

Between Conformity and Critique. Developing “Activism” and Active Citizenship: Dangerous Pedagogies?

Entre a Conformidade e a Crítica. Desenvolvendo “Ativismo” e Cidadania Ativa: Pedagogias Arriscadas?

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Abstract: The authors discuss the concept of active/engaged citizenship from both Brazilian and Canadian perspectives and relate their discussion specifically to Language Teacher Education (LTE). The text, thus, centers on research, practices and theories on the issue, considering the socio-political histories of education and language teaching through which the development of such modes of citizenship reveal their relevance in the respective countries. Believing that ‘engaged citizenship’ can greatly contribute to programs that seek to foster critical literacies, the authors examine the potential for citizenship practices to promote social participation and ‘critical making’ in second/foreign language settings. As the authors argue, active citizenship work is always potentially “dangerous” (cf. Foucault)—a contradictory and delicate balance between conformity and critique when actualized in classroom settings. Specific examples from the classroom will be discussed and related to theory. Conformity is potentially realized when citizenship practices celebrate neoliberal approaches to volunteerism and self-reliance. Critique potentially arises when critical awareness of the state’s complicity in neoliberal values are integrated in teachers’ practices. In the former case, students are encouraged to affirm a reduced role for the state by valorizing volunteerism and self-reliance, while in the latter, they develop critical awareness of the state’s complicity in beliefs that affirm neoliberal values of self-reliance and reduced state responsibilities.

Keywords: active citizenship; critical education; teacher education; language teaching

Resumo: Os autores discutem o conceito de cidadania ativa/engajada a partir das perspectivas brasileira e canadense e relacionam essa discussão especificamente à formação de professores de línguas. Dessa forma, o texto concentra-se em pesquisa, prática e teorias sobre o tema, levando em conta as histórias sóciopolíticas da Educação e do ensino de línguas, por meio das quais o desenvolvimento dessas modalidades de cidadania revelam as suas relevâncias nos respectivos países. Ao defender que a noção de ‘cidadania engajada’ traz grandes contribuições aos programas que buscam adotar letramentos críticos, os autores avaliam o potencial das práticas dessa visão de cidadania para a promoção de participação social e do ‘fazer crítico’ em contextos de línguas estrangeiras/segunda língua. De acordo com os argumentos dos autores, cidadania ativa é sempre potencialmente ‘perigosa’ (ref. Foucault) — um equilíbrio contraditório e delicado entre conformidade e crítica em contextos de sala de aula. Exemplos específicos de sala de aula são discutidos e relacionados à teoria neste artigo. O potencial da conformidade é compreendido quando as práticas de cidadania respondem a abordagens neoliberais no desenvolvimento de voluntarismo e autoconfiança. Nessas, embora incentivados, os estudantes têm um papel reduzido. O potencial da crítica se evidencia quando as práticas dos professores não negligenciam a cumplicidade do estado em valores neoliberais. Essas práticas possibilitam desenvolver a consciência crítica dos aprendizes sobre essa mencionada cumplicidade, sobre as crenças que afirmam valores neoliberais de autoconfiança e a percepção de que suas próprias responsabilidades são reduzidas.

Palavras-chave: cidadania ativa; educação crítica; formação de professores; ensino de línguas.

Introduction

Is everyone born a citizen? Is it viable to expect that schools work on citizenship if this is taken as a natural social right enjoyed by all? Why has citizenship become a topic of scholarly and pedagogical interest at this point of time? These are interrogations that guide this paper, but it should first be noted that despite the breadth of the questions, the reflections and

