigid hierarchy of human relations and the compartmentalization of knowledge. We also tend to question ways of thinking and knowing guided by notions of unity, homogenization, and discipline. From such a perspective, when we think of language teaching, we recognize the interrelatedness of language, culture, and power and stand for the principle that education, in general, should be oriented by the idea of plurality, diversity, and ethics in order to form critical and active citizens.

However, we well know that these words and ideas can evoke distinct feelings, values and discursive positioning, many of which, contradictorily, serve authoritative and oppressive forces. It is so because meanings are not fixed constructions, truth is not absolute, nor is there a single, pre-determined, dualistic-based reality, as positivist and rationalist thoughts would have it.

I understand, along with Barros (2000, p. 33), that other paradigms in language teaching will only be tangible so long as we come to see education and pedagogical practices as being “mechanisms of power”, that is, as “factories of subjectivity and machines to make one speak, think, and feel”. In other words, Education, and, therefore, also language teaching, is a political, ideological action, as Paulo Freire (2004) would claim. I thus think about the teaching of English in Higher Education as a culturally and historically situated process in which discourses as well as literacies are continuously constructed and reconstructed.

Literacies are here seen under a multimodal perspective and then broadly understood as social practices

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<sup>1</sup> For further information visit <http://www.prg.unicamp.br/profis/>

(Kalantzis & Cope, 2012; Rojo, 2009), which are actively mediated both by verbal and nonverbal language. They are likewise historically, culturally, and ideologically oriented. As Rojo (2009) points out, to actively engage in literacy practices nowadays, in and out of school, means developing a wide range of inter-dependent and inter-related literacies, such as visual, digital, multisemiotic, multicultural, among so many others, while questioning standardized values and institutionalized practices. A critical (trans)formative approach to language teaching is clearly important from such points of view and questioning relations of power is this way also fundamental (Norton & Toohey, 2001).

Following similar paths, Cope and Kalantzis (2000) claim that critical pedagogies, like the one they name pedagogy of multiliteracies, should be attentive to the multiple semiotic resources involved in meaning making today, as well as to the cultural and linguistic plurality that has always made part of our ways of communicating and relating to others. The named authors also point to the shrinking or fading boundaries between institutionalized forms of knowledge and language practices and our everyday lives, calling our attention to the ever growing importance of human agency in (re)shaping ways of knowing and being in the world in order to critically redesign social futures.

I then see critical English for academic purposes or in Higher Education as a process that “[...] engages students in the types of activities they are asked to carry out in academic classes while encouraging them to questions and, in some cases, transform those activities as well as the conditions from which they arose” (Benesch, 2001, p. xv).

Teaching languages within university contexts should be about helping students build knowledge in a multi-literate, critical, responsible, and collaborative way, encouraging them to both “increase their participation in the workplace, civic life and other areas” (Benesch, 2001, p. xv), while also questioning the values which social practices and relations are based upon.

As I see it, a critical approach to language teaching in Higher Education takes into account a multiliteracies perspective to social practices and knowledge construction and, therefore, attempts to go beyond restrictive views that neglect oral language and other modes of meaning making in favor of written language, and that sees skills in a similarly segmented and autonomous way.

Such a critical approach is also about promoting dialogue, from a bakhtinian point of view, between modes and varied forms of meaning making, as well as between socially validated, institutionalized practices and local, overlooked discourses and literacies. Respecting students’ social and cultural backgrounds, the educational process is this way aimed at encouraging them to experience other social languages, values and ways of seeing the world and relating to others.

This critical approach also implies a commitment regarding creating possibilities for students to engage in an active process of (re)appropriation of discourses, enabling them to express themselves in a singular way and to transform themselves and reality around them as they act and construct meaning and knowledge in a collaborative way.

