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Priscila Fabiane Farias

CRITICAL EFL AND CRITICAL LITERACY: THE IMPACTS OF DESIGNING AND IMPLEMENTING A CYCLE OF TASKS IN A PUBLIC SCHOOL SETTING FOR CRITICAL LANGUAGE AND CRITICAL LITERACY DEVELOPMENT

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Orientadora: Prof.ª Dr.ª Raquel Carolina Souza Ferraz D'Ely

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Esta Tese foi julgada adequada para obtenção do Titúlo de "Doutora em Estudos da Linguagem"e aprovada em sua forma final pelo Programa de Pós Graduação em Inglês

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_____
Prof. Dr. Celso Henrique Soufen Tumolo
Coordenador do Curso

Banca Examinadora:
_____
Profa. Dra. Raquel Carolina Souza Ferraz D'Ely
Orientadora e Presidente (UFSC)

_____
Profa. Dra. Ingrid Finger
Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS)

_____
Profa. Dra. Donesca Cristina Puntel Xhafaj
Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC)

_____
Profa. Dra. Adriana Kuerten Dellagnelo
Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC)

To all my dear ones,
You make me who I am.

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family, for providing Yhan and I with safety, care and wonderful memories while we were in Hawaii.

Para finalizar, gostaria de refletir brevemente sobre a ideia de gratidão e o que a mesma representa. Sentir-se grato implica também, na minha visão, reconhecer privilégios. Eu, particularmente, faço ressalvas à meritocracia e defendo que o mérito de alguém só é válido quando as condições de trabalho são as mesmas para todos. Infelizmente, contudo, esse não é o caso da educação brasileira. Portanto, quero finalizar meus agradecimentos também reconhecendo os privilégios que tive para que pudesse de fato ter algo para agradecer.

Qualquer discriminação é imoral e lutar contra ela é um dever por mais que se reconheça a força dos condicionamentos a enfrentar. A boniteza de ser gente se acha, entre outras coisas, nessa possibilidade e nesse dever de brigar. Saber que devo respeito à autonomia e à identidade do educando exige de mim uma prática em tudo coerente com este saber
(Freire, 1996, p. 35)

ABSTRACT

Bearing in mind the relevance of critical applied linguistics (Pennycook, 1999) to English as a foreign language teaching and taking into account the significant contributions that Task-Based Approach (TBA) (Van den Branden, 2016), Critical Pedagogy (CP) (Crookes, 2013) and Critical Literacy (CL) (Bishop, 2014) have made to the advance of language education, this study aims at investigating the implementation of a cycle of tasks in a 7th grade English class in a public school, comprised of fourteen students, fostering the development of language and critical literacy. In this sense, a task cycle that tackled issues of gender representation was designed under the TBA (Skehan, 1996,2016; Ellis, 2003, 2017), CL (McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004a, 2004b) and CP (Freire, 1970; Crookes, 2013) frameworks. It was then implemented and its impacts on participants' language and critical literacy development were analyzed considering a) the teacher/researcher's perceptions on tasks and diary notes, b) learners' performance in two pre-tests and two post-tests, and c) participants' own perceptions through a post-task questionnaire and interviews. Data was analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Findings from the teacher/researcher's perception revealed that both language and critical literacy development seemed to take place during the cycle implementation, highlighting both the role of the task-cycle as an instructional tool and the role of the critical task-based teacher in task design and implementation. Moreover, statistical results from two pre-test/post-test comparisons showed a significant difference between conditions after the task cycle implementation, in terms of knowledge of the simple past structure, accuracy, outcome achievement and critical perspective. Finally, participants' own perceptions indicate positive perspectives towards their language and critical literacy development. All in all, these findings make a strong case for critical and task-

based foreign language classrooms, not as a recipe for successful outcome but, instead, as an alternative for learners' emancipation towards context transformation.

Key words: Critical Literacy. Critical EFL. Cycle of Tasks.

RESUMO

Considerando a relevância de uma perspectiva critica para linguística aplicada (Pennycook, 1999) no que diz respeito ao ensino de inglês como língua estrangeira, e levando em conta as significativas contribuições que as áreas da Abordagem Baseada em Tarefas (ABT) (Van den Branden, 2016), da Pedagogia Crítica (PC) (Crookes, 2013), e do Letramento Critico (LC) (Bishop, 2014) tem feito para o avanço da educação de língua estrangeira, este estudo teve como objetivo investigar a implementação de um ciclo de tarefas em uma turma de inglês de sétimo ano de uma escola pública, com quatorze alunos, na tentativa de promover o desenvolvimento de língua e letramento critico. Dessa forma, o ciclo de tarefas utilizado, que discutiu questões de representação de gênero, foi desenvolvido sob os princípios e parâmetros da ABT (Skehan, 1996,2016; Ellis, 2003, 2017), do LC (McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004a, 2004b), e da PC (Freire, 1970; Crookes, 2013). As tarefas foram então implementadas e seus possíveis impactos no desenvolvimento de língua e letramento critico dos participantes analisados, levando em consideração a) a percepção da professora/pesquisadora em relação à tarefas e notas em seu diário de aula, b) o desempenho dos participantes em dois pré-testes e dois pós-testes, e c) a percepção dos participantes através de um questionário pós-tarefa e entrevistas. Os dados coletados foram analisados quantitativa e qualitativamente. Resultados, em relação a perspectiva da professora/pesquisadora, demonstram que o desenvolvimento de ambos língua e letramento critico parecem ter ocorrido durante a implementação do ciclo de tarefas, enfatizando o papel do ciclo em si, como uma ferramenta de instrução, e do professor critico e orientado pelos princípios da tarefas no momento de desenvolvimento e implementação das mesmas. Além disso, resultados estatísticos de ambas as comparações entre os pré-testes e pós-testes demonstraram uma diferença significativa entre as duas

condições após a implementação do ciclo de tarefas, em termos de conhecimento da estrutura do passado simples, acurácia, alcance do *outcome* e perspectiva critica. Finalmente, a percepção dos participantes indicou perspectivas positivas no que diz respeito à seu desenvolvimento linguístico e de letramento critico. É possível afirmar, portanto, que tais resultados reforçam a relevância de aulas de língua estrangeira de uma perspectiva critica e que sigam os princípios da ABT, não como uma receita para um resultado bem sucedido, mas sim como uma alternativa, que busca emancipação dos estudantes no sentido da transformação de seu próprio contexto.

Palavras-Chave: Letramento Critico. Inglês como Lingua Estrangeira sob uma Perspectiva Critica. Ciclo de Tarefas.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. FIRST WORDS

I have been an English teacher for more than ten years now, a researcher for the last seven years. Due to this path, I had the privilege of engaging in rich and diverse experiences while teaching and researching in different settings. Because I agree with Wallace (1992), who says that teaching entails a relationship between received theoretical knowledge and reflective experiential knowledge, I have always attempted to reflect on my choices considering the reality of the context I was teaching and/or researching at. Moreover, my teaching values and beliefs, which have been informed by experience, readings and research, have constantly played a significant role in my practice.

Among innumerous reflections I have engaged in as a teacher and a researcher, one thing that seems to continuously call my attention is the importance of teaching English as a foreign [1] language while also teaching for social justice. This observation derives from my understanding that communicating in another language involves more than knowledge about how to use the language. As Fairclough (1992) explains, language simultaneously shapes and is shaped by society. Hence,

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[1] It is important to acknowledge that the use of the word "foreign" may reinforce the idea the language being taught/learned is "the language of the other" and, hence, not part of the learners' context. Still, in this study, I opted to make use of the term, following research traditions in the areas that inform this study. I must make clear, however, that by making this decision, I do not attempt to imply the aforementioned. Instead, foreign here means simply not the students' first language.

the use of language (or discourse, as Fairclough defines) that permeates our everyday interactions is influenced by "relations of power and invested with ideologies" (Fairclough, 1992, p. 8). It makes much sense to me, therefore, that teaching a foreign language must involve empowering learners to use this language effectively, aiming for action and transformation of their own reality.

This is how (and why) this study came to life. I was, first of all, motivated by previous teaching experiences, in which I had attempted to experiment with tasks in my practice. Moreover, former engagements with peers, in conferences, as well as through readings and debates, in courses I took as an undergraduate student, all drove me to inquiry. Most of all, these experiences showed me that developing language and critical consciousness were not always balanced in Brazilian classrooms, as I believe they should be. Then, my prior background as an applied linguistics researcher got entangled with my strong commitment to education and urging interest in critical pedagogy and literacy. These made it clear to me that this investigation could (and should) benefit from both areas, even though they are not necessarily always compatible. Finally, becoming a middle and high school teacher at the beginning of my PhD studies, and taking into account the many political and social episodes that have influenced the Brazilian context in the last four years, all served as stimuli to pursue this empirical and theoretical quest, which you are about to be presented to.

This study, therefore, is an attempt to bring research and practice together, informing both in hope for a stronger, fairer and empowering future for the Brazilian education. The following sections introduce the context of investigation as well as the study's relevance, and finally the way this dissertation is organized.

1.2. CONTEXT OF INVESTIGATION

Both the field of second/foreign language teaching and learning and the field of critical theories of

education have prominent history and influential contributions to the area of education. The Second Language Acquisition (SLA) field has expanded and developed significantly in the past 50 years (Gass & Selinker, 2008) and researchers seem to agree on the positive results brought by the Task-Based Approach (TBA) in order to encourage a communicative use of language (Skehan, 2003).

The TBA offers students the possibility to achieve communicative competence (Canale & Swain, 1980) by taking part in activities referred to as tasks (Ellis, 2003). Although different views on what a task is have been given by a number of scholars, Ellis's (2003) definition, the one which will inform this study, proposes a general conceptualization of the construct as an activity that focuses learners' attention primarily on pragmatic meaning while allowing for a focus on form[2] whenever necessary and while aiming at the development of a pre-determined outcome. Whilst working on a task, students are, thus, encouraged to use language in a communicative way to achieve a given goal that replicates something they would do in real life.

Studies conducted in the area of Task-Based Learning and Teaching (TBLT) have greatly added to developing the field into what it is today, focusing on various aspects of the approach. For instance, Skehan's (1996, 2016) contributions on a task-based framework for task implementation reveal a significant step towards language growth. Although other authors have also proposed similar frameworks (e.g. Willis, 1996), Skehan's task sequencing proposal (in this study, called "task

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[2] The construct focus on form was first coined by Long (1991) as a term that refers to moments in which the learner thinks about form without dismissing meaning during task completion. The term will be fully explained and discussed, as well as the construct of a task, in chapters to come.

cycle"[3]), which is composed of pre-task, mid-task and post-task phases, still has much influence in the field and is used both for research and pedagogical purposes.

In a similar way, within the field of Critical Theories of Education, Critical Pedagogy (CP) has also increased expressively over the last 50 years and, when it comes to the area of language teaching, it focuses on advancing the study of languages in ways that would promote social justice (Crookes, 2012). The construct has its initial roots attached to the work of Paulo Freire who, among other contributions, discusses the importance of engaging students in the process of *conscientização[4]*, that is, developing a critical consciousness towards reality, which implies reflection and action upon it (Freire, 1970).

Likewise, Critical Literacy (CL), which is also deeply grounded in the Freirian pedagogy, has its core on analyzing texts at the discursive level in which they are created and maintained, that is, perceiving the ideological aspects of discourse. Moreover, critical literacy aims at

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[3] Skehan's framework for task implementation is referred to, in this study, as a task cycle. The word "cycle", in this case, is used to emphasize how each task is connected to, and hence, leads to the other. Moreover, the word cycle refers to how, within each task, the students are encouraged to revisit their learning and reflect on their development process in different ways. Skehan (1996) explains that the process of language learning does not take place in a linear, cumulative manner. Instead, it involves the development of metalanguage systems in complex ways, through "cycles of analysis and synthesis revisiting some areas as they are seen to require complexification, learning others in a simple, straightforward manner, developing others by simply relexicalizing that which is available syntactically" (p. 58). The word "cycle" was, therefore, chosen to express this complexity.

[4] The word "conscientização" is being used both in Portuguese and in English (as consciousness), following Freire (1970).

emancipatory action in the world (Lankshear & McLaren, 1993) through the development of transformative praxis. In this sense, McLaughlin & DeVoogd's (2004a/2004b) work introduces four principles for critical literacy development. According to the authors, 1) critical literacy focuses on issues of power and promotes reflection, transformation and action; 2) critical literacy focuses on problem-posing and its complexity; 3) critical literacy's strategies are dynamic and adapt to the contexts in which they are used; 4) critical literacy disrupts the commonplace by examining it from multiple perspectives. These principles, even though proposed by the authors for L1 environments, seem to easily adapt to L2 contexts.

Having introduced the three theoretical bases that inform this study, TBLT, CP and CL; it is paramount to recognize their distinctive backgrounds and goals. Jordão (2013) emphasizes that one of the main differences that must be acknowledged, when one compares the theories proposed by the communicative approach (of which task-based approach is a branch of), critical pedagogy and critical literacy, has to do with the fact that while the first can be associated with universal principles for language teaching and materials design that may adapt into specific contexts, the last two have intentionally refused to develop an instructional approach for its realization. Another important difference among the three theories has to do with the cognitive orientation of research in TBLT and the social orientation of research in CP and CL, which influences not only the way research is conducted in these fields but also the way that results are looked at. Finally, another relevant distinction that needs to be made among these areas has to do with the role of education within their perspectives. Jordão (2013) explains that while in the communicative approach perception, education serves the purpose of teaching to respect and integrate "differences" into our lives (which then may involve discussions in terms of intercultural notions and how cultures are different); in the critical pedagogy perspective, education also aims at emancipation by teaching/reflecting on how

ideology works. Additionally, within the critical literacy perspective, education has as its main goal problematizing discourse practices, offering the opportunity for the learner to re-signify the world and him/herself.

Even though these differences are significant and, hence, impact research as well as practice, I side with Pennycook (1999, 2001, 2016) and Rajagopalan (2007) who defend the possibility of critical applied linguistics and critical approaches to language teaching. And I do so, for various reasons.

First of all, if one considers the political and social changes that have taken place in the last four years in Brazil (as well as in other parts of the world), it becomes vital to teach a foreign (and also a first, or second, or heritage, and so on) language critically in this country. To illustrate, bills such as the 867/2015, entitled "School Without Parties", which assumes that education should be free of ideologies, encouraging students to "witch hunt" teachers against "ideological contamination", have been provoking enormous transformations in the Brazilian educational scenario, mostly towards an uncritical upbringing of students and fear among educators.

Another relevant example has to do with the unwarned modifications in the latest versions of the Common National Curricular Basis (CNCB)[5], a document proposed by the government to guide Brazilian education. The CNCB, which had been under development since the end of 2014, with the participation of various segments of

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5 The Common National Curricular Basis is a document developed by the Brazilian government that aims at guiding school curriculums in Brazil. The document took three years to be completed and has been the topic of controversial debates among the Brazilian population. The CNCB was finished in December 2017 and ratified by the minister of education in the end of the same month. It is expected to be implemented by Brazilian schools in 2019, replacing the current document, called National Curricular Parameters, which was implemented in 1998.

society, was modified unexpectedly in December, 2017 and its final version approved by the National Education Advisory Board. Among the modifications, any mention against gender discrimination was excluded from the original text. Taking into account that Brazil is the 5th country with the highest rate of feminicide in the world, this type of change in a document that is supposed to guide Brazilian educators seems problematic, to say the least, highlighting the importance of developing critical consciousness in language classrooms.