arguments that support the response to them here are intended to be situated, framed by each of the author's personal and professional experiences within and beyond the classroom. In common, the area of citizenship studies is one that both authors have explored through their work in English Language Teaching (ELT) and Language Teacher Education (LTE). Also in common, both authors view citizenship studies through a shared interest in critical literacies and through their ongoing collaboration in research projects such as the National Project for Teacher Education: New Literacies, Multiliteracies and the Teaching of Languages³ (*Projeto Nacional de Formação de Professores: Novos Letramentos, Multiletramentos e Ensino de Línguas*, 2009) and the Brazil-Canada Knowledge Exchange Project: Developing Transnational Literacies⁴ (2011). These types of collaborative projects, in which transnational and international insights are generated, are also important opportunities to re-examine locality at both the institutional and nation-state level; that is, through transnational dialogue, we are better able to appreciate the socio-historical factors that have uniquely conditioned the roles and responsibilities each of us associates with the notion of active citizenship; similarly, our ongoing collaboration has helped us understand the specific institutional constraints and opportunities within which each of us must conceptualize and develop critical citizenship literacies.

The situated experiences that have shaped Morgan's citizenship work begin in the 1990's and his teaching of English as a Second Language in government-funded adult ESL programs in Toronto (MORGAN 1998, 2002), one of the most racially and ethnically diverse cities in the world, and the most popular destination for newcomers to Canada. Within this setting, Morgan's emerging critical awareness arose through his concerns over infantilizing content and passive citizenship practices that aligned with government policies and curricula such as the Language Instruction for New Canadians (LINC) program and the Canadian Language Benchmarks from which LINC is organized (FLEMING; MORGAN 2011, MORGAN; FLEMING 2009). Since joining the faculty of York University in 2001, and transferring in 2009 to Glendon College, a bilingual (French-English) liberal arts college affiliated with York, Morgan's conceptualization of active citizenship has been shaped by Glendon/York's content-based English for Academic Purposes (EAP) program.

Inspired by Benesch's (2001) notion of Critical EAP, Morgan's approach aligns with the pedagogical duality of conformity and critique, which is foregrounded in the title of this article. Critical EAP,

as “conformity”, requires us to help English language learners acquire the specialized texts, genres and pragmatic norms needed to participate in academic discourse communities. As “critique”, Critical EAP helps students recognize the partiality and contested nature of these disciplinary practices, from which students are encouraged to question and challenge disciplinary and institutional conditions, especially when their own interests are at stake. In a later section of this article, Morgan will describe a group EAP project that he has implemented—the “Get Involved” project—and how it aspires to foster both conventional academic language proficiencies but also critical citizenship awareness through volunteerism and community engagement. The “danger” (cf. Foucault)⁵ in such projects is that they traverse, again, a precarious tightrope of conflicting agendas. Conformity, for example is potentially realized when citizenship practices celebrate neoliberal approaches to volunteerism and self-reliance, in effect, affirming and supporting a reduced role for the state in reversing social inequalities. Critique, in contrast, potentially arises when critical awareness of the state’s complicity in promoting neoliberal values (i.e. entrepreneurial identities, self-reliance) are integrated in teachers’ practices (CORSON 2002, CLARKE; MORGAN 2011). This is the situatedness and challenge of Morgan’s citizenship project.

For Monte Mór, the ideas of critical citizenship and a critical language education project for Brazilian schools have been crucial since the 1990s, concerns that have led her to focus on such themes in her studies and research. Since her graduate studies she has analyzed the teaching of English in Brazilian elementary and secondary schools from a philosophy of education perspective and investigated the interpretive habitus of university students, proposing curricular changes and a differentiated literacy at the university and schools. In both cases, the investigations occurred in the English language area where her views of the conformity-critique relationship arose within proposals for new research focuses in this area, thus breaking the strictly linguistic view that had prevailed in Brazilian curricula so far.

Later, she co-authored the Brazilian National Curriculum for Secondary Schools - Foreign Languages (Monte Mór; Menezes de Souza 2005) in which the ideas of new literacies, multiliteracies, critical literacies, global-local notions and active citizenship are proposed. Subsequently, concerned about public school students’ social exclusion and teacher preparation for the acknowledged changes in Elementary and Secondary

schools in Brazil, Monte Mór co-founded the National Project for Teacher Education: New Literacies, Multiliteracies and the Teaching of Languages (*Projeto Nacional de Formação de Professores: Novos Letramentos, Multiletramentos e Ensino de Línguas*. Monte Mór; Menezes de Souza, 2009). This project has led to partnerships, such as the one with Canadian academics, under the direction of Brydon (2011), in the Brazil-Canada Knowledge Exchange Research Project: Developing Transnational Literacies, which has enabled the widening of research scope in Brazilian and Canadian research in languages and education.