When it comes to critical language teaching, I also share with Bazerman (2004) the idea that an enhanced type of agency is necessary, so that individuals can, while engaging in social practices, more incisively question their basis and functioning, from a more ecological, pluralistic, and transformative point of view. According to Vitanova (2005), this process of building critical agency has to do with the development of an authorial literacy,

which makes redesigning practices possible, once it allows both mobility and a surplus of vision to take place. Such aspects are necessary for us to see and value things from different perspectives and in different ways.

As they mediate human relations in current times, new technologies and media are important elements to take into account as far as discourse and social practices redesigning processes are concerned. I thus believe they should likewise be subject to critical thinking when it comes to language teaching. By attempting to break with generalizing, monolithic and essentialist perspectives, we can see that, more than mere resources, the new technologies, ideologically impregnated, continuously reorganize contexts of communication, redefining spaces and means of social participation.

Under bakhtinian perspectives, I would say they reflect and refract the world, since they serve as vehicles for representations and values in a specific society, at the same time that they can mediate transformation. They are, therefore, both social processes and products, culturally and ideologically loaded.

In contemporary times, along with other symbolic systems, media take on a central role in our constitution “as subjects, individuals and citizens, with distinct personalities, desires, and subjectivities” (Setton, 2010, p. 13). Understanding the new media as agents of socialization and (re)producers of culture implies assuming that they mobilize meanings and values which orient the relations between groups in a given society; at the same time they create a relation of complementarity and rupture with other socializing instances, making the coexistence and reproduction of shared and also divergent discourses and practices possible.

It is fair to say that the new technologies today seem to impose a new order of participatory culture (Jenkins, 2009), taking us from mere consumers to producers of information and knowledge. In this perspective, engaging in literacy practices nowadays has to do with one’s involvement in groups or communities, realized by means of collaboration and networks. In this respect, I understand that we should be cautious in seeing literacies, including digital ones, as mere tools which should be “dominated”, in order for us to succeed in participating more fully and appropriately in society today.

As I see it, this instrumentalist view is coherent with positivist and neoliberal discourses, since it fails to see that literacies and technologies are socially, culturally, and ideologically determined and that they are shaped by discourses at the same time they shape them.

For this reason, I accompany Setton (2010, p. 14) in reinforcing the strong link between the notions of education, media, and socialization. I therefore see language teaching as an educational process aimed at creating spaces for the confrontation of ideas, values, and cultural representations, which makes processes of re-signification of hegemonic discourses feasible and of critical redesign of knowledge and literacy practices possible.

In other words, I defend critical language teaching, within Higher Education or any other settings, as a never-ending exercise in mobility, in dislocation. I see it as a continuous process of rupture and reconstruction of subjectivity, discourses, and practices, based upon the idea of a more equalitarian way of relating to people and acting in the world. This is all about experiencing the strengthening of critical literacy, which, under Paulo Freire’s terms, can be broadly defined as a process of living in and with the world, reinterpreting verbal and nonverbal texts, practices, the other, ourselves (Menezes de Souza, 2011). It is worth pointing out that the concept which prevails in such a process is that of “polyphonic subjectivity”, defended by Santaella (2010, p. 283), who acknowledges its multiform, non-centered, and unstable nature.

Recognizing the hybrid nature of social practices, mediated by varied modes of language and media, Setton (2010) shows us that the idea of culture, including that of the media, is of central importance. From Setton's point of view, the concept should not be reduced to a set of expressions of social values or of behavioral manifestations, objects, moral symbols, or material things attributed to belong to certain groups within society. It should rather be seen as a historically situated process that results mainly from differences in meaning making and use of various symbolic systems within the most diverse social practices individuals may engage in.

Therefore, I understand that, when guided by critical principles and when concerned with social participation, language teaching should also be aimed at plurilingual and transcultural practices, by which a wide range of literacies (critical, digital, authoring, among many others) can be actively developed. Such literacies should not be looked at as separate elements, though, but as interrelated practices.