On the other hand, the CNCB seems to preserve some of the principles established by the previous document, entitled National Curricular Parameters (NCP), proposed in 1998, in relation to the teaching of a foreign language. According to the NCP, learning a foreign language has to do with enabling the student so as to achieve *social freedom*. In this sense, social freedom means learning to "act in society through the word, building a social world to the self and others around us" (p. 42, Brasil, 1998, my translation). Similarly, the CNCB highlights the role of a foreign language in forming active and participative citizens, aiding to the development of their critical agency. As stated in the document, learning English should happen within a linguistic, conscious and critical perspective of education, "in which the pedagogical and political dimensions are intrinsically connected" (Brasil, 2017, p. 239, my translation). However, the document does not make clear what is meant by "critical" and by "political".

It is possible to affirm, therefore, that the innumerous controversial discussions, which have taken place during the development and especially after the final version of the CNCB was approved, signal that teaching a foreign language critically in Brazil has an urgent (even though sometimes reactionary) and hopefully transformative role in the upbringing of citizens.

Another reason why I defend critical approaches to language teaching has to do with my understanding that the areas that inform this study are not able to take over

the entire needs of the Brazilian foreign language education on their own. As previously stated, TBLT derives from a cognitive orientation and even though it has gained much prestige when it comes to language development, its lack of sociopolitical perspective of language is a strong criticism towards the approach. In fact, proponents of the task-based language teaching seemed, for most of its history, not to recognize the transformative role of language, which is embedded in sociopolitical contexts and, therefore, both reproduces and challenges dominant discourses. One may affirm that this is changing considering more recent publications such as Long's (2015) work. According to the author, TBLT is not only based on a psycholinguistic rationale, but it also follows equally significant principles based on the philosophy of education such as "individual freedom, rationality, emancipation, leaner-centeredness, egalitarian teacher-student relationships, participatory democracy, mutual aid, and cooperation" (p. 66).

Some criticisms are also directed towards the areas of CP and CL, especially due to their lack of methodological [6] instructions, which, as previously mentioned, characterize both areas. Behrman (2006) emphasizes that "the multiplicity of conceptual positions that influence critical literacy and the resistance to a definitive critical literacy pedagogy place responsibility for curriculum development on teachers and teacher educators" (p. 491), which may present difficult challenges to these professionals. Moreover, bearing in mind that research that attempts to understand the effects of critical literacy implementation in EFL contexts in combination with language development seems to be

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[6] It is relevant to highlight that by "methodological instructions" or "methodological framework", I here do not mean the implementation of a method, as the TBLT is perceived as an approach. By making use of the word "methodological" in these cases, I refer to choices made by the teacher while designing or implementing TBLT.

scant (Huang, 2011), even greater challenges may become part of the routine of the teacher who wishes to accomplish both.

It seems necessary, therefore, that research focusing on investigating scenarios that attempt to accomplish linguistic and critical needs take place, revealing empirical findings that may inform the practice of educators around the world.

It is important to clarify, at this time, that I do not believe that these fields ought to account for every single instance of education there is. In fact, I am very much aware that this is not a goal that has been set and then failed within these approaches to language teaching. However, since it is my understanding that both language and critical literacy development should permeate teaching in foreign language classrooms, I do perceive this combination as profitable. In fact, that is another reason why I defend critical foreign language teaching: as a researcher and as a teacher who is interested in both investigating my practice and in improving it, I do not see as beneficial to ignore the contributions made by these areas due to their differences. Instead, this study attempts to learn from each area by proposing a less taken path.

Finally, another reason why I endorse critical foreign language teaching is related to what Pennycook (1999) calls "pedagogy of engagement". According to the author, this is "an approach to TESOL that sees issues such as gender, race, class, sexuality, and postcolonialism as so fundamental to identity and language that they need to form the basis of curricular organization and pedagogy" (p. 340). Because I side with the author on the importance of approaching such issues in foreign language classrooms, as they are intrinsic parts of discourse, this study focused in discussing the topic of gender representation as the main theme that guided the classes that were implemented.

Having in mind the reasons aforementioned, this piece of research proposes a critical foreign language teaching approach, one that combines language

development and critical literacy growth, which may offer learners the necessary tools for communicating, understanding and acting upon discourse critically, therefore, taking on the opportunity for emancipation and agency. In this sense, this study aims at investigating the implementation of a cycle of tasks in a 7th grade English class in a public school, with the purpose of developing both language and critical literacy. So as to achieve this purpose, as a first step, a task cycle, in which students discussed issues related to gender representation, was designed under the critical pedagogy, critical literacy and task-based approach framework. Then, this cycle of tasks was implemented with the aim of understanding its impact on learners' language and critical literacy development.

Having informed the main theoretical groundwork that guided this study as well as its objectives, the following section focuses on detailing the significance of this piece of research.

1.3. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Studies that investigate TBLT in foreign language contexts have shown optimistic results on the positive impacts that tasks may have for language development (Long, 2016; Ellis, 2017; East, 2017). Moreover, studies that discuss the benefits of implementing critical literacy in education are also prominent (Huang, 2011; Janks, 2014; Bishop, 2014). However, as previously mentioned, it is not common among authors to discuss and understand the complexity and impacts of both areas in foreign language scenarios. This study, in this sense, may contribute to these fields, specially taking into account the criticisms towards them, as cited above.

Additionally, research that focuses on intact classrooms is not as common as it should be in neither TBLT nor CP, or CL fields, especially considering research in which practice also serves the purpose of informing theory. Additionally, studies in these areas that direct their attention to children/adolescents as participants, instead of adults, are also scant. In this sense, the present study also attempts to contribute by

investigating a 7th grade classroom in a public school. Moreover, bearing in mind the previously stated political and social scenario in Brazil, where the critical position of teachers as active participants in the classroom is being questioned, and where the emancipating role of critical consciousness is being put aside as a secondary (or even non-existent) aim of schooling, this study can be seen as both reactive and, hopefully, transformative.

Another important aspect of the present study is that it takes on the challenge of producing original tasks, which sheds some light on ways to develop tasks for the English language classroom according to learners' needs. Even though the cycle of tasks here presented is not supposed to serve as a recipe for critical foreign language classrooms, the fact that this piece of research explores the nuances, processes and theoretical grounds under which these tasks were developed and, it investigates the implementation of them in a real classroom, may inform teachers, by offering a sample of critical materials for foreign language teaching, and researchers from the various fields that guide this study, by discussing what it takes to develop a critical cycle of tasks and by producing empirical results that investigate the impacts of it on learning.

It is, therefore, my belief that this piece of research may contribute to the fields of Task-Based Language Teaching, Critical Pedagogy and Critical Literacy, both in terms of informing theory and advancing practice. Furthermore, I also believe that this study attains its relevance in offering an opportunity of a critical foreign language learning for students and critical foreign language teaching information for teachers who desire to teach English critically, hopefully, hence, encouraging transformations in their own realities and context.

1.4. ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

For the purpose of reporting a study that aimed at investigating the implementation of a critical cycle of tasks with the goal of developing both language and

critical literacy, this doctoral dissertation is organized into seven chapters, being Chapter 1 the introductory chapter.

Chapter 2 presents the theoretical background that informs this study, reviewing relevant literature on the three major fields that guided it: Critical Pedagogy, Critical Literacy and Task-Based Approach. For this purpose, the chapter is divided in three sections and subdivided into seven subsections. The first section, entitled Critical Theories of Language Education discusses the relevant theoretical grounds on both Critical Pedagogy (subsection 2.1.1) and Critical Literacy (subsection 2.1.2). It also discusses Feminist Pedagogy (subsection 2.1.3) and presents empirical studies of Critical Pedagogy and Literacy with a focus on foreign language contexts (subsection 2.1.4). The second section, named Task-Based Approach, reviews the main literature in the field, also presenting empirical studies in the area that have a focus on authentic classrooms (subsection 2.2.1). Finally, the third section in chapter 2 approaches measures that are used in the fields that informed this study when it comes to analyzing language development (subsection 2.3.1) and analyzing critical literacy development (subsection 2.3.2).

Chapter three offers a detailed account of the methodological choices adopted in this study. It is divided into seven sections. The first section provides explanation on what mixed method research is, since this is the method selected for research analysis. The second section introduces the objectives and the research questions that guided this study. The third section presents the setting where the study was carried out, along with the participants and the regulations governing ethical practices in Brazil. Section four focuses on describing the instruments used in this study. The fifth section portrays the general design of the study and discusses the procedures that were used for data collection. Section six introduces the procedures that were used for data analysis. Finally, the last section in chapter three presents a summary of the chapter.

Chapter four aims at describing the cycle of tasks developed and implemented in this study, as well as its rationale and teaching procedures. Considering the importance of designing materials that attempt to both develop critical literacy and language, the task cycle is presented separately from the other instruments. In this sense, chapter four is organized into five sections. The first section introduces the process of needs analysis that originated the cycle of tasks, discussing aspects of the context of investigation. The second section brings general details on the cycle of tasks. Section three provides information about the pre-task phase, while section four refers to the mid task phase of the cycle. Finally, the last section in chapter four presents the post task phase of the task cycle.

Chapter five, which presents and discusses the results related to language development, is organized into four main sections, which are further subdivided. Section 1 presents and discusses the results in terms of language development, considering the teacher/researcher's perception. For this purpose, both the pre-task phase (subsection 5.1.1) and the mid-task phase (subsection 5.1.2) are explored. The second section focuses on presenting and discussing the results in terms of language development, considering participants' performance in pre-test and post-test 1 (subsection 5.2.1), participants' performance in pre-test and post-test 2 in relation to accuracy (subsections 5.2.2, 5.2.3, 5.2.4, 5.2.5), and participants' performance in pre-test and post-test 2 in relation to outcome achievement (subsections 5.2.6, 5.2.7). Section 3 explores the results in terms of language development, considering participants' perceptions through questionnaires (subsection 5.3.1) and interviews (subsections 5.3.2). The results of both approaches are discussed in subsection 5.3.3. Finally, the fourth section of this chapter answers the research questions related to language development, summarizing the main results.

Chapter six refers to results related to critical literacy development. Hence, the chapter is divided into

sections and subsections. Section 1 presents and discusses the results in terms of critical literacy development, considering the teacher/researcher's perception. In it, five different tasks are detailed (subsections 6.1.1 through 6.1.5.). The second section explores the findings in terms of critical literacy development, considering participants' performance in a pre-test (subsection 6.2.1) and a post-test (subsection 6.2.2). The third section presents and discusses the results in terms of critical literacy development, considering participants' perceptions through questionnaires (subsection 6.3.1) and interviews (subsections 6.3.2). Finally, the last section of this chapter answers the research questions concerning critical literacy development, summarizing the main results.

Ultimately, chapter seven closes this dissertation by summarizing the main findings of the study in section 7.1, presenting the limitations and suggestions for future research in section 7.2, the possible pedagogical implications in section 7.3 and, finally, some last words of reflection concerning this piece of research in section 7.4.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter lays the theoretical groundwork of the present study, whose objective is to develop and implement a cycle of English thematic tasks in order to encourage critical literacy among students together with language development. Therefore, the chapter is divided according to the main fields and constructs that informed this piece of research, as follows: (2.1) Critical Theories of Language Education, (2.2) Task-Based Approach, and (2.3) Measures of Language Development and Critical Literacy Development. Moreover, considering each of these sections, the following subdivision offers specific information about each segment: (2.1.1) Critical Pedagogy, (2.1.2) Critical Literacy, (2.1.3) Feminist Pedagogy, (2.1.4) Empirical Studies in Critical Pedagogy and Literacy: A Focus on Foreign Language Contexts, (2.2.1) Empirical Studies in Task-Based Approach: A Focus on Authentic Classrooms, (2.3.1) Measures used for Analyzing Language Development, (2.3.2) Measures used for Analyzing Critical Literacy Development.

2.1. CRITICAL THEORIES OF LANGUAGE EDUCATION

In their well-known and influential book, *Literacy: Reading the Word and the World*, Freire and Macedo (1987) asked an intriguing question that has become a rather common inquiry among proponents of critical theories of education: "in favor of whom and what (and thus against whom and what) do we promote education?" (p. 38). This question is not only relevant to teachers and students but it is also one of the many issues that scholars who follow a critical approach to language pedagogy attempt to understand. As an English language teacher and a critical applied linguist and researcher, I too ask myself the same question and attempt to unveil some

issues surrounding it, considering a Brazilian English language classroom in a public school. In order to do so, the theories of Critical Pedagogy and Critical Literacy were used to inform the choices made during this endeavor. The following sections, therefore, aim at discussing the main tenets surrounding both theories.

2.1.1. Critical Pedagogy

When it comes to understanding Critical Language Pedagogy, Crookes (2013) explains that it "emerges from the interaction of theories and practices of language teaching that foster language learning, development, and action on the part of the students" (p. 8). Language, in this case, is seen from a critical perspective since language use happens in (and is therefore shaped by) a particular time and space, related to a specific context (Fairclough, 1992; Pennycook, 2001). However, before focusing on the main tenets that a critical approach to language pedagogy may have, it is important to consider its historical roots.

Critical Language Pedagogy is under the umbrella of the Critical Pedagogy Theory. In attempting to understand the history of Critical Pedagogy, many authors (Giroux, 1983; Knoblauch & Brannon, 1993; Burbules & Berk, 1999; Norton & Toohey, 2004; to name but a few) identify the work of the Brazilian scholar, Paulo Freire, as a starting point to the development of the theory. Crookes (2013) notes, however, that the term 'critical pedagogy' was first used in print by Giroux (1983) and only later by Freire himself. The author also explains that, although Freire's work was groundbreaking to the development of the area, other scholars before Freire have also promoted alternative, and sometimes even called 'radical', pedagogies such as Dewey, Ferrer, Tao Xingzhi, Freinet, A.S. Neill, among others.

It is also imperative to understand that, since Freire's work started, the Critical Pedagogy Theory has largely developed. Back in 1970s, when Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* became known worldwide,

oppression was primarily perceived as a dichotomy between the working class and the ruling class. Subsequently, other social movements and different perspectives of oppression from various contexts became visible and urgent, with feminist perceptions next in influencing critical educational theory, followed by race, sexuality, disability theories, among others. Currently, as Pennycook (1999) pointed out, these issues are so important that they should serve as the basis of curricular organization and pedagogy.

Considering the construct 'critical pedagogy', the word 'critical' may have various interpretations depending on the context in which it is used. Within the field of education, critical assumes a political stance, which is expressed "through embodied action or discursive practice" (Luke, A. 2004, p. 26). Crookes (2012) explains that 'critical' is related to the idea of *critique*, that is, "systematic and constructive criticism based on empirical and theoretical study of society, language and the person, reflecting alternative, progressive or radical theories of societies, individuals and languages" (p. 1). The word 'pedagogy', in turn, plays a unique role in emphasizing the teaching/learning process that education may entail.