It is important to consider the specificities of citizenship in the Brazilian context. In Brazil, it has been a common sense assumption that having Brazilian nationality entitles one to citizenship. According to this reasoning, being a citizen would imply living in a city and participating in its trades and political decisions, as in the old Greek meaning of the term. This view could actually reflect some of the current notions debated around the theme, had historical records not shown social and political changes in this type of participation (CARVALHO 2002). Nineteenth century lexical studies indicate that two terms circulated in the written and oral communication in both Portugal and Brazil: citizen and noble (BLUTEAU 1728; PINTO 1832; SILVA 1813). The former was the generic way to refer to the origin and transit of the common subordinates of the empire; the latter designated the individuals that had privileges in the empire. From 1822 on, when Brazil became independent from Portugal, the ideas embedded in 'citizen' and 'citizenship' have been competing for resignification in Brazilian social and political discourses, taking part nowadays in debates concerned about adding action and engagement to the conception based in rights and responsibilities. Other reasonings have also arisen in relation to the topic. For example, engaged citizenship has been advocated in Brazil as a response to a historical and political depiction that involved centuries-old influences from the Jesuits and colonizers, added by the recent military dictatorship (MONTE MOR 2013). Much has been identified from the three influences about power relations within school and out-of-school learning and relationships.

In recent investigations on 'active citizenship' programs for schools in Brazil, it was possible to show that teachers generally value the ideas, though expressing some restrictions or constraints. To cite three of their reservations, respondents: (a) think that the 'rights and responsibilities' concept is the official one requiring no change or addition; (b) find it hard

to work with the new concept, considering that they don't feel prepared to work with its underlying theories and practices; (c) question whether the proposal promotes critical education or whether it responds to neoliberal interests and needs, instead. We suggest that these responses convey, respectively: resistance, caution, and skepticism. Nevertheless, these responses make it clear that at least two clarifications should be made in citizenship programs and policies. The first relates to the justification of the focus on active citizenship, considering that it represents a different concept from the one that Brazilian teachers had been prepared to implement in schools. The second is related to the distinction between conformity and critique embedded in the notion of citizenship, considering the ambiguities often found in the discussion and practice of such issues.

Engaged citizenship in Brazilian language education

A constraint identified by teachers in the aforementioned 'active citizenship investigation' informs their feeling of unpreparedness to work with the underlying theories and practices of the engaged citizenship proposals. Some considerations are raised here to frame this reaction. The policies for the teaching of foreign languages in Brazil are rooted in enlightenment and liberal ideas. According to Saviani's account of the history of Brazilian pedagogic ideas (2008), the teaching of foreign languages followed the enlightenment idea that, at the very beginning of Brazilian language teaching, aimed at contributing to the education of the "perfect noble" and the "perfect merchant". The citizenship premises of that period did not yet embrace the ideals of wide social participation as they concentrated on a specific elite. Another fact helps to contribute to the explanation for the language teachers' cautious response to an idea of citizenry that escapes the conventional one. It is the fact that foreign languages policies of the last decades in Brazil bear the influences of bilingual education projects developed in the USA. The transferability of these American-rooted policies has proven to be ambiguous, especially when adopted in foreign territories. If on one hand, they have enabled participation through communication in the same language, on the other, this participation has not always occurred in equal terms. Crawford's thesis (1998) would probably present an explanation for the latter possibility. It argues that bilingual education ideologies tend to marginalize the status of the foreigner or outsider in the USA, an idea that explains the feeling of

disadvantage that may be developed in foreign language learners in Brazil.

