Developing English teachers as transformative agents

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This research project aims to investigate the complexity of the development of the activity of assisting student-teachers to become reflective English teachers of a private college in São Paulo as transformative agents of social changes, but not merely experts on linguistic features. In this process, the students have the possibility of becoming agents in the activity of teaching English. The course of the referred institution of higher education aims at developing English teachers as critical and reflective practitioners, as educators and researchers, committed to comprehensive education and the development of socially responsible and capable citizens to participate in the building of a fairer society by promoting the dissemination of knowledge and encouraging cultural creation and encouragement of reflective thinking. The two disciplines directed to the reflective development of this study are called "Reflective English Development 1 and 2", held during the first year of the course. Their objective is to provide students with studies and discussion of theoretical and methodological contributions needed to develop critical reflective thinking and attitude towards their future transformative teaching practice, with regard to English language teaching. This proposal was conceived because of the increasing need and urgency to develop critical reflective English teachers as agents of changes. There are already several studies by various scholars in this area (CELANI, 2010; ESTEFOGO, 2001, 2005; LIBERALI, 2015; and others), especially in bachelor's degree English teaching programs. In general, in Brazil, it is well known that English teachers undergraduation courses have serious weaknesses that undermine the development of a critical reflective thinking and attitudes with regard to teaching as social transformative activities. They tend to have only a technical linguistic input that structure academic "training" of these future teachers in the mere application of theories, methods and linguistic technical tools.

More specifically, this study aims to understand how the process of reflective teaching development occurs during the first year of the course against the studies and theoretical discussions on the concepts of reflective teaching as a transformative social activity. Opposed to the mechanistic, Cartesian view of the world, where there is no room for feelings, where mechanical reason, exact, reductionist, law of cause and effect, excludes emotion and human creativity and innovation, this study believes that, given the real situation of life, disorderly, chaotic, uncertain of human relations, "*life* that is lived" (*MARX; ENGELS, 1845-46, 2007*-26), which is complex (MORIN,

2005), the activity of developing reflective English teachers certainly will have different characteristics and structures of the initially idealized object. In other words, it is a study that aims to create the basis to discuss the details of the realized object, not only the idealized, that is the real picture of life, full of imbalances in situations of chaos, uncertainty and doubt, but with the omnipresence of creativity and innovation of human action that creates opportunities for a new order, a new object. Chaotic scenarios, dubiousness and questioning are rooms for the genesis of new organizations and structures singularities of new conceptions, meanings and then objects. The unfolding of the idealized objects is not likely to be known, given the fact that the achieved object stems from the dialectical interrelationship of individuals by means of social activities. The concept of social activity is associated with the subject in the world, acting and making history in interaction with others in certain historically dependent and cultural contexts. Based on the Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (VYGOTSKY, 1930, 1994; LEONTIEV, 1978, ENGESTRÖM, 1987, 1999), this study understands that the characteristics of human actions are focused on the external physical aspects with consequences in the internal and psychological features, particularly, consciousness development. Furthermore, human actions take place by means of the relationship with the social environment, with others, with the cultural tools and instruments available in a dialectical relationship, interconnected and intertwined. Besides that, understanding how people interact collectively with each other and with the available cultural tools, what meanings they give to the processes that they belong to and how to build their knowledge is to understand the world in the complexity of their relationships, which is also the conception of the present study.

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