It is important to highlight, however, that different from other critical theories that may give emphasis to recognizing or reflecting on injustices in the world, Critical Pedagogy sees promoting action towards the world as equally important, so the student "is also moved to change it" (Burbules & Berk, 1999, p. 9). This is what Freire, back in the 1970s, called 'critical consciousness' or '*conscientização*'. For Freire, a person is truly aware of his/her reality and, therefore, achieves a critical consciousness, if he/she goes a step beyond perceiving the existing conditions and, in fact, engages in authentic transformation of them.

Applying Freire's notion of *conscientização* to language teaching and learning, Crookes (2013) defines

critical pedagogy, emphasizing the main tenets of the approach. As posed by the author,

> "critical pedagogy is teaching for social justice, in ways that support the development of active, engaged citizens who will, as circumstances permit, critically inquire into why the lives of so many human beings, including their own, are so materially (and spiritually) inadequate, be prepared to seek out solutions to the problems they define and encounter, and take action accordingly" (Crookes, 2013, p. 77)

Having in mind this understanding of what critical pedagogy is, innumerous aspects that have contributed to the development of the theory along the years have to be highlighted. One of them is the importance that critical teaching gives to students' local contexts and needs. Within this perspective, students' own linguistic background and life experiences become central to the learning process, since students and teachers are the starting point for analyzing their own involvements in engaging with and constructing social and power relations (Giroux, 1987; Lancaster and Taylor, 1992). Praxis, following this rationale, is teaching that incorporates "the dimensions of reflection and action, the process of naming reality (theorizing, 'representing'), and the process of changing reality (directed action in the material, historical world)" (Knoblauch and Brannon, 1993, p. 9).

Riveira (1999) stresses the need for developing a program that has students and their community as a starting point, so then the student and the community's multiple identities are "not only a source of knowledge but also knowledge itself" (p. 498). In a similar vein,

Benesch (1999) tackles the idea of a dialogic education, which "does not choose between immediate needs and the development of social awareness, believing that they can and should be taught simultaneously" (p. 579). What Benesch is saying, therefore, is that the learner, when assuming a critical position, considers both his own reality and the reality of others, aiming at transformation. The idea is later on reinforced by Shin and Crookes (2005) who pose that "the macro social, cultural, and political contexts where the learner is situated should be embodied in the curriculum" (p. 115) so then the student can assume an active role in society.

　　　　Another important aspect of critical teaching is taking a closer and attentive look at the influence of power relations, since education and power are intrinsically related (Freire and Macedo, 1987; Pennycook, 1999). Considering that we live in a society divided by relations of unequal power, and having in mind that language and classroom cannot be seen apart from people, society and from relations of power (Pessoa, 2014), fostering a critical capacity in students is a way of empowering them to challenge such power effects. As Burbules & Berk (1999) clarified,

> "Critical Pedagogy represents (…) an effort to work within educational institutions and other media to raise questions about inequalities of power, about false myths of opportunity and merit for many students, and about the way belief systems become internalized to the point where individuals and groups abandon the very aspiration to question or change their lot in life" (p. 8).

It is possible to perceive, therefore, that critical pedagogy, when applied in classrooms, attempts to offer a critical stance to teaching by engaging students in reflection and transformative action, taking into account their own context and the impact of social injustices and power relations in this context. Critical Pedagogy for language teaching, hence, also follows these basic tenets besides considering other aspects that are specific to the area.

Crookes (2013) enumerates nine prerequisites for critical English language teaching. As he explains, although they probably should not be separated, experimenting with these aspects in more conventional environments can be a step towards promoting critical pedagogy in language classrooms. The nine components are, therefore, elements that should be included when developing a critical language curriculum for ESL/EFL classes. They are: 1) language organization and classroom management, which refer to the importance of teachers engaging in careful planning and the employment of democratic management skills; 2) critical stance by the teacher, which calls attention to the relevance of the teacher developing his/her critical values and including them in teaching; 3) critical needs analysis, that indicates the significance of addressing students' needs towards agency; 4) the negotiated syllabus, that emphasizes a democratic perspective on the syllabus design and implementation; 5) codes, which draw on Freirean materials that made use of visual aids to assist students in articulating their perceptions of their own world; 6) critical dialogue, an opportunity for sharing thoughts while encouraging or pressing "another to consider the basis for their thinking" (Crookes, 2013, p. 64); 7) critical content and procedures, that allow for participatory engagement of students in approaching critical themes; 8) democratic, participatory and critical assessment, that understands assessment as a negotiated, cooperative and student-centered step; and 9) action orientation, which highlights the praxis characteristic of critical pedagogy

where learners not only develop a critical consciousness but also attempt to transform their reality.

It can be concluded, considering the aforementioned, that critical pedagogy is currently perceived as an approach to language teaching that, through dialogical, negotiated discourse, that attempts to encourage reflection about language and its social aspects, fosters transformation of unequal power relations in society through the actions of learners. Taking into account that this study focuses on the critical teaching of English as a foreign language in the Brazilian context, I shall now turn the discussion to the developments of the field in Brazil.

According to Cox and Assis-Peterson (1999), critical pedagogy in Brazil emerged with the work of Freire, who was, during the dictatorship in the 1960s, imprisoned and exiled for his ideas and practices in promoting education for the oppressed. The second phase of Brazilian critical pedagogy starts with the Law of Amnesty of 1979, when many intellectuals (including Freire) where able to return to the country and when, as the authors put it, "never had the word critical been spoken so much" (p. 435).

Cox and Assis-Peterson explain that during this second phase, the main tenets of critical pedagogy "mainly fertilized the imagination of academics involved with the mother tongue [Portuguese]. Teachers of English stayed on the sidelines of the movement" (pp. 436-437). At the time, the communicative approach was very popular among Brazilian English professionals and learning a language meant "acquiring linguistic and communicative competence without a political, ideological dimension" (Cox and Assis-Peterson, 1999, p. 437). Almost 20 years later, their 1999 study, that tried to find out what Brazilian English teachers knew about and thought of critical pedagogy, showed not so optimistic results, as their findings pointed out to the fact that critical

pedagogy was still "a matter of interest only to a few academics" (p. 448).

Nowadays, the area of Critical Pedagogy for foreign language teaching has largely developed in Brazil, as Brazilian authors seem to be increasingly attracted by language teaching from a critical perspective (e.g. Brahim, 2007; Moita Lopes, 2006, 2009, 2010; Pessoa, 2014; Pessoa & Urzêda-Freitas, 2016; Siqueira, 2009, 2010; to name but a few). However, even though the field of critical pedagogy for language teaching has been increasing in Brazil, there is still room (and demand) for research and praxis. After all, as Soares and Zaidan's (2015) article (which reviewed fourteen years of publications in two major journals of applied linguistics in Brazil) revealed, only ten per cent of the papers published between the years of 2001 and 2014 focused on a critical perspective of applied linguistics. It seems, therefore, that there is an urgent need for more research interested in unveiling critical pedagogy for language teaching implemented in the specific conditions that emerge from the Brazilian context. In this sense, one important area that needs to be tackled is how one goes about teaching a foreign language critically.

When it comes to foreign language teaching in general, the Brazilian National Curriculum Parameters (Brasil, 1998), a document that has guided schools and educators for the last 20 years, recommends that the central emphasis of foreign language teaching in Brazilian schools should be on "citizenship, critical awareness in relation to the language and the social-political aspects of learning a foreign language" (p. 15, my translation). The document highlights the social function that language has and calls attention for the demand of a "discursive engagement of the learners, that is, their capacity to engage themselves and others in discourse so that they can act in the social world" (p. 15, my translation). More specifically, among the goals for foreign language

education in elementary school, the NCP emphasizes that, during this phase, students should learn to "position themselves critically (…) making use of dialogue as a way to mediate conflicts" (p. 7, my translation) as well as "question their reality by posing problems and attempting to solve them making use of (…) a critical analysis capacity" (p. 8, my translation).

Similarly, the Common National Curricular Basis (CNCB, 2017), a new document approved in December of 2017 that is expected to replace the NCP until 2019, stresses the importance of foreign language learning as a tool to reinforce "a perspective of language education that is based on language, awareness and that is critical, and in which the pedagogical and political dimensions are intrinsically connected" (p. 239). Among the competencies recommended to be developed during foreign language teaching in elementary schools, the CNCB suggests a critical reflection about the world, the self and the others as well as a critical use of English language literacy. It must be acknowledged, however, that the document is not clear on what it means by 'critical' or 'political', and this it has been the topic of controversial debates among educators.

In order to achieve the aforementioned objectives, both the NCP and the CNCB recommend that, in foreign language classes, texts must be used as a means for language meaning-mapping and meaning-making that is based on social interactions and critical reflection. The NCP talks about developing knowledge about the world, the text and the language itself through various types of texts that will be related to the world of the student. The CNCB discusses the importance of intercultural texts that are used to develop several kinds of literacy, including digital literacy, making it possible for students to identify and express ideas, feelings and values.

Considering that the two documents emphasize

the use of texts[7] as the basic tool for foreign language teaching, it is possible to say, therefore, that both documents, then, put emphasis on the development of foreign language literacy as the basis for foreign language teaching in elementary schools. By literacy, in this case, I mean mastering basic communicative skills, aiming at functioning in the world. However, having in mind some statements presented in the documents themselves, which highlight the importance of taking a critical stance (as aforementioned), and considering the previous discussions in this section, which emphasize the relevance of critical perspectives on language teaching; it is my belief that the development of foreign language *critical* literacy is an urgent goal in Brazilian schools, so that students are prepared not only to communicate but also to understand the ideologies and the relations of power involved in discourse, becoming a multilingual social agent in his/her world.

This study is, therefore, grounded in both Critical Pedagogy and Critical Literacy theories since, as previously said, it takes the principles of Critical Pedagogy as basis for language teaching and, in order to do so, focuses on the development of foreign language Critical Literacy that allows for engagement with texts within a critical perspective. In this section, I discussed the main tenets and characteristics of the Critical Pedagogy theory, which aims at developing critical consciousness among learners by encouraging reflection and action in relation to the learner's (micro and macro) world perceptions, fostering transformation. The next section, then, reviews some important aspects related to the theory of Critical Literacy.

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[7] By text, I mean a unity of meaning that may be presented in several formats other than only written.

2.1.2. Critical Literacy

Burbules and Berk (1999) explain that for Freire, "the teaching of literacy is a primary form of cultural action, and as action it must 'relate speaking the word to transforming reality'" (p. 10-11). However, Brahim (2007) points out that a more traditional view of literacy, one in which "teaching of the reading and writing abilities is mechanical and decontextualized" (p. 14, my translation), has permeated a great part of educational scenarios. Bishop (2014) emphasizes that "such a traditional definition of literacy is ideologically aligned with particular postures of normative sociopolitical consciousness that are inherently exploitative" (p. 53). The author explains that a more critical understanding of literacy may focus on "the social construction of reading, writing and text production within political contexts of inequitable economic, cultural, political, and institutional structures" (p. 53).

Knoblauch and Brannon (1993) make a significant distinction among different kinds of literacy. According to the authors, the most popular understanding of literacy "comes from the functionalist perspective, with its appearing pragmatic emphasis on readying people for the necessities of daily life" (p. 17). That is, to be literate from this viewpoint, means learning to perform complex tasks in society, such as reading and writing with the purpose of being productive and contributing to society's development. Another type of literacy suggested by Knoblauch and Brannon is the cultural literacy, which aims to move "beyond a limited conception of 'basic skills'" (p. 19), focusing not only on technical proficiency and abilities but also on "an awareness of cultural heritage, a capacity for 'higher-order' thinking, a contemplative ability and some aesthetic discernment, a feel for the richer meanings of literature and philosophy" (p. 19).

Literacy for personal growth is the third type

discussed by Knoblauch and Brannon. As posed by the authors, "nurturing reading and writing abilities offers a way to develop that imaginative power, thereby promoting the progress of society through the progress of the individual learner" (p. 21). In this case, hence, the development of the individual contributes to the development of a productive and well-functioning society. Finally, the fourth representation of literacy presented by Knoblauch and Brannon (1993) is critical literacy, which

> constitutes a means to "empowerment", a way to voice discontent and seek political enfranchisement, not in the naive belief that merely being literate is sufficient to change the distribution of power, but in the knowledge that the ability to speak is dialectically related to the authority to speak and that the authority to speak alone enables entrance to the public discourses in which power is negotiated (p. 22).

Giroux (1993), who seems to agree with Knoblauch and Brannon's definition of Critical Literacy, explains that literacy becomes critical when it problematizes the practice of representation; that is, when it acknowledges that meaning is not fixed and it is embedded in context. For Giroux, critical literacy happens when "difference becomes crucial for understanding not simply how to read, write or develop aural skills, but also how to recognize that the identities of 'others' matter as part of progressive set of politics and practices" (pp. 367-368)

Almost ten years later, Janks' (2000) ideas come as imperative in the sense that they point out that critical literacy provides access to dominant languages (such as English), literacies and genres "while simultaneously using diversity as a productive resource for redesigning social futures and for changing the horizon of possibility" (p. 178). The author talks about how transformative the use of critical literacy can be in reinventing discourse and representations, both in oppressing and oppressed contexts. Petrone and Gibney (2005) go in a similar direction, affirming that, by mastering critical literacy skills, not only do students learn how to read and write and how to perceive the world from a critical perspective, but also they are encouraged to use this knowledge for seeking change in the world. As described by Behrman (2006), the "aims of critical literacy are to have students examine the power relationships inherent in language use, recognize that language is not neutral, and confront their own values in the production and reception of language" (p. 480).

More recently, Bishop (2014) stresses that even though there is no single model of critical literacy, "the emphasis on Freire's (1970) action-reflection cycle of 'praxis' has offered participants a concept through which to construct meanings that support their literacy for civic engagement" (p. 52). The author calls attention to the inquiring role of critical literacy as an approach that is committed to exploring how and why particular social and cultural groups of persons are either part of the center or the margin, occupying unequal spaces in society.

Although critical literacy is largely seen as an emancipatory practice, translating critical literacy theory into practice is not an easy task, and for that, it demands innovative and local solutions. Behrman (2006) discusses the lack of instructional methodology for implementing critical literacy in classrooms. According to the author,

"some critical literacy proponents have even resisted the development of a too narrowly conceived instructional methodology. While Luke (2000) recognized varied classroom strategies to foster critical literacy, he cautioned against a 'formula for doing critical literacy in the classroom' (p. 453–454) and questioned the value of a state-mandated curriculum policy supporting critical literacy. Instead, he envisioned an organic approach to critical literacy wherein teachers and students 'invent' critical literacies in the classroom. McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2004) warned that critical literacy practices should not be exported from one classroom to another without local adaptation, and Comber (2001) asserted that 'critical literacy needs to be continually redefined in practice' (p. 100)" (Behrman, 2006, p. 480).