In his recent studies about cosmopolitan cultural capital, Windle (forthcoming) evidences the distinctions between intra-class divisions in Brazilian elites' schooling. He asserts that the educational practices of ruling-class families in Brazil "have been marked by a heavy investment in learning English and in international travel to 'first world' destinations for educational purposes since the 1990s" (p 3). To him, fluency in English is seen as "a cultural capital that occupies an important place in the order of Brazilian symbolic goods", a prestige that is recognized by both the elites and other social classes.

Other evidence of the wide debate around knowing a foreign language, participation and citizenship is found in studies about globalization. The phenomenon of globalization has perpetuated the premise that knowing English may represent advantages, such as opportunities and social status, within a context where the English language has undeniably assumed a central role in communication, business and interaction with speakers of other languages. However, in the areas of critical applied linguistics, language and education, culture, and certainly literacies, there has been great concern about the unbalanced equation that has been disseminated through globalizing goals, ideologies and praxis. Therefore, there has been great effort to resignify the teaching and learning of English as a foreign (or additional) language in various locations in the Western world. The relevance of this language as a cultural capital and a requisite to economic growth has been recognized at the same time that universalization, standardization and convergence have been identified as some of the problematic characteristics that the language politics bear. Issues of strength, power and hierarchies embedded in those policies have represented the values and interests of the dominant classes of the West. Researchers such as Luke, Woods, and Weir (2013) reinforce the unbalance in those policies by stressing that some of their problems lie in the observation that knowledges, abilities, capacities and cultures other than the standard ones are denied and marginalized, not representing the social and cultural differences of ethnic and cultural minorities. All of these assertions seem to advocate for less unequal education, leading to revisions that could favor critical education and the development of a perspective of citizenship that envisages action, engagement and critique in schools and societies.

Why active citizenship?

The assertion that ‘everyone is born a citizen, being entitled to rights and responsibilities’ has not necessarily guaranteed equal opportunities in Brazilian society, as it has veiled inequities of various sorts. In order to break away from this problematic conception and include an analysis of inequality, current debates in Brazil have borrowed the ideas promoted in the recent studies of literacies (NEW LONDON GROUP 2000) where much emphasis is given to citizenship as defined by action and engagement. In those studies, one will encounter the terms ‘active citizenship’, ‘engaged citizenship’ or ‘critical citizenship’, treated as synonyms, guiding inferences about the definition of attitudes envisaged in practice: action, engagement and critique. These studies respond to: acknowledged social changes that require (a) new understandings or readings about institutional relationships in the life of people and groups and (b) reinvigorated civic participation in the life of institutions. Further, other aspects have shown relevance in the revision of the concept of citizenship, such as tendencies in the media communication that raise impediments to critical views about the ‘common good’; and proximity and intensification of experiences with diversity, that then demand new approaches to negotiate identity and living with differences.

It has been understood, nevertheless, that the conceptual salience related to action, engagement and critique in the recently proposed understanding of citizenship has brought about a certain level of uncertainty to teachers, who sometimes feel as if they are walking on a tight rope amid new thresholds plotted by studies of postmodernity, liberalism, neoliberalism, transnationalism, globalization and various others. This feeling of uncertainty explains teachers’ inquiry as to whether such concepts entail ‘conformity’ or ‘critique’, multiple sides of active citizenship that invoke Spradley and McCurdy’s widely known terms ‘conformity and conflict’ from the field of cultural anthropology (2009).

Engaged citizenship as conformity, as critique

It should be noted that the issue of conformity is often raised by researchers in their attempt to advocate for critical citizenship. Ratto and Boler (2014) identify conformity in the premises of citizenship when it is restricted to “the standard political activities of voting, advocating

for policy changes, and protest” (p 7) and when it “invokes notions of membership, rights and belonging, all of which are curtailed and limited by nation-states” (p 8). The authors also claim that this view of citizenship may become problematic when it is associated with the “atomistic individual” as in “the conception deeply rooted in Western thought” (p 11). According to this perspective, one may be misled to believe that individual choices are able to supersede realities of social hierarchies, power differentials and uneven fields. In addition, the researchers argue, even the newly expanded views of citizenship, such as the one related to the engaged citizen, may end up as practices that “align with or are appropriated by an emphasis on liberal individualism” (p 12), much valorized by neoliberal enterprises.