The idea of a plurilingual language teaching is based upon the bakhtinian notion of plurilingualism. In general terms, the concept refers to the way different voices and social languages can be orchestrated in literary works. Together with heteroglossia, it is deeply related to the dialogic nature of language and, therefore, linked to the presence of otherness in one's inner self, discourses and voices. When redirected from novel to educational settings, plurilingualism implies recognizing each and every way of expressing meaning, each and every social language or each and every way of thinking and doing things in the world as equally important and valid.

This way, looking at educational processes and practices through the lenses of plurilingualism involves questioning stereotypical and essentializing thinking concerning language and (media) culture, at the same time we work on knowledge construction and problematize what is considered valid knowledge and why that is so.

With regard to the concept of transculturality, based on Rojo (2009), I should say that it acknowledges the fluid, heterogeneous and historically based nature of what is seen as culture. The concept of transculturality also involves the idea of entanglement of canonic, mass, and popular cultures, highlighting the relation of intermixing and interdependence among them.

Critical, plurilingual, and transcultural language teaching, consequently, seek to promote leaning spaces which allow for negotiation of meaning as well as for interpenetration of (social) languages, discourses, and cultures. These are called third spaces by Kostogriz (2005) and have to do with crossing boundaries, in every possible direction, so that other hybrid spaces can be created and other discourses and identities experienced.

In this perspective, the idea of glocality, as defined by Robertson (1995) and later revisited by Kumaravadivelu (2006), takes on a central role. Transcultural practices seek to promote intertwining between the global and the local, in a dynamic and open way, without seeing them as geographical elements or understanding them through a dualist prism. Aligned with this theoretical framework, Pennycook (2012, p. 237) defends the concept of "deep locality". Such a concept is understood as active and selective processes of (re)construction of locality, in which the critical agency of subjects in the discourse is maximized in favor of a reflexive, transformative process of appropriation of discourses and global practices.

Language teaching, like educating and living, is thus a political act. Given this, the idea of teaching languages for citizenship or for democratic awareness gains ground (Dei, 2013). From a plurilingual and transcultural view, the notion of citizenship which prevails is the one distanced from uniformity to evoke meanings linked to transgressive movements of revindication and struggle (Oliveira, 2006).

Likewise, in the midst of the polysemy that marks the term democracy, I see it as an active and complex

process, which is historically constituted within the tension between stratifying and transgressing discourses. I share with Dei (2013, p. 58) the idea that rethinking democratic (language) education implies seeking discursive positioning and going beyond “conventional neoliberal assumptions about fairness and social justice”.

Critical, plurilingual, and transcultural language teaching is by nature concerned with social participation and democratic consciousness. It is, therefore, committed to placing “greater emphasis on questions of power, identity, voice and representation in schooling” (Dei, 2013, p. 58), as well out of it, while it is also worried about questioning the ideas of citizenship and democracy themselves, interrogating the conditions upon which such terms and related discourses, values, literacies, and practices are based.

In sum, from my point of view, plurilingualism, transculturality, and critical literacy are not elements which should be “added” to the language teaching process. Instead, they should be understood as the lenses through which we see and think about the world, language, (media) culture, as well as education and its different settings, foci, and contexts.

Based upon this theoretical framework, it seems correct to state that critical and democratic language education, which is always concerned with the relation between language, knowledge, power, and society, should concern itself with the development of a wide range of (new) literacies, making it possible for which the student and citizen to act in the world, questioning values and social standards, as well as the bases upon which they exist.

As defended by Monte Mór (2011) and Benesch (2001), it becomes fundamental that the process of teaching and learning of languages for specific purposes should be rethought and redesigned. It should aim at widening the critical action of the student in the world, promoting the crossing of boundaries between the spheres of the school and of work, while also going beyond these, thus creating an interface between the public and the private, between knowledge, statements and actions which circulate in different spaces, allowing plurilingualism to emerge.

For Benesch (2001, pp. xvii-xviii), critical language teaching within Higher Education involves understanding it as an active process of interrelating “an analysis of needs and an analysis of rights”. This is due to the fact that the education promoted on the basis of such critical and plurilingual perspective encourages the engagement of students in activities which are both typical of the academic context and also concerned with promoting a questioning and authorial attitude, so that students are able to actively engage in academic practices, recreating instead of merely repeating them.