Even though there is no single way of doing critical literacy, one prominent proposal for implementation of critical literacy in classrooms was presented in the work of McLaughlin and DeVoogd's (2004a/2004b), who offer four principles for critical literacy development. According to them, 1) critical literacy focuses on issues of power and promotes

reflection, transformation and action; 2) critical literacy focuses on problem-posing and its complexity; 3) critical literacy's strategies are dynamic and adapt to the contexts in which they are used; 4) critical literacy disrupts the commonplace by examining it from multiple perspectives. The authors also propose a framework for developing a critical literacy lesson that involves four steps: a) engaging students' thinking, by activating their background knowledge, motivating and setting a purpose; b) guiding students' thinking, by making use of different techniques that prompt the text and aid students in their exploration; c) extending students' thinking, by engaging in critical discussions and taking action based on the readings; d) reflection, by assessing the lesson and learning.

Moreover, McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2004b) talk about various strategies that can be used to "provide direction for students as they engage in critical analysis" (p. 38). Problem posing is a strategy in which learners engage in critical literacy by asking critical questions about a text such as "who (or whose voice) is in the text and who is missing?" or "what are the author's intentions and purposes in writing this text?" or "what would an alternative perspective say?" and "how can this information be used to promote equity?". Examining alternative perspectives, another strategy used in critical literacy, happens when learners explore different viewpoints of a theme. According to the authors, different ways of promoting alternative perspectives, such as creating alternative stories, juxtapositioning different texts, or engaging in group analysis and discussion, can help learners to better understand the social relations and social identities that are constituted or reconstituted in discourse (Fairclough, 1992). It is important to emphasize, however, that McLaughlin and DeVoogd's cited works are L1-oriented.

In the second and foreign language field, almost

two decades ago, Alford (2001) called attention to the fact that "published research into the needs and experiences of ESL students engaging in CL in mainstream classrooms is indeed scant" (p. 238). More recently, Huang (2011) explained that "the few studies that do exist focus on development of critical literacy without explicit attention to development of language skills. These studies also do not systematically examine students' understanding of critical literacy in relation to their language development" (p. 145).

One reason for explaining the insufficiency of studies in the area of second/foreign language critical literacy can be the fact that various contexts demand different approaches. Luke, A. and Dooley (2011) ask the question "is there a unified or singular approach to critical TESOL education?" and emphasize that the answer requires a historical and culturally situated perspective since, for them, approaches to critical TESOL are

> "activist interventions by students and teachers, teacher educators, scholars and researchers to disrupt and redress specific conditions of educational inequality, political disenfranchisement, linguistic and cultural marginalization, social and economic injustice. Each is based on a situated 'reading of the world' and a set of assumptions about what is to be done. It would be spurious to adjudge them on lofty theoretical and narrow empirical grounds. Each should be viewed in terms of transformative effects: whether and how they generated

literacies that altered communities' critical analyses and action in the world and their material and social relations, individually and collectively, developmentally and longitudinally" (p. 864)

Besides the fact that critical literacy is contextual and situational, another substantial challenge that a critical literacy approach to second/foreign language teaching may face, according to the authors, is because "it lacks specificity in terms of how teachers and students can engage with the specialized and complex structures of texts" (Luke, A. & Dooley, 2011, p. 826). Moreover, Lau (2012) warns us about another difficulty that happens "because teachers assume that students' limitations in English will preclude academic engagement with complex social and moral issues" (p. 325). These difficulties, therefore, may explain the gap that exists when it comes to understanding 1) how to implement critical literacy in second/foreign language classrooms and 2) what the relations between language and literacy development are.

Concerning the Brazilian context, Mattos (2014) reveals that "English teachers in Brazil often find it difficult to implement critical literacy in their classrooms, not only because of lack of theoretical basis, but also because they have never been through the experience of learning through Critical Literacy" (p. 127). Silva, L. et al (2017) accentuate the need for educators to become critical themselves so then they can teach critically. The authors alert us to the point that, nevertheless, the current Brazilian political scenario seems to be creating obstacles for the development of critical positions in classrooms since many (one may call, conservative) politicians, who have the power to make important decisions that impact

the Brazilian educational system, hold a positivist/essentialist perspective of education, which perceives that "teaching should be a neutral act […] and has to do with knowledge transmission of objective facts" (p. 1867).

Indeed, over the last three years, two central bills, concerning the Brazilian educational scenario and that endanger a critical teaching standpoint, were introduced: (1) the project "School Without Parties" (867/2015), which aims at reinforcing a neutral education and sees the practice of critical reflection as political indoctrination; (2) the project "New High School" (13.415/2017), that overemphasizes the teaching of Portuguese, English and Math and, among other actions, allows for professionals without an education degree to teach certain courses within the curriculum. The first project, "School Without Parties", encourages students to suspect, report and criminalize their teachers against "ideological contamination" of political parties and specific groups. What the project in fact does, according to Frigotto (2017), is to defend the absolute party, a party that promotes "intolerance in front of different and antagonistic views of the world, of knowledge, of education, of justice, of freedom; a xenophobic party, therefore, in its various aspects: towards gender, race, class, etc" (p. 31, my translation). The second project, entitled "New High School", claims to offer more flexibility for students to focus on the areas they are more interested in. What it does, however, is to reinforce and implement a utilitarian and technicist view of learning, one that prepares students to produce and that perceives knowledge solely as a means to an end (Ramos and Heinsfeld, 2017).

Additionally, it is relevant to mention the last-minute modifications in the CNCB document, which were also controversial decisions made by the Brazilian government that seem to create obstacles to critical

teaching in Brazil. In the beginning of December, 2017, the final version of the document, which was sent to the National Education Advisory Board for approval, had any mention against gender discrimination excluded from its text and, instead, the topic of gender was included as a part of the religious studies.

This research (and researcher) positions itself against these projects and decisions since they reproduce a banking concept of education (Freire, 1970), which perceives students as empty vessels (that are not capable of reflecting critically about what they are taught), because they perceive teaching from a technicist perspective that prioritizes the preparation of students for being part of the work force, and because they ignore the problematic representations of gender that are part of the Brazilian's (and world's) reality as well as their negative impact in reproducing normative discourse. Hence, because I agree with Freire and Macedo, D. (1987) who see a language curriculum that encourages critical literacy as one that "promotes democratic and emancipatory change" (p. 141), I believe (and act on) the need for more research (and teaching) that attempts to unveil the impact of critical development in foreign language classrooms.

Still, it is important to consider, on the other hand, the foreign language teaching status and conditions in Brazil, as well as the expectations that schools, parents and students may have concerning this subject. Rocha, D. (2017) warns us about the dissonances of the Brazilian legislation concerning foreign language teaching in basic education since, as the author explains, the official documents (NCP, previously mentioned) seem to recognize many limitations and difficulties for the teaching of another language in this country while not acting upon (or even assuming responsibility for) them. The author highlights the most impacting conditions of the Brazilian scenario for foreign language education: the large amount of students in the classroom, the

heterogeneity of the students gathered in the same class, the insufficient workload attributed to the discipline, the deficient teacher instruction, the poor infrastructure, to name but a few. Moreover, it is crucial to consider the common expectations surrounding English classrooms in Brazil, that is: students should learn English in schools so that they may be approved in the university entrance exam or get a good job. The Brazilian reality in most public schools, therefore, still overemphasizes the development of either a more structural and/or a communicative competence, and often "ignores sociopolitical issues that are embedded in any communicative event" (Silva, L; Silva, M; Rocha, 2017, p. 1869).

This study, therefore, understands critical literacy as an emancipatory tool for analyzing discourse, considering the existing power relations, as well as producing discourse that encourages social changes and, hence, recognizes the importance of developing critical literacy in the foreign language classroom. Similarly, taking into consideration that language can be an empowering tool and that teaching a foreign language is also a political act, this research aims at ensuring language development from a critical perspective. Moreover, taking into account the need for more studies that attempt to unveil the limitations and benefits of a critical language teaching in EFL classrooms in Brazil, this study proposes the use of a cycle of tasks as an instructional basis for implementing and developing this perspective. Due to the fact the cycle of tasks developed for this research tackles issues related to gender representation from the perspective of feminist theories, the next section will briefly discuss some relevant information concerning the feminist pedagogy.

2.1.3. Feminist Pedagogy

When the subject is gender, the Brazilian

sociopolitical scenario is (to say the least) contradictory and highly marked by female struggles. Advances in favor of women's rights are indeed part of the country's history (the contributions of the women's movement for the redemocratization of the country after dictatorship, for instance) and some victories have left their mark, such as the approved law "Maria da Penha", in 2006, that aims at curbing domestic and family violence against women. More recently, the bill 13.104, which passed in 2015, introduces the concept of feminicide to the Brazilian criminal law, characterizing it as a crime against women, who are killed for being women. Even so, violence against women and girls remains pervasive in Brazil, "rooted in patriarchy […], linked to the economic inequality Brazilian women face" (Roure & Capraro, 2016, p. 208).

According to the Brazilian Forum of Public Safety (2016), during the year of 2014, a woman was raped in Brazil every eleven minutes. In 2016, a 16-year-old teenager was raped by 30 men while unconscious. The crime was recorded and streamed in social networks by the aggressors themselves. Being only one among many other similar cases (not always reported by the media), these are drastic examples of how serious the violence against women in Brazil is.

This was one of the reasons why the bill 7371/2014 was presented in the House of Representatives. The bill proposes the creation of a national fund for combating violence against women. Even though the bill is seen by many as a progressive action, several conservative (mostly religious) congress people (mostly men) have positioned themselves against it, because they believe the project may encourage abortion, a practice that is still considered illegal in Brazil.

Not only cannot Brazilian women feel safe in their own country, but also they struggle in face of lower salaries, lack of space in high order professional positions,

stereotyped representations in the media, to mention but a few. Black Brazilian women are forced to engage in an even more unjust battle, accumulating prejudice against their gender as well as their race. According to the study entitled "violence map" (Waiselfisz, 2015), sponsored by different organizations, the general profile of women who suffer violence in Brazil is constituted by black women, between the ages of 18 and 30. The document explains that during the decade of 2003-2013, the feminicide against white women decreased 11,9% whereas the feminicide against black women increased 19, 5%.

Considering the aforementioned struggles women and girls face in Brazil, this researcher argues in favor of discussing gender representation in schools, not only as a means for promoting awareness but mostly aiming at social change when it comes to gender inequality, misrepresentation and discrimination (even though, as previously mentioned, the current documents for education do not explicitly recommend so). hooks (2000) warns educators that by failing to teach about feminism in our schools, "we allow mainstream patriarchal mass media to remain the primary place where folks learn about feminism, and most of what they learn is negative" (p. 21). Similarly, Pessoa and Urzêda-Freitas (2012) describe the teacher's role as the one that problematizes discourses that exclude and marginalize various groups. Be it either "behind closed doors" (Sattler, 1997) in the schools or be it out on the streets, it is my belief, hence, as a researcher and educator, that through the development of critical literacy and critical language, students may be better equipped to recognize/understand gender power relations expressed in discourse and, therefore, act upon it.

At the core of Critical Pedagogy theory as well as Critical Literacy theory lay the principles for an education that fosters social justice. After all, as Hammond and Macken-Horarik (1999) explain, the role of critical literacy is to assist students in "developing insights into

the ways in which ideologies, identities, and power relations work in society and the ways in which language works to entrench and challenge those relations" (p. 529). However, it is important to consider that, even though the main tenets of critical theories of literacy and pedagogy seem to share their perspectives with the feminist agenda, some tension between them exists. As explained by Crookes (2009), the feminist pedagogy is a clear example of a perspective "related to critical or radical pedagogy, arising generally after Freirean critical pedagogy had established itself as a concept in academia, whose proponents wanted to not only draw from Freirean ideas but also critique them and be separate from them" (p. 7).

Luke, C. (1992) talks about how the discourse of critical pedagogy initially "constructs a masculinist subject which renders its emancipatory agenda for 'gender' theoretically and practically problematic" (p. 25). The author called attention to how some issues specifically concerned with female struggles remained politically subordinate and how empowered men were the ones with prerogatives to critique and act towards an emancipatory reality. Without their voice being heard, women have then been silenced since "those who are denied speech cannot make their experience known and thus of their lives or of history" (Gal, 1989, p. 1).

Cameron (1992) points out how the feminist understanding of pedagogy "has posed a very serious challenge to the authority linguistics who wants to claim for itself the central locus of knowledge about language" (p. 233). Drawing from critical theories of gender, critical feminist pedagogies are asking new questions and reformulating old ones, revisiting the concept of empowerment. As explained by Pavlenko (1992),

> what is important in critical feminist pedagogies is the types of issues raised and the

> types of *engagement* offered in the classroom. The multiple forms of engagement should aim to offer a safe place in which students could learn to recognize and acknowledge existing gender discourses and explore alternative discourses, identities, and futures (…) the key way to explore alternative discourses and possibilities is through *authenticity*, which involves recognition of cultural differences, of otherness, and of multiple interpretations and perceptions of gendered performances. (pp. 63-64)

Together with many other female scholars, Carmem Luke and Jennifer Gore (1992) challenged the Critical Pedagogy theory proposing instead a poststructuralist feminist pedagogy, which links texts, classrooms to material bodies/subjectivities. A decade later, as an attempt to answer the question "what is, then, a feminist pedagogy?", Fisher (2001) called attention to the importance of social movements, such as the feminist movement, as a channel that aims at offering a space for oppressed people to have a voice and move towards a more socially fair world. The author warned us, however, that the feminist movement is "neither simple nor unified. Feminists continuously divide along lines of political philosophy, class, race, sexual orientation, culture, nationality, and a host of other factors" (Fisher, 2001, p. 26).

Norton and Pavlenko (2004) explain that the feminist poststructuralism in language education is an approach to the study of language and education that "strives to (a) understand the relationship between power

and knowledge; (b) theorize the role of language in production and reproduction of power; and (c) deconstruct master narratives that oppress certain groups" (p. 2). The authors emphasize that this perspective considers how gender relations vary across cultures, taking into account social, political and economic changes within a temporal spectrum.

The feminist poststructural view is, therefore, intersectional and considers various aspects to understand the complexities that underlie its premises. hooks (2010), for instance, calls attention to the importance that women of color have in the feminist movement and theory. Still, she denounces how "we can still read celebrated theory by white women that builds on this work without any mention of the individual black women thinkers who laid the foundation" (p. 174).

Even though different perspectives inform and contribute to the feminist agenda, it is a consensus that "educators must maintain critical vigilance to ensure that sexist biases do not once again become the norm" (hooks, 2010, p. 94). A critical and feminist teaching of language and literacy, therefore, should aim at aiding students in the development of a critical consciousness of discourse.

Brady and Hernández (1993) talk about how discourse is used to reinforce a biased representation of gender. According to the authors, "to unlearn privilege as Spivak says, one needs to transform the ways in which women are represented: 'from fragmented and passive voices to active subjects in the struggle of histories'" (p. 331). In this sense, the cycle of tasks in this study attempts to contribute to this goal, not only by providing tools of "understanding how subject positions for readers and spectators are constructed", but also reclaiming "the importance of linking the personal and the political as legitimate foundation for how one speaks, what one says, and how one acts" (Brady & Hernández, 1993, p. 332).