Similar arguments have been made regarding the pervasiveness of liberal ideals in educational projects. For example, in an important critique of liberal multiculturalism, Kubota (2004) acknowledges its historical contributions to social justice, such as in the extension of voting rights for women and racial minorities. At the same time, the negative social and disciplinary effects she identifies are numerous: e.g. liberal multicultural notions of universality, objectivity, and neutrality—when adopted at the institutional level—lead to policies and practices that treat diversity in superficial ways, that are blind to systemic forms of discrimination, and that exaggerate meritocratic explanations for advancement in both schools and the broader society. It is possible to interpret that Kubota’s congruent perceptions support the premises of engagement and participation in the ‘active citizenship’ proposals presented in this paper.

Indeed, some citizenship proposals may appear less bound to conformity, such as the ones that invoke the formation of public spheres. These are meant to “provide citizens space to deliberate, debate, and discuss matters of public interest outside of formal government processes” (RATTO; BOLER 2014, p 13). Based on Habermas’s (1962) conceptualization (1962), *public spheres* promote democratic participation by identifying and supporting the ideal conditions in which all voices can be heard and appraised equally in the deliberative process. However, this conceptualization fails to recognize the extent to which social hierarchies and power relations restrict participation in public sphere debates. In settings of increased diversity, such citizenship proposals also overlook the communicative and rhetorical conditions (e.g. monolingual versus multilingual participatory policies and norms) by which such hierarchies are sustained. Another point we might consider is the notion of agonistic

citizenship practices (cf. Mouffe in JORDÃO in press; TAMBAKAKI 2011): critical/engaged citizenship is not achieved solely through communicative or procedural consensus (cf. Habermas's discourse ethics) but instead through acts of *dissensus* and the provisional mobilization of 'them-versus-us' alliances empowered through effective and media savvy, rhetorical citizenship skills.

Engaged citizenship as critique is, thus, seen as the model that makes a difference by enabling critical social participation and choices that go beyond individuality, without disregarding individual interests. In Ratto and Boler's depiction, it entails "new forms of participatory engagement and world-making" (Ibid., p 8), a possibility that greatly expands the 'rights and responsibilities' concept of being a citizen. Within this perspective, engagement, action and critique enable 'doing', 'making' and 'remaking' as social participation. Through such practices, new understandings and readings related to citizenship may be accomplished, starting with the realization that institutional relationships in the lives of individuals and groups are not given or fixed in a naturalistic sense, but that they are, instead, social arrangements always open to (re) interpretation. In this way, civic participation may be reinvigorated.

We now turn to the challenge of fostering such forms of critical engagement in light of the constraints and opportunities presented in language teaching programs and curricula. It requires us to think of field-internal practices and areas of expertise that ELT and LTE can bring to broader discussions of citizenship across disciplinary domains.

Critical Citizenship Pedagogies in Action

The activity described below is a major group project for a full year content-based course called Academic Foundations (ENSL 2700 6.0). The college also offers a more advanced set of 3000-level courses. Almost all of the students in ENSL 2700 are in first or second year and are able to take disciplinary courses in French, but are in need of higher-level instruction in academic English in order to accomplish similar content proficiencies in English. In their second/additional language, they study academic lexico-grammar, reading strategies, essay writing skills, as well as the types of speaking/listening skills and interactional pragmatic norms required to participate in university seminars and lectures. A key dimension of the course is the integration of meaningful academic content that is

intrinsically motivating for students and in keeping with Glendon/York's broader commitment to programs that stimulate community engagement and social justice at local, national and international levels.