Such approach to language teaching in Higher Education also breaks with rigid boundaries between verbal and nonverbal language, as well as between texts (oral, written, or multimodal) typically related to the academic sphere and other which are constitutive of others. The aim of a critical approach to languages in this setting is to promote opportunities for a wide range of literacy practices to take place, at the same time identities, discourses, and other literacies can be (re)constructed based upon an ethical and ecological perspective.

### **Multiliteracies and Speech Genres in Critical Language Teaching**

According to bakhtinian premises, the areas of human activity are diverse and so are the nature and forms of language use involved by them. Social interactions occur within spheres of communication and are mediated by language, which, in turn, is realized by means of individual concrete utterances named speech genres (Bakhtin, 1986). According to this author, it is impossible to act, that is to speak or write, outside of such genres, which

are acquired by us as we engage in human activity.

These utterances are composed of specific dimensions known as thematic content, style, and composition structure. It is the speaker's evaluative attitude towards his subject when making utterances (oral or written), however, that determines his lexical, grammatical, and compositional choices. Such specifications reveal the emphasis on the ideological or axiological nature of language according to bakhtinian views

When approaching the novel, Bakhtin (1981) also emphasizes the discursive and social nature of any type of language realization and argues that it is more than a literary manifestation. To this author, the novel is also to be seen as a linguistic event of plurivocal, plurilinguistic, and pluristylistic nature. Its plurilinguistic dimension allows us to see the novel as a diversity of languages or social speech types and individual voices, that is, ideologically oriented points of views. The plurivocal aspect, in its turn, is linked to the idea of polyphony. This way, it refers to a multiplicity of voices that reveal distinct axiological perspectives. Last but not least, the pluristylistic domain relates to the multiple ways by which such multiplicity of languages and voices can be orchestrated in the novel.

Likewise, the language teaching which I call plurilingual, from the point of view of bakhtinian theorization (Bakhtin, 1988), re-contextualized for the educational field (Shields, 2007), in its wide range of settings, proves to be a plurilinguistic, plurivocal, and pluristylistic phenomenon.

In a quite simplified way, I understand its plurilinguistic nature as an encounter, not always harmonic, of many voices, (social) languages, discourses, cultures, and multiliteracies. This intertwining is necessarily characterized as also plurivocal, since it incorporates a variety of conflictive voices. In its turn, such a polyphonic range of ideological positions, along with the interwoven elements of the plurilinguistic domain, can be purposefully organized in various different ways or styles to materialize or redesign social practices.

Quite distant from meaning a set of multiple self-sufficient elements, the plurilinguistic, plurivocalic, and pluristylistic domains of a critical language education process show an inter-mixing and interrelated nature. From a critical, transcultural, and plurilingual perspective, the dialogic and discursive nature of language is always recognized. It is therefore not possible to abstract educational or linguistic practices from their conditions of production. The bakhtinian notion of speech genres is central to this process, since they are here understood as organizers of social activities and consequently of educational practices as well.

As previously stated, according to Bakhtin (1986), human activity is inextricably related to the use of language. There is a wide range of spheres of communication within which utterances, of relative stability, circulate. Bakhtin (1986, p. 60) specifically terms such utterances "speech genres" and claims that they "reflect the specific conditions and goals of each such area" and that their "wealth and diversity are boundless".

Bazerman (2004, 2005) defends that genres are ways of being in the world and that they should be organized, when it comes to educational processes, in terms of systems of activities. As I see it, genres can then be understood as the organizers of the plurilingualism in the teaching of English within Higher Education.