The issue of gender representation and feminism, however, may not be an easy one to approach in classrooms, especially with younger children and teenagers, as is the case of this study. Bell (2001) suggests the use of popular culture texts as "an important way of opening a more critical discourse in primary and secondary classrooms" (p. 230). According to the author, not only is popular culture part of students' subjectiveness and lives but also they "allow us to build bridges to their moral and political practices as they come into the school world" (p. 232). The author, who worked with four teachers to be and, in her study, wanted to understand how dialogs with students may be facilitated through the use of popular film texts, concluded that "carefully chosen popular culture texts may well provide the bridging mechanisms between potent social theory and the problems and challenges faced by their students" (p. 243). Buckingham (2003) accentuates the relevance of media education in classrooms which aims to develop both critical understanding and active participation. In fact, as the author himself claims "media literacy is a form of critical literacy" (p. 38). This research, therefore, made use of popular culture texts such as videos, advertisements and news in order to tackle gender representation in the media.

It is important to clarify, finally, that although the tasks used in this study mainly focused on female representation, the issue of gender representation itself was its main topic since it is part of students' identities no matter their own gender. Pessoa and Urzêda-Freitas (2012) emphasize how at school, "the processes of subject constitution and heterosexual identity formation produce and feed the homophobia and sexism – especially among boys, who need to affirm their masculinity through violent attitudes and 'harmless' jokes" (pp. 149-150).

For the reasons previously mentioned, gender representation was seen as an urgent topic to be discussed

in English classes, with the purpose of encouraging a critical position among students who would then be able to use the language as critical social agents. Therefore, the cycle of tasks used as instrument in this study discusses this topic following a feminist perspective to critical literacy and critical language pedagogy. The following section presents a summary of some relevant empirical studies in the field.

2.1.4. Empirical Studies In Critical Pedagogy And Literacy: A Focus On Foreign Language Contexts

Taking into account the main objective of this research, this section aims at summarizing significant studies, conducted in the area of critical language pedagogy and critical literacy, which contributed to decision-making in this study. Considering that, as previously mentioned, there is a need for more empirical research that attempts to unveil the issues that result from the implementation of a critical approach to foreign language teaching, the following studies are here described as important contributions to this specific area in the field.

Having Critical Pedagogy in mind, considering the teaching of Japanese as a foreign language, Ohara, Saft, and Crookes (2001) aimed at answering the question: "How can a teacher of Japanese as a foreign language, who is concerned about the position of women in Japan, present the Japanese language and culture to learners in such a way that allows them to think critically about linguistic differences and culturally-derived gender inequities in Japanese society?". In order to answer such inquiry, a critical module for a class of seventeen beginner level Japanese university students was planned and conducted. Through critical debates and analysis of authentic input (such as commercials), students engaged in critical reflections about gender identity in the Japanese culture. Interviews with the participants after the classes

revealed students' acknowledgement of gender inequity in Japanese society. The study advocates for the possibility of a critical feminist pedagogy in Japanese classes.

Similarly, Shin and Crookes's (2005) study on exploring possibilities for EFL critical pedagogy in Korea attempted to integrate critical lessons or materials into an existing communicative curriculum. More specifically, the researchers were particularly concerned with how to foster critical dialogue between students and teachers and how to provide opportunities for learners to develop English language abilities while engaging in critical discussion of topics. Data included audiotaped interviews of the teacher, written reports from the high school students, end of school-year course evaluations from high school students, students' worksheets and presentations, e- mail exchanges with the students and researcher's field notes and journals. After students engaged in debates and dialogues as well as material development and presentation throughout the classes, results showed that students made use of critical dialogue both in Korean and English, becoming active participants in the classroom. The study suggests there is room for critical engagement in Korean EFL classes.

Focusing specifically on the Brazilian context, Pessoa and Urzêda-Freitas (2012) intended to unveil faced challenges and engaged reflections of a teacher and his collaborator while teaching English from a critical perspective in Brazil. Students attending classes at two intermediate classrooms at a University language center participated in the study (twenty-five students in classroom 1 and eighteen students in classroom 2). Data was collected through questionnaires, a research diary, reflexive sessions between teacher and collaborator. The implemented classes discussed various themes such as English in the Age of Globalization, The Power of the Body, Race and Racism in Brazil, Culture and Identity, Gender and Sexuality. Results showed that students perceived the critical classes as a positive experience because of the combination of language and critical thinking development. The teacher also perceived the

problematizations originated in class as successful since they seemed to have contributed to students' identity empowerment and awareness.

Four years later, Pessoa and Urzêda-Freitas (2016) conducted another study, this time during a speaking development course, in the English Language Program, in a Federal University in Brazil, as an attempt to understand power relations in the classroom. Thirteen students participated in the study, which showed that any interactional context, such as the classroom, is always a space where power is unequal and that emphasizes the relationship between language and body/identities. The authors analyzed speech acts of students during the moment they were giving the teacher feedback on the course. Four main events, which resulted in conflict in class, were considered by the authors since they represented moments in which students felt oppressed. The findings showed that students were able to re-contextualize the events, opening spaces for agency. The study concluded that language may restrict and, at the same time, create identities, reinforcing a critical perspective of discourse in EFL Brazilian classrooms. Table 1 summarizes the four studies.

Table 1
Critical Pedagogy studies in Foreign Language contexts

Study	Context under investigation	Main Results
Ohara, Saft, and Crookes (2001)	Critical Pedagogy used in a Japanese as a foreign language university classroom. Focus on students' perceptions.	Students engaged in critical reflections about gender identity in the Japanese culture. Interviews revealed students' acknowledgement of gender inequity in Japanese society.
Shin	Critical Pedagogy	Students made use

and Crooke s's (2005)	used in a Korean EFL classroom. Focus on students' perceptions.	of critical dialogue both in Korean and English, becoming active participants in the classroom.
Pessoa and Urzêda-Freitas (2012)	Critical Pedagogy used in a Brazilian EFL university classroom. Focus on students' and teacher's perceptions.	Students perceived the critical classes as a positive experience to language and critical thinking development. The teacher also perceived the problematizations originated in class as beneficial to students' empowerment.
Pessoa and Urzêda-Freitas (2016)	Critical Pedagogy used in a Brazilian EFL university classroom. Focus on students' perceptions.	Results point out to four main events that represented moments in which students felt oppressed. The findings showed that students were able to re-contextualize the events, opening spaces for agency.

When it comes to Critical Literacy, a study conducted by Ko and Wang (2009) focused on unveiling teacher's perspectives. The research had as participants three EFL Taiwanese teachers and the theoretical framework involved the development of critical literacy. The authors attempted to investigated how Taiwanese EFL teachers who have newly learned critical literacy in American universities perceive the importance and the

feasibility of critical literacy in EFL teaching, as well as what is the ideal critical EFL class they envision. Instruments for data collection included in-depth individual interviews and participants produced a lesson-plan that was later discussed in details. All participants acknowledged the importance of critical literacy in EFL teaching but expressed concerns for implementing it, such as specific cultural aspects of Taiwanese students, students' proficiency, students' autonomy and teaching resources. Participants stated to believe these issues can be overcome if the lessons are carefully planned. Participants' lesson plans followed a critical literacy perspective according to the authors.

Huang's (2011) research, entitled "Reading 'Further and Beyond the Text': Student Perspectives of Critical Literacy in EFL reading and writing", intended to investigate both the implementation of critical literacy in an EFL classroom and students' perspectives of it. Thirty-six students enrolled in an English reading and writing course, offered to non-English majors at University in Taiwan, participated in the study. Instruments for data collection included students' written work and teaching journal. Students read articles that showed different positions on the same theme, discussed and wrote about them both separately and comparatively with a critical perspective, using critical questions as guides so as to act as text critics. Results showed students saw critical literacy as conscious reading that helped to uncover hidden messages and consider multiple perspectives. The findings also point that critical literacy seemed to enhance reading comprehension and motivate learners as writers. The study showed that EFL students can benefit from simultaneous emphasis on both critical and conventional literacy. It also emphasized the importance of considering students' perspectives in assessing critical literacy implementation.

Bringing together Critical Literacy development and the Brazilian scenario, Duboc and Ferraz (2011) investigated the implementation of two critical literacy

activities in two English graduate programs in southeast Brazil, aiming at rethinking teachers' training from a critical literacy perspective. One activity focused on reading skills and the other on speaking skills. For the first activity, fifteen student-teachers participated in data collection that lasted one class. For the second activity, student-teachers from another institution participated in data collection which also lasted one class. Results show that the first activity engaged participants in new literacy practices, questioning the literal reading and engaging in contextual reading. Moreover, the second activity offered participants the opportunity to deconstruct stereotypical concepts of the ideal speaker, developing a critical perspective on communication. The study contributes to the reflection of teacher training within a critical approach, bringing claims for the relevance of critical literacy in teacher instruction. Table 2 summarizes the previously mentioned studies.

Table 2
Critical Literacy studies in Foreign Language contexts

Study	Context under investigation	Main Results
Ko and Wang (2009)	Critical Literacy used EFL Tawainese m. Focus on teachers' ons.	Participants acknowledged the importance of critical literacy in EFL teaching but expressed concerns about implementing it, which might be overcome if the lessons are carefully planned. Participants' lesson plans followed a critical literacy perspective.
Huang'	Critical Literacy used	Students saw critical

s (2011)	in an EFL reading Tawainese classroom. Focus on students' perceptions.	literacy as conscious reading that helped to uncover hidden messages and consider multiple perspectives. Critical literacy seemed to enhance reading comprehension and motivate learners as writers.
Duboc and Ferraz (2011)	Critical Literacy used in two EFL graduate programs in Brazil. Focus on students' performances.	Activity 1 engaged participants in new literacy practices, questioning the literal reading and engaging in contextual reading. Activity 2 offered participants the opportunity to deconstruct stereotypical concepts of the ideal speaker, developing a critical perspective on communication.

Considering the results of the summarized studies, which all point towards more research on the implementation of critical pedagogy and literacy in foreign language classrooms, this research aims at doing so by making use of a cycle of tasks as a means for instruction. That is due to the apparent lack of methodological frameworks when it comes to teaching both language and literacy critically in EFL classrooms.

Having in mind all the studies reviewed above, it is possible to see that none of them makes use of a

specific methodology when it comes to language teaching. Although applying a specific approach to language teaching is neither a requirement nor a guarantee of success when it comes to language development, bringing both areas of language and literacy development together can be a challenge, specially considering instructional contexts, such as the Brazilian context, where exposure to the target language is constrained and largely reserved for the classroom but the expectations of language acquisition can be high.

As previously mentioned, the area of Critical Literacy does not seem to provide teachers inserted in EFL contexts with sufficient empirical basis as well as procedural knowledge about what to do in practical terms when teaching critical EFL literacy. If one adds the need for language development, the challenge is even bigger. The task-based approach, in this sense, is seen in this study as a methodological alternative to promote both critical language and literacy development. Even though TBLT does not discuss critical literacy development in any way, the use of tasks for promoting language acquisition opens room for tackling other aspects, such as a critical perspective of language and of texts, as well as the discussion of critical topics in classes. The following section, therefore, reviews the main tenets of the task-based approach for language teaching.

2.2. TASK-BASED APPROACH

Although research that involves theory and practice in SLA may be seen as controversial, there seems to be an agreement on the interdependent interests both share, which may end in significant empirical findings that can inform the two areas (Ellis, 2009; Van den Branden, 2016). Studies on teaching approaches and the results their implementation may have on language development are a clear illustration of these shared concerns both researchers and practitioners may have. Among a vast range of possible approaches for second

language teaching, the Task-Based Approach (TBA) has attracted increasing attention from the two corners, holding "a central place in current SLA research and also in language pedagogy" (Ellis, 2003, p. 1). As posed by Adams (2009), "task-based language teaching lies at the nexus of theory, research and pedagogy" (p. 340).

Robinson (2011) explains that the Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) "was, initially, a proposal for improving pedagogy with only a slight foundation in empirical research" (p. 4). Being originally an extension of the Communicative Approach (CA) (Skehan, 2003), the TBLT and/or TBA also focuses on the development of communicative competence (Canale and Swain, 1980) through the teaching of the four language skills (reading/ writing/ speaking/ listening). The TBA, however, differently from other communicative approaches, places the construct of 'task' at the center of curricular planning.

According to Ellis (2003), "tasks have played an important role in both the early descriptive research and the later more theoretically based research. Also, tasks have become a focus of research in their own right" (p. 21). Firstly, different foci given in the development of SLA research have been linked to the use of tasks as instruments. Examples vary from prompt research that focused on describing how learners acquired an L2 naturalistically to further engagement on understanding conditions for acquisitional processes, such as the role of input (Krashen, 1981), the impact of interaction (Long, 1985), the aspects of developing speaking (Levelt, 1989; Skehan, 1996), the support of scaffolding and collaborative dialogue (Swain, 2000), among others.

Moreover, tasks have become "objects of inquiry" (Ellis, 2003, p. 26) in studies that investigated varied aspects of language learning such as the importance of noticing structures in the input (Schimidt, 1990), effects of task conditions (Takashima & Ellis, 1999, as cited in Ellis, 2003), language processing and task type (Bygate, 2001), the relevance of focus on form (Samuda, 2001), etc. As stated by Ellis (2003), the shift of

task investigations from instrument to construct "also demonstrates the wide range of theoretical perspectives that now inform task-based research – variability theory, the Input and Interaction Hypothesis, socio-cultural theories of learning, theories of language competence and speech production, and theories relating to the role of conscious attention to form" (p. 26).

Van den Branden (2006) accentuates the fact that the term TBLT was purposefully coined "largely in reaction to empirical accounts of teacher-dominated, form-oriented second language classroom practice" (p. 1). As the author explains, researchers such as Long (1985) and Prabhu (1987), among others, "supported an approach to language education in which students are given functional tasks that invite them to focus primarily on meaning exchange and to use language for real-world, non-linguistic purposes" (p. 1). Prabhu's (1987) influential work on the task-based procedural syllabus was one of the first attempts to develop a theoretical rationale for task-based teaching. In his tasks, students primarily focused on meaning and attention to language forms were only incidental. On the other hand, Long's (1985) interaction hypothesis and focus on form theory proposed a TBLT approach that drew on the relevance of learner-driven attention to form which may arise from the negotiation of meaning and the noticing of linguistic elements that incidentally appear during it.

Moreover, other SLA studies have certainly contributed to the theoretical status TBA holds in the Second Language Acquisition (SLA) field. Examples are Swain's (1995) output hypothesis, which brings claims for the importance of output in language development; Skehan's (1996) limited capacity hypothesis, that shows how more demanding tasks require more attentional resources; Robinson's (2001) cognition hypothesis, which states that "pedagogic tasks should be sequenced solely on the basis of increases in their cognitive complexity" (Robinson, 2011, p. 14); and socio-cultural approaches which "explore how learners co-construct meaning while

engaging in interaction" (Skehan, 2003, p. 5). Besides, studies that focused on task conditions (Foster & Skehan, 1996), task repetition (Bygate, 1996); the impact of focused tasks (Fotos, 1998; Mackey, 1999; Ellis, 2001; as cited in Skehan, 2003), and stages of speech-production (Robinson, 1995; Skehan, 2009a, as cited in Robinson, 2011) have also added to the development of research in the area of Task-Based Approach. More recently, contributions such as East (2012, 2017), Long (2015), Van den Branden (2016), among others, have shifted the focus to how to implement TBLT in authentic classroom environments.