At first glance, the setting of an additional/foreign language classroom might seem a disadvantaged context for active or critical citizenship. Yet, arguably, the opposite is the case (MORGAN; VANDRICK 2009). Bi/Multilingual students bring a critical awareness of language, discourse, and identity that monolingual students do not share. Guided by their teachers, they are better positioned to recognize how particular lexico-grammar choices condition the way we understand and respond to current events. Also, considering the ethno-linguistic diversity of Toronto, and the growing internationalization of North American universities, EAP classrooms are indeed public spheres in which the voices of historical enemies are heard for the first time, unfiltered through official media and propaganda. Brazilian universities may not yet have similar levels of internationalization, but in major urban centres such as São Paulo, such developments are likely, suggesting similar transformative and dialogic options for content-based, foreign-language teaching at the university level. In short, the setting of additional/foreign language learning is a resource and not a liability for active and engaged citizenship pedagogies. Newcomers perceive local conditions in ways no longer recognized by longstanding residents. Indeed, they become critical ethnographers if encouraged through syllabus design that promotes critical inquiry and comparison, rather than a celebratory acceptance of official nation-state narratives. As we have stated throughout this article, this is always a precarious path, balanced between conformity and critique, not least of all the realization that the growing internationalization of universities, itself, is a development driven by neoliberal policies that threaten to undermine the integrity of academic programming (CHOWDURY; PHAN 2014).

The “Get Involved” Project

Now Magazine is a free weekly newspaper with a vibrant progressive editorial policy and a substantive list of current events (arts, politics, environment, etc.) in the city of Toronto. In the January 3-9, 2008 issue, the cover title proclaims “Do It Now: Hundreds of Ways to Take Action and Get Involved”. The cover image is of a racially and gendered mix of young people in their 20's, holding a “Do It Now” banner and several

placards with captions such as "Free the Web", "I Dream in Green", "Party for Change", "Screw Corporations: Art = Power". Inside the newspaper, there is a list of hundreds of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), doing development work in the city or that have local offices for their international projects. The list, compiled by Leslie McAllister, provides brief descriptions and contact information (websites, phone numbers, addresses) for each organization, placed within the following categories of service and/or community: e.g. Animal Protection, Anti-Poverty, Literacy, Arts, Community, Diversity, Green, Health, Literacy, Human Rights, Peace, Queer, Tenants, Women. As the accompanying article states on p. 29, "There are organizations all over TO [Toronto, Ontario] wanting to work with you to make the world a better place".

For my students in ENSL 2700, I provide a handout of selected NGOs that usually covers about 10 pages. Below is a very short sample, which indicates the diversity of NGOs involved. Now Magazine actually provided a short descriptive paragraph for each of the several hundred organizations it included in the issue:

- **OUT OF THE COLD:** Local religious communities open their doors to provide food, shelter and support to those in need. www.ootc.ca.
- **ST FRANCIS TABLE:** Nonprofit restaurant in Parkdale committed to social justice. 416-532-4172, www.capuchinoutreach.org.
- **ANIMAL ALLIANCE OF CANADA:** This group works for animal rights. 416-462-9541, www.animalalliance.ca.
- **WOODGREEN COMMUNITY CENTER:** delivers meals to seniors and runs after school programs. 416-469-5211, www.woodgreen.org.
- **ANISHNABI HEALTH:** Works to improve the health and well being of aboriginal people. 416-360-0486, <http://aht.ca>.
- **DAVID SUZUKI FOUNDATION:** Dedicated to solving global warming, protecting human health, saving oceans, promoting global conservation and building a sustainable economy. 1-800-453-1533, www.davidsuzuki.org.
- **ASIAN COMMUNITY AIDS SERVICES:** Serves the east and Southeast Asian communities assisting people affected by HIV/AIDS. 416-963-4300 ext. 25, vol@acas.org, www.acas.org.
- **CANADIAN CENTER FOR VICTIMS OF TORTURE:** Assists children survivors with homework, offers ESL tutoring and provides interpretation services. 416-363-1066, www.ccvvt.org.