Under a plurilingual, plurivocal, and pluristylistic approach, genres can be powerful means by which we can have access to the repertoires, experiences, and multiliteracies practices that are familiar to students and by which we can expand and transform them, as claimed by Bazerman (2006). As it occurs within a multiplicity of social activities that organize human relations, language classes can be constituted by a wide range of activity systems, in which an equally boundless diversity of genres and discourses circulates. When we engage in these diversified

activities, a wide range of socially constructed knowledge can be developed, which shows the intrinsic relations between human activity, genres, and multiliteracies.

Thinking didactic processes from such a perspective means taking into account the constitutive elements of the speech genres themselves, that is, their thematic, compositional, and stylistic domains. Themes, from a bakhtinian perspective applied to language education, involve thematic content deeply articulated to transversality, understood as an interwoven way of crossing disciplinary borders and problematize social problems as some kind of specific knowledge is being constructed. Such content is guided to problematize the social and cultural basis of human relations within society by means of the social activities and genres which will be orchestrated in educational practices.

In their turn, such social activities and genres integrate what can be called the compositional domain of the educational structure, when it is thought from a bakhtinian point of view. In this didactic recontextualization (Marandino, 2003) of bakhtinian theories, the stylistic domain has to do with the way different voices, social languages, languages and modes, as well as varied activity systems and genres are (re)arranged to allow educational practices to take place.

I believe these ideas can be easily articulated to theories regarding multiliteracies. As shown in Figure 1, expanded from previous theorizations on this issue (Rocha, 2012a), the thematic, compositional, and stylistic domains can be linked to the three categories thought by Kalantzis and Cope (2012) when they theorize about the Multiliteracies Pedagogy: the *why*, the *what*, and the *how* of such literacies within educational processes and practices.

According to Kalantzis and Cope (2012), the *why* of multiliteracies are related to ontological and epistemological views and their connection with multiliteracies. It is here linked to the thematic domain. The *what* of multiliteracies involves the material basis of pedagogic practices, as far as languages and modes are concerned. This way, it can be linked to the compositional domain. Last but not least, the *how* has to do with the way multiliteracies can be approached regarding teaching and learning and it can therefore be aligned with the stylistic domain.

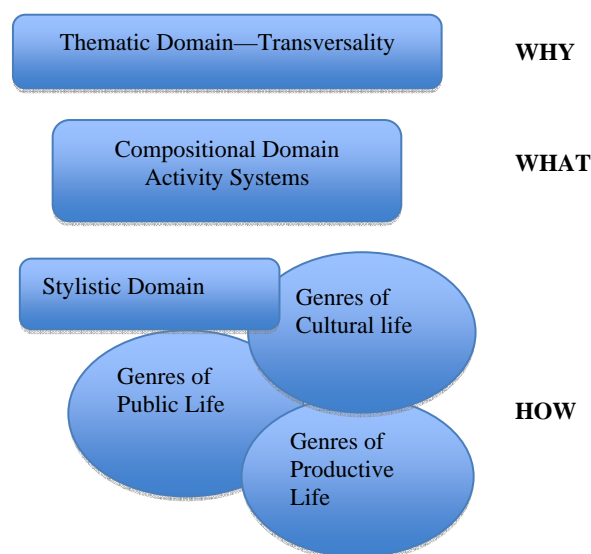


Figure 1. Structural basis for didactic practices, multiliteracies, and speech genres.

It is within this social-educational organization that plurilingual, plurivocal, and pluristylistic and language teaching continues in search for the construction of multiliteracies capable of critically strengthening the potential of social and discursive engagement of the student, redesigning spaces for action and widening critical potential of agency. Based on Bazerman (2004, 2005), I see that the notion of agency involves the ability to problematize and understand the complex social-discursive functioning of texts (oral, written, and multimodal ones).

I also align the notion of agency to one's creative capacity of redesigning (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000), which acknowledges the importance of enhancing the possibilities of active response to utterances and discourses within social and educational practices. When it comes to critical language teaching it proves to be vital to promote, in centrifugal movements, the circulation of less oppressive discourses so that transformative views and voices can become internally persuasive. This way, language teaching based upon a plurilingual, plurivocal, and pluristylistic approach can take place.