In the Brazilian context, tasks have been gaining more and more importance over the years, with several authors investigating the impact of tasks in foreign language teaching/learning in Brazil (Xavier, 2004; D'Ely, 2006; Guará-Tavares, 2009, 2011, 2013; Ferreira, 2013; Specht, 2014, 2017; Farias, 2014; Pereira, P., 2015; Pereira, G., 2015; Roscioli et al, 2015; Afonso, 2016; Specht & D'Ely, 2017; D'Ely & Farias, 2017; D'Ely et al, 2018; to name but a few). When it comes to the use of tasks in schools, the NCP, since 1998, recommends the use of tasks as instruments for foreign language teaching since, as explained in the document, tasks bring together the interactional, the linguistic and the cognitive dimensions of foreign language learning, which "work as formative experiences during learning" (p. 88). The document also emphasizes the communicative nature of tasks that should aim at connecting the student to the world inside and outside the classroom. The CNCB, on the other hand, does not mention the use of tasks specifically. Still, the document brings the notion of thematic units in which students should develop more than grammatical knowledge and, instead, should learn how to use "language that circulates socially" (p. 203). Both documents, hence, recommend that Brazilian foreign language teachers should focus on teaching/learning language that is based on meaning-making, constructed socially and through interaction.

It is important to highlight, however, that the teaching/learning context as well as learner diversity play a significant role in terms of possible impacts derived from the use of tasks. While talking about the importance of needs analysis to assess the teaching/learning context and understand the specific needs of the learner, Long (2015) explains that "a flexible approach embodying a set of psycholinguistically and philosophically motivated principles whose realization will vary systematically at the level of *pedagogic procedures* to take account of individual differences among teachers, learners, languages, and settings" (p. 92) is necessary, if one aims at achieving successful foreign language development. Therefore, having the specificities of the various Brazilian contexts and learners in mind is paramount when it comes to task-based research and pedagogy.

Considering the advances of research in the area of TBLT, as well as the several contexts in which this approach is implemented, one key element needs to be defined: the task itself. Kumaravadivelu (2006) highlights that even though much has been published as an attempt to explain this concept, "a consensus definition of task continues to elude the teaching profession" (p. 6). According to Skehan (2003), the term 'task' arose in the 80s, as an alternative for the term 'communicative activities'. From that time to these days, various authors have listed characteristics to the construct as an effort to explain it. As stated by Robinson (2011), "for TBLT research to produce cumulative findings, with application to pedagogy, a taxonomy of task characteristics is needed" (p. 17). Nonetheless, Bygate, Skehan and Swain (2001) highlight that "definitions of task will need to differ according to the purposes for which tasks are used" (p. 252, as cited in Ellis, 2003).

From Richards, Platt and Weber's (1985) definition for a task, that claims tasks can be seen as "a result of processing or understanding language" (p. 4, as cited in Ellis, 2003) to more elaborate definitions, such as Nunan's (2004), according to whom, a task involves

learners "in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is focused on mobilizing their grammatical knowledge in order to express meaning, and in which the intention is to convey meaning rather than to manipulate form" (p. 4), a number of descriptions have arisen, rooted on research and pedagogic literatures. Even so, many researchers have argued that the criteria for defining a task "are overly loose" (Ellis, 2009, p. 222). In his 2009 article, Ellis numbers four theoretically consensual criteria for a task. According to the author, in order for a language activity to be a task: 1) learner's primary focus should be on meaning, 2) there should be some kind of gap, that is, a communication need, 3) learners should largely have to rely on their own resources to complete the activity, 4) a clear, defined outcome, other than language use, is there to be accomplished.

Ellis's (2003) definition of a task considers all the characteristics mentioned above. Since it conforms to the main goals of this study, it will also inform this research. Ellis's definition goes as such:

> "A task is a workplan that requires learners to process language pragmatically in order to achieve an outcome that can be evaluated in terms of whether the correct or appropriate propositional content has been conveyed. To this end, it requires them to give primary attention to meaning and to make use of their own linguistic resources, although the design of the task may predispose them to choose particular forms. A task is intended to result in language use that bears a resemblance, direct or indirect, to the way

language is used in the real world. Like other language activities, a task can engage productive or receptive, and oral or written skills, and also various cognitive processes" (p. 4).

Taking into account that a task may share some of its characteristics with other types of activities, such as exercises or other communicative activities, a special attention will be given here to aspects that enhance tasks' authenticity, differentiating it from other kinds of activities. Therefore, in order to clarify some paramount concepts that are part of the abovementioned description, a brief explanation of what "focus on meaning" is, of what the author means by "outcome", and of the role "particular forms" play in a task, will be given as follows.

Concerning the first aspect, Ellis (2003) differentiates synthetic and pragmatic meaning, emphasizing that "a task seeks to engage learners in using language pragmatically rather than displaying language" (p. 9). To this end, as the author poses, in a task, the learners' main focus should be to fill in a communication gap which "motivates learners to use language in order to close it" (p. 9). This is what the author means by pragmatic meaning, the opposite of its counterpart, synthetic meaning, that describes meaning of language per se, literally, not communicatively oriented. Although the task itself does not make specific what kind of language should be used so as for the task to be completed, the context in which the task is inserted in "constrains what linguistic forms learners need to use" (p. 10). Therefore, the learner ought to maintain his/her focus on the communication needs to make appropriate language choices, that is, keep his/her focus on pragmatic meaning.

Another important characteristic of a task is that it should have a clearly defined communicative outcome. Ellis (2003) expounds that not only must the task have

pedagogical aims (such as developing oral skills or being able to understand a text) but it is also expected that a task contain "a goal of the activity for the learners" (p. 10). This goal, referred to as outcome, is related to "what learners arrive at when they have completed the task" (p. 8) such as a list of differences or an ad for a car. Hence, the communicative outcome is what the learner is trying to achieve during the task. Although the outcome itself may be of no real pedagogical importance, it aids in maintaining leaners' focus on language use, especially since it is supposed to mirror a real-world activity.

Finally, another significant concept that needs to be more accurately described is the issue of tasks and language forms. This aspect is seen as controversial among task-supporters. Ellis (2009) explains that many people mistake TBLT as an approach that does not deal with form at all. East (2017) points out that teachers' conceptualization and enactment of grammar teaching is not standard and does not always follows the principle of focus on form, according to theory. D'Ely (2011) explains that the term *focus on form*, coined by Long (1991), refers to a pedagogical intervention in which form receives attention during a task-based lesson. A 'focus on form' is different from its counterpart 'focus on forms' since, as Long (2015) clarifies, while a focus on forms methodology is inserted in a synthetic approach for language teaching, where language itself is the object of study and attention, focus on form can be seen as an analytic approach which

> "involves reactive use of a wide variety of pedagogic procedures to draw learners' attention to linguistic problems in context, as they arise during communication, thereby increasing the likelihood that attention to code features will be synchronized with the learner's internal syllabus,

developmental stage, and processing ability. Focus on form capitalizes on a symbiotic relationship between explicit and implicit learning, instruction and knowledge." (p. 27).

It is important to clarify that, for Long, in a focus on form approach, the learner's attention will still be aimed mainly at language meaning and "the brief switch of attention from meaning to form is usually triggered by a communication problem, either receptive or productive, and thus is, by definition, reactive" (Long, 2015, p. 317). In Long's perspective, therefore, there is no room for what Ellis (2003; 2017) calls 'pre-emptive' form-focused episodes.

Ellis explains that while reactive form-focused moments happen because a classroom participant (be it the teacher or the learners) draws attention to a particular linguistic form that "was the source of a problem either because the meaning of an utterance was not clear or because an utterance contained a linguistic error" (p. 516), pre-emptive focus-on-form consists of a focus on a specific linguistic feature, either initiated by a student or the teacher, but that is not a reaction to a linguistic problem. The difference, hence, lies on how the focus on form is originated in class: while the reactive kind (the one proposed by Long) derives from a communication setback; pre-emptive focus on form derives from attention to form even if there was no apparent communicative gap. In Ellis' viewpoint, pre-emptive focus on form can be beneficial, and it can frequently occur in task-based classes (see Ellis et al, 2001). The author also makes a case for focus on forms once in a while if needed, arguing that "both focus on form and focus on forms can result in the kind of L2 knowledge (implicit or automatized explicit knowledge) that enables learners to communicate fluently and accurately" (Ellis, 2017, p. 515).

Considering the characteristics presented above for defining what a 'task' is, different kinds of tasks may be found in the literature. Nunan (2004) describes three categories for task-types coined by Prabhu (1987), namely 1) information-gap activities, that involve a transfer of given information from one person/form/place to another; 2) reasoning-gap activities, that involve "deriving some new information from given information through processes of inference, deduction, practical reasoning or a perception of relationships or patterns" (p. 57); 3) opinion-gap activities, that refer to articulating a personal preference, feeling or attitude as a response to a given situation.

For Ellis (2009; 2017), tasks can either be 'input-based' or 'output-based' and 'unfocused' or 'focused'. Input-based tasks are the ones in which the learner will focus his/her attention to comprehending the given input whereas production can happen but is not a requirement. The author clarifies that this type of task is beneficial for beginners, who may rely on comprehensible input to get started in understanding how language works and producing output. Output-based tasks, on the other hand, require production from the learner, that is, the student must either write or speak in order to fulfill the expected outcome of the task. Ellis emphasizes how output-based tasks are significant in terms of providing opportunities for meaning negotiation as well as focus-on-form, therefore, aiding in the development of higher levels of proficiency.

Unfocused tasks are the ones that do not focus in any specific aspect of the language, and, in this sense, they "provide learners with opportunities for using language in general communicatively" (Ellis, 2009, p. 223). Focused tasks, on the other hand, are designed to offer "opportunities for communicating using some specific linguistic feature" (Ellis, 2009, p. 223), that is, the task itself is designed to elicit pre-determined linguistic features. Ellis (2017) defends the use of focused tasks as complementary options in language programs as they help

the learner in becoming aware of language in both functional and semantic ways, reinforcing accurate communication. Ellis (2017) also endorses the relevance of a particular type of focused task: the consciousness-raising task (Ellis, 1991; 1997). According to the author, consciousness-raising tasks, which have a linguistic feature as the topic of a task, aiming at developing metalinguistic understanding of this feature's rules or regularities, are not to cover a complete syllabus but should be used "as a means for developing explicit knowledge of specific features that are problematic to learners on the grounds that such knowledge might facilitate attention to these features in subsequent input and output" (Ellis, 2017, p. 511).

Long (2015; 2016) dismisses the use of focused tasks in TBLT and, therefore, disagrees with Ellis' task types. For Long, a valid distinction is to differentiate 'target tasks' from 'pedagogic tasks. For the author, while the first refers to activities done in the real world, pedagogic tasks, as the name itself says, refer to the ones performed in the classroom and that recreate target tasks. The author brings some pedagogic task-types such as one-way tasks (where information exchange is optional), two-way tasks (where information must be exchanged between participants), open tasks (where there is no single correct answer), closed tasks (which require students to find a single or a number of solutions to the task problem), convergent tasks (where a group of participants has to reach an agreement to complete the task), divergent tasks (where different opinions may arise), complex tasks (those which involve one or more reasoning demands), planned tasks (where learners are given time to think about which language to use), familiar tasks (known by the students due to repetition), and mixed proficiency tasks (where students with different levels of proficiency interact).

Bearing in mind the previously cited task types and the disagreements among scholars when it comes to defining them, it is expected that miscellaneous Task-

Based Language Teaching programs may appear. Long (2015) talks about task-based curriculums and task-supported curriculums. The author explains that they both draw on different psycholinguistic rationales, being the first purely meaning-based while the second shares features with "traditional linguistic syllabus of some kind" (Long, 2016, p. 6). In Long's perspective, real TBLT does not allow for task-supported approaches.

In Ellis (2009; 2017) point of view, however, there is no single way of doing TBLT. The author acknowledges that "a hybrid syllabus consisting primarily of a task-based component but supported by a task-supported component to address recalcitrant linguistic problems when these become evident" (Ellis, 2017, p. 522) may not only be necessary (depending on the context, e.g. EFL children teaching contexts), but beneficial. In the author's opinion, "alternative versions of TBLT are possible and indeed are necessary to accommodate different instructional contexts" (Ellis, 2017, p. 508). Ellis (2009) also accentuates that, although there are two major and distinct theoretical stances taken to research in the SLA area: a cognitive one and a socio-cultural one, from a pedagogic perspective, these two research traditions are not necessarily a mismatch, considering that "a pluralistic research agenda capable of addressing the multi-faceted nature of task-based instruction" (p. 127) is mandatory.

In terms of task implementation, Skehan's (1996) and Willis' (1996) three-stage frameworks are widely accepted in the area. Skehan proposes the use of pre-tasks, mid-tasks and post-tasks for promoting a complete achievement of the teaching goals. Pre-task activities aim at either introducing new elements or reorganizing the existing elements in the learner's language system in order to prepare the students to the coming task, diminishing the processing load they may encounter. Mid-task activities, then, focus on improving performance. As explained by the author, however, "the main factor affecting performance during the task is the choice of the

task itself" (p. 55). Tasks should neither be too easy nor too difficult, so the learner is able to communicate the intended message. Finally, post-task activities aid the learner in focusing their attention to aspects that were not attended to during task completion. Post-tasks may also be used as reflective tools for assessment or as an opportunity for repeating the task, aiming at improvements.

Willis' (1996) framework also includes pre and post-task phases. However, the middle phase of Willis' framework is called task-cycle and she also includes a final phase called focus on form. Moreover, while Skehan's framework follows a more cognitive orientation, Willis' one is more classroom oriented. In Willis' framework, during the pre-task phase, the learner is introduced to the theme in order to aid him/her in recalling relevant words, recognizing new ones and preparing for the real task. The task-cycle phase gives learners the opportunity to work on the task itself, correct it after feedback and report it to the rest of the classroom later on. The post-task phase offers learners additional exposure to topic-related material and increases students' experience of the target language in use. Finally, the focus on form phase aids students in developing awareness of features of language. According to the author, by following this framework

> "learners begin with a holistic experience of language in use. They end with a closer look at some of the features naturally occurring in that language. By that point, the learners will have worked with the language and processed it for meaning. It is then that the focus turns to the surface forms that have carried the meanings" (Willis, 1996, p. 2).

Although both frameworks derive from different perspectives, they are both valid choices for task implementation and have been used in studies and pedagogical contexts. More recently, Van den Branden (2016) introduced other aspects to usual the three-stage model for task implementation. According to the author, each stage is thought of to impact learning not only cognitively but also emotionally and from an organizational point of view. In the pre-task phase, as Van den Branden explains, the topic (non-linguistic/thematic) to be discussed is introduced to the learner, whose prior knowledge about it gets activated and may be combined with either new or familiar vocabulary, depending on the teacher's intentions. Besides the cognitive impacts just described, in the pre-task phase there is also the socio-emotional effects, which derive from motivation, interests, taking risks, and so on. Moreover, still in the pre-task phase, from the organizational point of view, the teacher may be concerned with how the task will be conducted (in groups or individually) as well as think about clear task instructions.