In small groups I ask students to select an NGO to research and present to the whole class later in the term. Students are also given the option of suggesting an NGO not included in the “Get Involved” list provided by NOW. They are given the following assignment sheet, with which to discuss their choice, the scope of the assignment, and the in-group division of tasks:

**“Get Involved/Do It Now!”: ENSL 2700.6 Assignment
Oral Group Presentation (20-30 min., 15% of final grade)**

- The topic of this oral presentation will be the idea of active citizenship, either at a local or global level. Select one of the organizations from the “Get Involved” handout and provide information about it.
- What social issue or problem does the organization address? What community groups (gender, ethnicity, etc.) does it represent? What are its sources of funding, etc.?
- Also, it’s very important to research and critically analyze the problem/issue that the organization hopes to change. Your research should include peer-reviewed, scholarly sources.
- You will be evaluated on: the quality of your research, preparation and organization, knowledge of the topic, language use (including pronunciation and grammar), and audience engagement [students are also required to provide discussion questions post-presentation]

It is important to note that the second bullet point above draws attention to the prevalence of identity-based NGOs in Toronto, a point that reiterates the politics of liberal multiculturalism as discussed by Kubota (2004) above. The same bullet point also encourages critical inquiry directed towards sources of funding. Most NGOs post their budgets online, including the percentage of their income that goes towards salaries and administration, versus direct expenditure on the actual service or charity. Point three emphasizes learning about the context/purpose for the NGO.

After the selection of NGOs for presentation, a lot of class time is spent on EAP language skills, related research concerns (summarizing, paraphrasing, citations) and the kinds of multiliteracies issues involved. Comparison between written and oral texts is a prominent issue,

emphasizing the lexical and information density of the former and foregrounding the prosodic features of the latter that can support emphasis and cohesion in an oral text. We also look at the multimodality of the assignment, discussing the best ways to integrate their oral texts along with a Power-Point presentation that might include images and video clips, as well as a short, paper handout for the whole class. As noted above, the multiliteracies work of the New London Group (2000) is particularly useful for teachers in considering the design features and affordance-rich opportunities available to students for their presentations.

St. Francis Table

Over the past four years, St. Francis Table (SFT) has been one of the most popular NGOs chosen by students for this project in ENSL 2700. SFT is an unusual non-profit restaurant situated in one of the low-income areas of the city. It is supported through private donations of food and money. SFT serves daily meals at a nominal cost (i.e. one dollar) or for free for those who can't afford it. Students are surprised to find out that it is run by a Catholic order of priests/monks named after St. Francis. From the Franciscans that operate the restaurant, students learn about the problems of food security and hunger in such a wealthy country like Canada, and in its preeminent center of commerce, the city of Toronto. The number of full time, all year round food banks in the city is always a shock. Through their research, students learn about a number of contributing factors: drug & alcohol addiction, mental illness, but also a lack of affordable housing in the city and huge income disparities forcing the working poor to seek out help from places like SFT. As part of their presentations, many groups take digital photographs of the décor to highlight its welcoming appearance—not unlike any other commercial restaurant—and the priority given to maintaining the dignity of those who visit. Students also learn about the day-to-day challenges involved (e.g. scheduling sittings for busy days, coordinating volunteers, dealing with clients with substance-abuse problems).

Discussion: Dangerous Pedagogies Between Conformity and Critique

There is not enough space here to go into greater detail regarding SFT's operation and the community it serves. In the "Get Involved"

project, there is a small supplementary assignment, an individual reflection paper on both the topic (NGO) for the presentations and the language challenges and insights each student experienced. In these reflection papers, a frequent comment on SFT—and indeed most of the NGO’s covered—is that Canadians are “generous” people and that it is a society in which volunteerism and community service are highly valued and normalized. And it is on this observed point in which “dangerous” pedagogies (cf. Foucault) that traverse conformity and critique become most relevant. For some longstanding citizens/teachers, it can be tempting to take such comments at face value and as a source of national pride, indeed, expecting such reassurances from students as anticipated outcomes of the “Get Involved” assignment. When such reassurances are not forthcoming, however, teachers should be cautious in passing negative judgement, instead allowing further debate to occur, especially during the post-presentation discussions in which the whole class takes part.