### **The Plurilingual and Critical Approach to Language Teaching: Further Theoretical and Practical Considerations**

The invitation to dislocation and the reconfiguration of discourses and practices, typical of critical and plurilingual language teaching opens possibilities for processes of intertextuality and interdiscursivity to happen. For educational purposes intertextuality can be seen as the mixing of oral, written, and multimodal texts, while interdiscursivity as the entangling of discourses, within the thematic domain.

Practices guided by these ideas in the field of language education have a recognized value and impact in terms of their potential regarding the development of (re)designing discourses as well as multiliteracies practices. Language teaching guided by such principles implies, in general, the plurilingual, polyphonic, and pluristylistic encounter between texts of different social spheres, making possible the reconfiguration (also of an esthetic order) of views and social practices.

I intend to go on to illustrate such ideas and topics by briefly analyzing some practical instances related to the didactic work developed in ProFIS. I will do so after the notion of agency is discussed, once it is also a relevant aspect to be taken into account as far as critical language teaching is concerned.

According to Bazerman (2004), the development of this intertextual awareness maximizes the potential of human agency. It is so because it inserts literate practices into a richer and wider context, significantly, increasing the capacities of the student in moving between diverse texts in specific contexts and for specific purposes, modifying them according to their intentions and needs.

For Bazerman (2004, p. 64), therefore, an intertextual and rhetoric approach as far as is concerned means the redesigning of texts (written, oral, and multimodal) means "creating authorship, agency, and other potential texts". It means that the process of meaning making and knowledge construction, within school borders, goes far beyond the fragmented and autonomous aim of developing abilities or capacities to ensure such texts can be created and put to use in the school setting or in society as a whole.

Bazerman (2004) goes on to claim that through such an approach we can help students to write themselves, as well as for writing their interests in the world of language. Interpreting such claims from a plurilinguistic, plurivocalic, and pluristylistic point of view helps me to see that an exercise of enhanced agency would involve

making it possible for students to create multimodal narratives of self. It is so because I consider that the critical approach discussed here is potentially capable of taking students to exercise their capacity of agency at the same time they can reflect upon their identities, social positions, and subjectivity.

Regarding practical examples, I believe we can see aspects related to plurilinguistic domain of this critical approach to language teaching in a ProFIS student's piece of work, which I will now discuss. It is firstly important to point out that the image is intentionally blurred so that the student's privacy can be preserved.

The task from which such work was developed was suggested in the English language classes of ProFIS in 2012. Students should reflect upon their identity constitution, based upon their life histories, both inside and outside university. This topic can be said to be a transversal theme, since it has to do with people's identities in the world.

Such a topic is socially relevant for the educational context, as well, for ProFIS students were going through a moment of adaptation regarding Higher Education and the university environment. When seen and dealt with within language classes, such a moment called for discussion and reflection so that there could be a redesigning process of re-signification of ways of seeing and being at university. It therefore involved redesigning discourses, identities, subjectivities as it is claimed in a critical and plurilingual approach to language teaching oriented to social participation.

One of the main objectives of the task was to invite students to say who they were, that is, to build their narratives of self to people in the university community. The communicative purpose established was to introduce oneself and the related speech genre was what we can call a personal presentation. The texts to be produced by students would circulate in blogs and should this way involve, in terms of the compositional and stylistic domains, the crossing of boundaries between oral, written, and multimodal modes and languages.



Figure 2. Leaflet produced by a student of ProFIS (2011/2012).

As shown in Figure 2, a student from the group produced a leaflet in order to tell people who she was. She chose to tell her story as if she were the lead character of a movie. The narrative shows a plurilinguistic tone, once it combines different modes to compose meaning. One could say that in terms of the compositional content and

style, the created folder tends to be a reproduction of the genre (cinema leaflet) rather than its modification or recreation. On the other hand, it is fair to say that choosing to tell people who you are via a movie leaflet can also be seen as an invitation to dislocation, to making other discourses, identities, and subjectivities circulate under different conditions of production.