During the mid-task phase, or as Van den Branden calls, the actual task stage, similar organizational, socio-emotional and cognitive impacts are to be considered. As the author states, it's during this phase that

> "interactional support serves the crucial function of dealing with students' personal or shared misconceptions; responding to learners' form-focused and meaning-focused questions; providing learners with feedback on the quality of their ongoing work and monitoring their progress; encouraging students to keep up the good work or perseverate when tasks are

challenging; and maintaining students' motivation, self-confidence and task-engagement" (Van den Branden, 2016, p. 242)

Finally, during the post-task phase, students' performance is reviewed and discussed. There is also room for focusing on form if necessary.

By applying any of the abovementioned models, the task-based teacher is, hence, offering students the opportunity to learn language by using it. As Van den Branden (2016) explains, task-based language teaching, then, "is not necessarily compartmentalized the way more structure-based approaches to second/foreign language teaching tend to be, as, in real life, people also need to deploy different skills and knowledge to perform authentic tasks" (p. 242).

Even though Task-Based Language Teaching seems to be an alluring approach to second/foreign language classrooms, many are the criticisms towards TBLT. In terms of pedagogical implications, Ellis (2009) highlights that "teachers face a number of practical difficulties in implementing TBLT" (p. 240). These may vary among possible "failure of TBLT to provide adequate exposure to frequent language, failure to explain grammatical concepts and rules sufficiently, and failure to offer sufficient practice with the language" (East, 2017, p. 413).

Similarly, research in the area of TBLT may also encounter pitfalls. East (2017) also talks about alleged discrepancies between task-as-a-workplan and task-as-a-process, that is, results predicted by theory or empirically are not always reproduced in practice. Foster (2009) explains that one reason for research to have difficulties in showing a link between L2 development and the task implementation refers to "the unpredictable nature of what learners focus upon when using the L2" (p. 250). In fact, as she asserts, one cannot expect a task to have a

predictable cognitive or linguistic outcome and that is why task-as-workplan and task-as-process may deliver different results. Another limitation related to empirical studies in the area of TBLT is the fact that most of them are carried out in controlled environments, not considering many other aspects that are part of real world classrooms (Robinson, 2011; East, 2017).

However, despite the critique towards TBLT, a case can definitely be made for the use of this approach in research and in classroom practice. As Foster (2009) underlines,

> "if you take a wider view of tasks – that they can be part of a cycle in which pre-task preparation and post-task activities impact on levels of L2 accuracy, fluency and complexity, that at all stages they can generate an explicit focus-on-form through teacher recasts, that they present valuable and proven opportunities for incidental and individual learning, and that they can be spontaneously generated and not necessarily designed to meet specified and observable learning outcomes – then some principled pedagogic choices can be made" (p. 260).

Ellis (2009) observes that TBLT has many advantages as an approach to be implemented in classrooms and research. According to him, TBLT offers the opportunity for 'natural' learning inside the classroom, emphasizes meaning over form but also caters for learning form, affords learners a rich input of target language, is motivating and learner-centered but allows for teacher

input and direction, caters for the development of communicative fluency while not neglecting accuracy and can be used alongside a more traditional approach.

Shehadeh (2012) points out that issues such as "administrative constraints, exam pressures, cultural pressures and expectations, time pressures, and available materials" (p. 6) have to be considered when implementing TBLT in EFL contexts, since they can pose challenges to teachers and learners. Still, Carless (2012) makes a case for more research that "reports on the implementation of TBLT from different EFL settings" (p. 355) as well as research that presents "detailed qualitative accounts of what is really taking place in classrooms in which the teacher is trying to implement some version of TBLT" (p. 355) and "further research on contextual adaptations to TBLT" (p. 355). After all, as East (2017) points out, because "TBLT in practice can end up looking very different to TBLT in theory or empirical study" which "can lead to a perception of discordance between its advocates (e.g., theorists and researchers) and its recipients (e.g., teachers)" (p. 413), there is an urgent need for a closer look at the interface between theory, research and practice when it comes to TBLT.

Having in mind the several decades of task-based research and considering the increasing number efforts in implementing TBLT all around the world, it is possible to say that, despite various criticisms about the approach, TBLT has gained much prestige in academia and classrooms. East (2017) points out that, "as Van den Branden, Bygate and Norris (2009) assert, there are both theoretical grounds and empirical evidence to support a belief that TBLT is able to meet all the requirements for successful SLA in a variety of contexts and among a range of learners" (p. 413). The author goes even further, highlighting the positive impact of tasks in instructed contexts, in which "exposure to the target language is constrained and largely reserved for the classroom" (p. 413), such as the case of most Brazilian foreign language learning scenarios.

Still, even though TBLT can be seen as cutting-edge in terms of second and foreign language teaching, the approach clearly lacks a sociopolitical understanding of language. Within the 40 years of task-based research, language has always been seen as a tool for ensuring effective communication, without considering the discursive and ideological basis that permeate language. In fact, it was not until recently that the social and discursive roles of language, which reproduce and challenge dominant discourses, were recognized by a few scholars in the field.

In this sense, Long's 2015 publication, *Second Language Acquisition and Task Based Language Teaching,* acknowledges the philosophical principles that inform TBLT and highlights that "TBLT has a socially conscious curriculum" (p. 73) and that education is to be seen indeed as a political act.

Even though timid attempts have been made towards filling in the gaps when it comes to perceiving language not only cognitively but also socially, future challenges ought to be faced by task-based scholars in this matter, since, as Van den Branden (2016) emphasizes, the effectiveness of task-based language education depends on "the extent to which it allows and supports learners to learn to do the things with language that matter in their personal lives outside the classroom" (p. 249).

Within this recent context, it is my belief that using TBLT as a methodological framework combined with the principles of the critical literacy theory may offer learners the necessary tools for learning language, understanding discourse and acting upon it critically, considering the demands of the current Brazilian context. Having in mind that the unit of both teaching and analysis in TBLT is the task and in CL is the text, this study, therefore, proposes to implement a cycle of tasks that will aim at, through the critical discussion of various texts, promote critical language and critical literacy development. The following section presents some

empirical studies that tackled relevant underpinnings of the task based language teaching used to inform this work.

2.2.1. Empirical Studies In Task-Based Approach: A Focus On Authentic Classrooms

Many are the studies that have enlightened the Task-Based Approach research field over the last 40 years. Nonetheless, as Robinson (2011) and East (2017) acknowledge, "a limitation of empirical studies into the effectiveness of tasks is that they are commonly carried out in controlled experimental settings" (East, 2017, p. 415). Hence, studies that attempt to investigate the implementation of tasks in authentic classrooms are still very much needed, not just because TBLT theory also informs pedagogy, but also because it is the basis for syllabus and curriculum designs all over the world. This section, therefore, briefly describes significant studies that contributed to the area of TBLT in real-world EFL/ESL classroom environments.

Interested in bridging theory and practice, Carless (2003) aimed at exploring the use of task-based English teaching in three primary school classrooms in Hong Kong, taking teachers' planning and implementation decisions as data. All teachers implemented their task-based course for seven months. Research attempted to answer questions related to teachers' understanding of TBLT as well as possible factors that could impact teachers' planning for TBLT implementation. Classroom observation and interviews were used for data collection. Findings point to six themes that were seen as aspects that may impact teachers' use of TBLT: teacher's understandings of tasks, teacher's attitudes towards TBLT, the classroom time available for implementing TBLT, the influence of the textbook and the topic, teacher's preparation and the available resources, and the language proficiency of the students. The author concludes that if one aims at successful TBLT implementation in EFL contexts, local contextual

conditions and learners' characteristics need to be considered as basis for approach adaptation.

McDonough and Chaikitmongkol (2007) also discuss teachers' perceptions of a task-based EFL course. Thirteen teachers participated in the study. Additionally, the authors investigate the response of thirty-five learners to the task-based approach that was implemented at a Thai university. Data was collected through task evaluations, learning notebooks, observations, course evaluations and interviews. Findings indicated that participants perceived the task-based course as encouraging learners' independence and addressing real-world academic needs. The authors make claims about the importance of support when transitioning from traditional L2 teaching methods to task-based language teaching.

Calvert and Sheen's (2015) action-research intended to unveil one teacher's experience in developing, implementing, critically reflecting on, and modifying a language learning task to better address the needs of her students in an adult refugee English course. Data analyzed considered student success in task completion and qualitative student-based results. Resulting from task evaluation, task modification took place. As students improved after task modification, the findings reinforce the importance of teachers creating their own tasks considering their teaching context and of evaluating them empirically. The article strengthens the relevance of action research as a means through which language teachers can address problems that arise in task-based instruction. Table 3 summarizes the aforementioned studies.

Table 3
TBLT studies in authentic EFL/ESL classroom environments

Study	Context under investigation	Main Results
Carless (2003)	Three primary school	Six aspects, concerning teachers' perspectives,

	classrooms in Hong Kong. EFL task-based course.	classroom and school environment, and learners' characteristics were seen as influential factors for teacher planning and implementation of TBLT.
McDon ough and Chaikit mongko l (2007)	EFL task-based English course at a Thai University.	Tasks seem to increase learner's independence, and approach real-world and academic needs.
Calvert and Sheen's (2015)	ESL English course of Occupational Purposes. Use of one task designed for meeting students' professional needs.	Students' performance and perceptions are used as tools for task evaluation and modification, which result in improvements. Findings reinforce the importance of teachers designing and evaluating their tasks.

In the Brazilian scenario, Farias (2014) aimed at understanding the relationship between the way one may teach and test, advocating for the importance of following similar approaches when doing so. By making use of a test developed on the basis of task characteristics, the author compared the performance of two groups who had been exposed to different teaching methodologies. Moreover, through a questionnaire, participants described their perception of the test and its relation to their classes. The study concluded that, although no statistically significant differences were perceived between conditions, students who were exposed to similar approaches when taught and tested seemed to have been benefited. The author, who developed the assessment instrument called 'Task-Test' based on theoretical

readings and on her teaching experience, also brings claims for the importance of task-based classroom-oriented research. Finally, Farias discusses the relevance of using more qualitative measures for task performance such as outcome achievement.

Pereira (2015) designed and implemented a cycle of tasks, under Skehan's framework for task implementation, to a group of elderly EFL learners enrolled in a language course in a Brazilian university, aiming at investigating participants' perceptions regarding the implementation of the cycle of tasks. Eight elderly EFL learners answered perception questionnaires about the classes and took part in an interview in the end of the cycle. Her results showed that task familiarity was regarded as a successful technique in helping elderly EFL learners memorize new content and optimize their communicative skills. Her findings also revealed that Skehan's framework is a resourceful tool for balancing the task level of difficulty and the learners' attention between meaning and form. Pereira also pointed out that developing and implementing a cycle of tasks can ultimately contribute to a teacher's formation.

Afonso's (2016) study aimed at investigating seventeen 9th grade students' perceptions regarding the implementation of a cycle of tasks. The tasks were designed under Skehan's (1996, 1998) frameworks for task analysis and implementation, with the purpose of preparing students to read the first chapter of 'Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone' (Rowling, 1999). At the end of each class, students answered a questionnaire. They also engaged in interviews at the end of the cycle. The results showed that TBA was perceived as effective in promoting learning opportunities. Findings also emphasized the relevance of Skehan's framework in aiding the development of communicative competence, that is, in offering students opportunities to learn how to communicate their ideas effectively. Table 4 summarizes the three studies.

Table 4
TBLT studies in authentic EFL/ESL classroom environments in Brazil

Study	Context under investigation	Main Results
Farias (2014)	Two EFL classrooms in a English course at a Brazilian University.	The use of similar approaches for teaching and testing seems to be beneficial.
Pereira (2015)	EFL elderly classroom in a language course at a Brazilian University.	Task familiarity is beneficial in aiding communication. Also, Skehan's framework seems to contribute on balancing the task level of difficulty and the learners' attention between meaning and form. Moreover, developing and implementing a cycle of tasks can be positive to a teacher's formation.
Afonso (2015)	EFL 9th grade group in a public Brazilian school.	TBA seems to be effective in promoting learning opportunities.

Considering the studies here reviewed, two strong claims can be made: 1) research that focuses on task implementation in authentic classrooms is paramount to understanding TBLT in practice and 2) research that offers teachers the opportunity to design their own tasks considering their teaching context is seen by participants as having positive impact in language learning. This study, hence, attempts to bring both claims into practice. However, because there seems to be a lack of studies that attempt to unveil aspects of critical language development

in EFL classrooms by making use of task-based framework, this study aims at contributing to the area by investigating a 7th grade Brazilian English classroom through the implementation of a task cycle that aims at fostering critical literacy and language development. Having in mind the findings that resulted from the implementation of the cycle of tasks, different measures of language and critical development were considered. The following section discusses the literature on these measures.

2.3. MEASURES FOR LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT AND CRITICAL LITERACY DEVELOPMENT

Considering that this study aimed at developing and implementing a cycle of thematic tasks that simultaneously serves to encourage the development of critical literacy and language growth, the choice of language development measures as well as critical literacy development measures must consider the plural, multi-faceted context in which this research is inserted in. Therefore, the paragraphs below aim at briefly presenting some theoretical grounds on procedures commonly used within these fields.

2.3.1. Measures used for Analyzing Language Development

In relation to language development, although a great bulk of studies have attempted to measure it in TBLT research (mainly oral performance), "the measurement of language production has long proved problematic for researchers" (Ellis, 2003, p. 115). Foster (2009) stresses that "it is not possible to prove beyond doubt a direct connection between L2 acquisition and more accurate, more fluent, or more syntactically complex L2 performance in tasks" (p. 253). The author points out that this difficulty results from the usual cross-sectional design of the TBLT research, which makes it challenging to claim for acquisition gains. However, Foster explains that in order for empirical results to be valid, research has

to continue its path towards pedagogical and theoretical evolution.

Skehan (2003) states that there are various ways in which researchers have operationalized and measured language development and "the different choices that investigators have made have reflected their theoretical positions" (p. 8). Considering the cognitive and socio-pedagogical nature of this research, measures that reflect both views will be discussed as follows.

Concerning a cognitive perspective on language measures, according to Skehan (2003), "the complexity-accuracy-fluency dimensions of task performance have been justified both theoretically and empirically" (p. 8). The author makes a case for how these areas compete with one another for limited attentional resources and defines their main characteristics. As posed by him, complexity is usually measured in terms of AS-unit (in oral discourse) or t-units (in written discourse). D'Ely (2006) states that "complexity has been overtly operationalized by an index of subordination" (p. 63). Accuracy, on the other hand, mostly appears as a measure of percentage of error-free clauses or errors per 100 words. Still, other ways to measure accuracy can be used such as number of errors per number of words. Finally, concerning fluency, it contains separate measures of silence, reformulation, speech rate and automatization. Because of these characteristics, it is a measure of oral discourse. Considering the listed CAF measures, only accuracy was chosen to be used in this study due to time constrains and to the written nature of participants' productions. Moreover, having in mind the form-focused aspect of this research, accuracy was selected since it may also reveal interesting findings concerning students' linguistic performances.