Certainly, such discussions are invaluable for promoting academic language proficiencies in EAP settings, particularly in support of effective argumentation and in generating ideas for composition. But beyond language proficiencies, and as noted above, the multiple voices inherent in an EAP setting can open up critical citizenship perspectives less often considered. As in the case of SFT, for example, it can be an opportunity to valorize community volunteerism and support of food banks, but also an opportunity to question their now permanent existence in a developed nation of remarkable wealth. Moreover, it can also become an opportunity to discuss the possible functions of volunteerism and community engagement under neoliberalism and the steady decline of state responsibility and investment in social welfare (see e.g. OLSSON 2010; MILLAR 2014). Again, to revisit the title of our article, the pedagogical point in debating community engagement and volunteerism is not to pass ultimate judgement (i.e. to determine whether or not it is ‘bad’ or ‘good’) but to note that it may always be “dangerous”, in which both conformity and critique are potentially implicated. In this respect, as Foucault notes, “we will always have something to do” when exploring issues of language, power and citizenship in ELT classrooms.

Final Considerations

We wish to reiterate the value of the kinds of Brazilian-Canadian

research exchanges we have described in this article. Working together on areas of mutual interest, we have come to appreciate the productive synergies that can emerge through such projects. As noted earlier, the value of such collaboration unfolds in bidirectional and dialogic ways—in the generation of transnational and international insights, but also in the reassessment of our own respective localities as seen through the eyes of our partners. In spite of the different social histories we bring to our conversations, a key commonality has been a concern for the *critical*—what it can mean and how it might be implemented across varied sites of practice, particularly the practices of citizenship in ELT and LTE settings, where meaningful public engagement is usually subordinate to the acquisition of linguistic code. Yet, as we have argued, the prioritization of a restricted, lingua-centric model of second/foreign language acquisition fails to utilize the social and critical resources that ELT students bring to such settings and that are available for a more socially engaged curriculum in which the dangers of conformity and critique are central concerns. Towards this goal, we look forward to further collaboration.

Endnotes

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- ³ It involves 1) investigation and 2) intervention through an ongoing teacher education program. The investigation focuses on understanding the relationship between foreign languages teaching in public schools and its interface with education, how such teaching contexts conceive of language and the development of citizenship and inclusion through foreign languages teaching. These aims might be summarized as follows: 1) to verify local knowledge practices about foreign languages practices and how they relate to teachers' and students' roles in the investigated places; 2) to identify teachers' and students' notions of global and local in their pedagogical practices; 3) to survey teachers' educational backgrounds on foreign languages teaching; 4) to survey regional methodologies and epistemologies related to foreign languages. The intervention proposal through an ongoing teacher educational program aims: 1) to design syllabuses according to critical educational perspectives to address local specific needs; 2) to design syllabuses and pedagogical materials aiming at promoting inclusive education through foreign language, reflecting language(s) concepts in accordance with local and global society.

- ⁴ Its goals: 1. To strengthen transnational literacy and cross-cultural understanding in Brazil and Canada; 2. To work with English teachers, in schools and universities, to integrate theory and practice, developing site-specific pedagogies appropriate to global challenges; 3. To advance understanding of how globalization is impacting education in Canada and Brazil; 4. To advance the Brazil/Canada relationship; 5. To contribute to understanding of how to make transnational, interdisciplinary partnerships work.
- ⁵ The conceptualization of danger implied in the title and in various in-text references, comes from Foucault (1983): “My point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous, which is not exactly the same as bad. If everything is dangerous, then we always have something to do” (pp. 231-232). Foucault’s sense of danger here requires ongoing attentiveness to the ways in which concepts and practices related to citizenship are locally articulated with disciplines (e.g. ELT, LTE), institutional demands (e.g. university policies) and socio-historical factors at the community and nation-state level.

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