When the student rearranges what was meant to belong to everyday, private life (oral self-presentation) to the social sphere of entertainment (cinema leaflet) new meanings start to rise, which opens space for intertextual and interdiscursive meaning-making relations to occur and for enhanced agency to be built. As also analyzed by Chen (2013, p. 145), in his studies about social networks and the teaching of languages, I believe that a critical and plurilingual approach can encourage students to make “deliberate choices and appropriations in terms of language and discourse, social roles and projections of beliefs and cultural values”.

If we analyze another piece of work done by another student, we will notice some traces of a plurivocalic perspective. The modes and discourses used by the students in order to compose meaning and say who she was reveal some critical appeal by means of the interdiscursive and intertextual relations established between them. Elements of parody, brought to scene because of the image involving the painting “The scream”, originally by Edvard Munch, intensify the transgressive tone of the utterance “being different is cool” (see Figure 3), which moves towards less authoritative discourses.

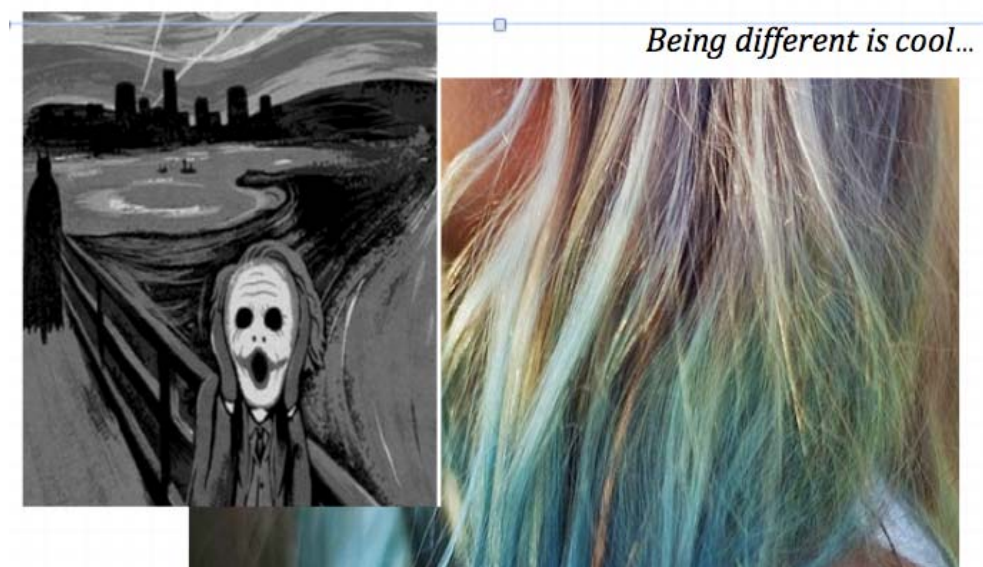


Figure 3. Work produced by a student of ProFIS (2011/2012).

From this perspective, the transgressive nature of an education with plurivocalic bases can also be found in actions which break with linear and conventionally standardized narratives, by means of which critical and authorial literacy can be made present, as well as subjectivity can be re-dimensioned.

As stated by Vasquez, Harst, and Albers (2010), critical educational practices, here also seen as plurilinguistic, plurivocalic, and pluristylistic, should involve an active work of interpretation, that is, should enable students to engage in an active process of re-construction of the (oral, written, or multimodal text), recognizing the explicit and implicit, observing representations, values and the social purposes and functioning of such texts within society.

Guided by these ideas, culture jamming was brought to ProFIS English classes (see Figure 4) and many texts, as the ones shown below, extracted from the Internet, were discussed, aiming at strengthening critical literacies by means of allowing them to be aware of polyphonic utterances.



Figure 4. Culture jamming used in ProFIS classes.

As already stated, plurilingual and critical language teaching should prepare students to deal with different texts or genres, enabling them to actively redesign them, in terms of discourses, forms, and styles, re-orchestrating a multiplicity of languages and voices. I believe that the transgressive tone of such practices can be linked to the bakhtinian concept of carnival.

As Bakhtin (1981) shows us, carnival can be seen as a cosmic view that subverts, even if temporarily, social order, that is, all which is officially considered to be authoritative and oppressive. According to Foust (2010), the bakhtinian carnival should be seen as a practice of transgression, which effectively threatens the *status quo*, since it opens new possibilities for the presence of new identities and other discourses. Therefore, I understand that a critical approach to language teaching should also be a matter of allowing carnival to take place.

In her turn, Lillis (2011) discusses the process of textual and ideological juxtaposition as one possibility for strengthening the dialogic nature of critical practices within Higher Education. By discussing the reconfiguration of written academic practices, English (2011) turns to articulate notions of redesigning academic genres with ideas of multimodality and discourse.

By reorganizing genres as far as their theme, compositional content, and style are concerned she defends a process of redesigning practices called *regenring*. In a rather simplified way, we can say that English (2011) links *regenring* to the re-orchestration of ways of producing and consuming texts within university. As I see it, we can relate such ideas with the plurilingual and critical approach discussed in this paper.

Furthermore, I believe that cyberspace is a means of strengthening critical and plurilingual language teaching practices. As stated by Santaella (2010), this is a space of transmutation, of the collective, and, thus, an invitation to dislocation. Educational practices involving the cyberspace can thus intensify the development of plurilinguistic, plurivocalic, and pluristylistic language teaching. Among other propositions, I see collaborative

written projects on the web as a rich possibility of developing meaningful practices in this direction. It is worth pointing out that a project of this sort was developed in the English classes of ProFIS and will be here briefly described.

Thematically speaking, the idea was to problematize the university in times of globalization and internationalization and the impacts of such processes on the lives of students. In order to discuss such ideas and to share experiences and thoughts about this topic with other people worldwide, students were supposed to produce an online newspaper, whose sections could, one way or another, present articles, interviews and other kind of texts and reports related to such theme.

As an attempt to make polyphony arise more evidently, interaction between distinct groups of students, in terms of area and courses, were settled. The online newspaper was then supposed to be written collaboratively between two different groups of students.

One group was composed of some of those participating in ProFIS and the other was a group of undergraduate students attending English classes at the Language Teaching Center of the University of Campinas. Altogether the online newspaper counted on 15 students.

The idea of this articulation between different groups was based on the attempt of promoting the possibility of collaborative engagement between groups of students who did not meet in classes. This way, discussions and decisions about the production of the online newspaper would have to happen throughout social or digital media, such as discussion forums, Facebook, and other possibilities. This later proved to be very productive in terms of development of a wide range of literacies, which leads me to think as rich and positive the potential of the virtual world regarding the promotion of affinity spaces and the re-construction of knowledge and discourses.

Guided by the thoughts of Vasquez et al. (2010, p. 267), one of the objectives of the project was also to analyze whether the agentive potential of the students would be strengthened as they engaged in the “creation of multimodal texts which could be accessed publicly around the world”, showing this process as a means of critical and social action related to cyberspace.

At the end of the semester, it was possible to have a publication entitled *The Loudspeakers* (<http://worldenglishvoices.wix.com/newspaper>), with later projects following the one outlined here. In general, these practices proved to be rich experiences through which plurilinguistic, plurivocal, and pluristylistic aspects could be revealed.

## Conclusion

All in all and based on what has been discussed in this paper, I understand that such an approach to language teaching within Higher Education and other educational settings can help meet the demands for other forms of production and consumption of texts and media in the university environment (Lea & Jones, 2010; Selwyn, 2011). It is thus, from this critical and plurilingual perspective, that I see language teaching become a rich and productive exercise of mobility and of multiliteracies development towards social participation as a means of transgression.

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