Although the three measures described above are standard in TBLT language production research, much criticism has been made towards the exclusive use of CAF measures, since they may not be sufficient to indicate if learners' production is satisfactory for the expected

outcome. After all, a text/speech can be accurate, fluent and complex, but still be confusing and not interesting, for instance. Pallotti (2009) proposes the use of a fourth measure for language production, named adequacy, which refers to qualitative rating of participants' performance according to their communicative needs, that is, is language being used adequately, in order to communicate the intended meaning? Attempting to investigate the validity of adequacy as a speech-performance assessment measure, Specht (2017) made use of a principal component factor analysis and found that "the adequacy measure proved to assess discourse-oriented aspects of narrative tasks, which were not grasped by CAF measures" (p. 107).

Making use of a similar approach to measure language production, Farias (2014) proposed the implementation of another qualitative measure for production assessment, the outcome achievement measure. The author emphasizes the importance of the outcome as a key characteristic in a task, pointing out that regardless of inaccurate use of language here and there, if the student is able to perform the task, outcome can be achieved, considering the meaning-oriented nature of a task. Differently from adequacy, that puts attention on examining if language was used adequately for communicative purposes, outcome achievement is focused on investigating if the expected outcome of a task was accomplished. Still, both measures are very similar and may overlap, depending on the nature of the task.

Because both adequacy and outcome achievement are measures that depend strongly on task characteristics, neither Pallotti, nor Specht or Farias present a concrete framework for the qualitative approach they applied. However, all authors suggest descriptive scales to be used by raters to evaluate performance. These scales, therefore, would provide raters with enough information about what adequate language should look like or what outcome achievement should be about, varying according to the specificities of each task.

Considering that a narrative is the final outcome of some of the tasks in this study, the measure of outcome achievement was chosen to assess participants' written performance and a descriptive scale, with five main aspects, was created to indicate whether the expected outcome was accomplished or not. The five aspects are concerned with whether: the story was told successfully, the story makes use of appropriate language, the story is cohesive and coherent, the story follows a logical sequence of events, the story is interesting and catches the reader's attention. These aspects were perceived as important characteristics of a narrative according to the raters who analyzed students' productions and according to myself. More details on each of the measures here described are given in the method chapter.

Taking into account the issues previously discussed, this study made use of two cognitive-oriented measures for language growth: accuracy and outcome achievement. In this sense, participants' linguistic development was assessed considering their performance in two written pre-tests and two written post-tests. As previously mentioned, however, this research, which is also of a socio-pedagogical nature, argues for a procedural and social understanding of language development, one that accounts for students language development through the task cycle, and that considers learners' views about their own development. Henceforth, the teacher/researcher's perception of learners' performance in other tasks were analyzed. Additionally, students' own perceptions about their language development served as data for measuring language development.

Considering that both the learners and the teacher were invited to share their insights and thoughts throughout the learning process, it is mandatory to define perception as a theoretical construct. Farias (2014) brings attention to the fact that "the word perception is normally related to opinion or belief, and, therefore, often taken for granted without receiving an important value within the

research field" (p. 20). However, as explained by Silva, M. (2005), perception can be seen as

> "a physical and intellectual ability used in mental processes to recognize, interpret, and understand events, an intuitive cognition or judgment; a way to express a particular opinion or belief as a result of realizing or noticing things which may not be obvious to others; insight, awareness, discernment, recognition, a set of understandings, interpretations and a way of knowing" (p. 2)

Perception, therefore, comprises not only cognitive aspects but also emotional ones. It must be understood as a multifaceted construct, which involves intellectual knowledge, background information and cognitive thinking and evaluation. In this sense, this study sides with Silva, M. (2005) who understands perception as the intellectual ability used by second language students to recognize a specific input; internalize it; process this internalization; and produce knowledge at the end of this procedure, as a result of reasoning.

Three main constructs are, therefore, used to investigate language development in this study: accuracy, outcome achievement and perception. The section below presents the measures used to examine critical literacy development.

2.3.2. Measures used for Analyzing Critical Literacy Development

Concerning students' development in terms of critical literacy, many studies make use of ethnography as a way to understand the complex relationships that take part in and outside the classroom. Street (1995) talks

about the importance of assuming ethnographic perspectives that allow the researcher to see and hear what participants really do and the local and social meanings of these actions. Another great amount of studies in the area of Critical Literacy have interviews and questionnaires as their instrument of data collection. Moreover, teacher's diaries and classroom observations are also valid approaches for investigating aspects of critical literacy development. In all cases, perception is used as a way to assess critical literacy.

This study employed a qualitative approach for data collection in terms of critical literacy development, by making use of teacher's notes and observations, and participants' responses to questionnaires and interviews. Perception (Silva, M., 2005) was used as a unit of analysis in these cases. The observed instances of critical literacy development were then discussed according to the literature used to inform this study.

Additionally, participants' critical perspectives presented in their productions were considered, taking raters' perspective into account. A descriptive question was given to raters who needed to decide whether participants' narratives seemed to include a critical stance towards the story that was being told. A final score was then given to each participant and statistical procedures used for data analysis. Two main constructs are, therefore, used to investigate critical literacy development in this study: perception and critical perspective in narratives, according to raters' understanding.

A more detailed explanation of the aforementioned measures and their implementation is given in the method section, which is presented as follows.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

This mixed method study aimed at investigating the implementation of a task cycle in a 7th grade English class in order to promote critical literacy growth and language development. Therefore, a cycle of tasks, in which students discussed issues related to gender representation, was designed under the critical literacy and task-based approach framework.

In order to achieve the main objectives of the study, the present chapter describes and explains the method that was used to collect and analyze data. It also gives information about the participants, the setting, and the instruments that were used. The chapter is organized into seven sections. Section 3.1 provides explanation on what mixed method research is. Section 3.2 introduces the objectives and the research questions that guided this study. Section 3.3 presents the setting where the study was carried out, along with the participants and the regulations governing ethical practices in Brazil. Section 3.4 focuses on the instruments used in this study. Section 3.5 portrays the general design of the study and procedures used for data collection. Section 3.6 presents the procedures that were used for data analysis. Finally, section 3.7 presents a summary of the chapter.

3.1. THE MIXED METHOD APPROACH

Mixed method research (MMR) is a third paradigm along the quantitative-qualitative continuum (Brown, 2014). It is characterized by a combination of both quantitative and qualitative methodologies in such a way that both are complementary and interactive when it comes to research data collection and results. Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner (2007) provide a general definition for this type of research. According to them,

> mixed method research is an intellectual and practical synthesis based on qualitative and quantitative research; (…) it recognizes the importance of traditional quantitative and qualitative research but also offers a powerful third paradigm choice that often provides the most informative, complete, balanced and useful research results (p. 129).

Based on the literature reviewed by Johnson et al (2007), Brown (2014) lists seven features of a mixed method approach that, according to him, are necessary if a research is to be seen as one of a mixed method nature. The present study includes all features as explained below:

(1) *MMR combines qualitative and quantitative methods in such a way that it produces complementary strengths and nonoverlaping weaknesses*: by triangulating different methods of data collection and analysis, all results in this study contribute and are to be seen complementary to a better understanding of the context and the results, considering the goals of the present research.

(2) *MMR generates and provides answers to research questions*: this study attempts to answer its questions both quantitatively and qualitatively, as the two methods interact interchangeably.

(3) *MMR takes into account all on-site social, political, and resource-oriented needs and concerns*: considering the social and cognitive nature of this study, language development and critical literacy growth are observed from different and complementary

perspectives, attempting to investigate and understand the context under scrutiny considering various aspects.

(4) *MMR borrows features from both qualitative and quantitative methods*: the results of this study were collected and analyzed following quantitative and qualitative approaches.

(5) *MMR integrates, simultaneously or sequentially, qualitative and quantitative points of view, data collection methods, forms of analysis, interpretation techniques, and modes of drawing conclusions*: the results of this study were collected and analyzed following quantitative and qualitative approaches simultaneously. Therefore, both theoretical grounding were considered.

(6) *MMR should only be used if qualitative or quantitative methods do not produce the expected results on their own*: it is this researcher's belief that a mixed method approach can provide a more complete understanding of the context under analysis.

(7) *MMR aims to produce useful and defensible results*: the results of this study aim to contribute to the areas in which it is inserted in as well as to the context in which data was collected.

Hence, considering the characterization proposed by Johnson et al (2007) and Brown (2014), the present study is a pure mixed method research since both quantitative and qualitative results contribute interactively to answer the research questions posed.

3.2. OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

As previously discussed, developing critical literacy while also learning a foreign language can be seen as an imperative need within the EFL Brazilian context.

Therefore, the present study aimed at implementing a cycle of thematic tasks for a middle school group of learners so as to engage students in critical literacy while fostering language growth. After applying the thematic tasks during the group's classes, this research attempted to unveil the processes students engaged in when learning English and developing critical literacy by: observing and taking notes of students engagement in the classes and in the activities, comparing their performance before and after the cycle of tasks, and investigating their perception through questionnaires and interviews. Therefore, both language and critical literacy development were looked at from multiple perspectives, as a way of perceiving the complexities that learning a language critically entails.

In order to accomplish the aforementioned objectives, the following research question guided this study: (1) does a critical cycle of tasks promote language development and critical literacy development? If so, how does it take place? As a way to answer this general question, six other questions were posed:

1a) are there elements, perceived during the implementation of the task cycle, that signal language and critical literacy development, considering the teacher/researcher's perception? If so, which are they?;

1b) are participants better able to identify the correct use of the simple past structure, when comparing their performance in a grammaticality judgment test after the implementation of the task cycle, in a pre-test and a post-test condition?;

1c) do participants perform more accurately after the implementation of the task cycle, when writing a narrative, in a pre-test and a post-test condition?;

1d) do participants achieve the expected outcome after the implementation of the task cycle, when writing a narrative, in a pre-test and a post-test condition?;

1e) do participants' texts show critical perspectives after the implementation of the task cycle, when writing a narrative, in a pre-test and a post-test condition?;

1f) are there elements that signal language and critical literacy development, considering participants' perceptions of their own experience? If so, which are they?.

The method described in this chapter was, therefore, implemented aiming at answering the posed questions.

3.3. RESEARCH CONTEXT

Taking into consideration the objectives and research questions presented, this section introduces the institution in which the data was collected in order to contextualize the setting where the present study was carried out. It also presents the participants and the regulations that govern research ethical practices in Brazil.

3.3.1. Colégio De Aplicação

Colégio de Aplicação (CA), founded in 1961, is a federal public school located in *Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina* (UFSC), Trindade campus. The institution accepts students of primary, middle and secondary school age. It follows the university's educational policies for promoting learning, research and extension. Therefore, it is also an experimental setting aiming at the development of teaching experiences and supervised training - student teaching - for undergraduate programs, according to the requirements of the Law 9.39420[8], from December 20th, 1996.

As explained in the school's website, until the 1990s, the students who attended CA were the children of people who worked for the university, such as faculty and staff. After the Resolution 013/CEPE/92, it was established that, in the school, there should be three groups per grade with 25 students each, and the admission of students started to occur through a raffle, open to the community. Therefore, students who go to *Colégio de*

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[8] Lei de Diretrizes e Bases.

Aplicação nowadays come from different neighborhoods in Florianópolis as well as other cities nearby, characterizing a diverse group in terms of gender, class, race, and others.

Among the various disciplines that are part of the school's curriculum, *Colégio de Aplicação* currently offers four options of foreign language classes: English, French, German and Spanish. In primary school, students start having foreign language classes in the third year, and during each year a different language is taught to them. In primary school, English is offered to the 5th year. During middle school, in the 6th year, students have one class of each language a week so they are given the opportunity to review some of the learned knowledge and be more familiar with the options they will have to select from later on at the school. From the 7th year on, students have to choose one of the four languages to continue studying all the way through high school.

In middle school, each language is allotted three classes of fifty minutes each per week. Besides regular classrooms, there is a thematic classroom for each foreign language, where the language classes take place. Moreover, the school offers a computer lab and a room in which Project LIFE[9] is located, both spaces where foreign language classes might happen as well.

Regarding the specific objectives related to the teaching of English in middle school, the school's syllabus for 7th year (the one in which participants were enrolled in at the time of data collection) claims that the English language classes aim at developing the cognitive, social and cultural dimensions that encompass the

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[9] LIFE – *Laboratório Interdisciplinar de Formação de Educadores* is a Capes program that aims at creating a space and offering the necessary structure and resources to encourage the teaching practice in public institutions. Among many possibilities, the project offers resources such as tablets, computers and games to be used for educational and research purposes.

learning of a foreign language. Moreover, it attempts to discuss identity and intercultural aspects of this language, as a way to contribute to the formative education of citizenship.

In relation to the textbook selected for the English classes in the 7th grade, CA takes into consideration the collections presented in *Programa Nacional do Livro Didático* (PNLD Guide). The books selected for middle school during the year of 2016 were part of the collection 'Alive!' (Menezes, Tavares, Braga & Franco, 2012), approved by PNLD Textbook Guide in 2014. For the 7th year, this textbook is divided into 8 thematic units that discuss the following themes: environment, arts, gender, culture, shopping, healthy habits and leisure activities. As aforementioned, the specific characteristics of *Colégio de Aplicação* were considered when the instruments used in this study, as well as the whole process of data collection and analysis, were developed and implemented.

3.3.2. Students from the 7th year

This study was carried out with a group of foreign language Brazilian learners enrolled in the 7th grade of a federal public school located in Florianópolis-SC, Brazil. The rationale that lies behind the decision of conducting this study in a public school in an authentic classroom derives from the importance that schools have in the formative aspects of society and the impact the classroom environment may have on teaching approaches. As stated by Samuda (2001), "few [task-oriented] studies have been set in intact classes, and even then, have not always had as their central concern the broader pedagogical context in which tasks occur" (p. 119). The author stresses the relevance of research that considers individual differences, context of instruction, group dynamics, and so on since these aspects may affect task performance and may largely influence the teachers' choices.

Moreover, as critical approaches to foreign language teaching involve both pedagogy and research (Pennycook, 1999), attempting to understand the

processes and nuances that are part of EFL education in Brazil is mandatory if one aims at transforming the reality and promoting social change. Lankshear and McLaren (1993) explain that "research undertaken in a critical mode requires recognizing the complexity of social relations and the researcher's own socially determined position within the reality he or she is attempting to describe" (p. 382). Finally, considering it is in the school that major transformations need to be made so as to ensure the upbringing of critical citizens, conducting research in a public school not only provides students with the opportunity to participate in empirical research but it also offers them the possibility of engaging in critical EFL learning.

The 7th year group chosen to participate in this study was selected due to several motives, one of them being the researcher's familiarity with the group[10]. This was seen as important considering the information used during needs analysis, instruments development, previous knowledge of the context, among others. Additional aspects such as the English class schedule for 7th grade and the fact that no other educational experiences[11] were taking place with that group were also reasons that influenced this decision.

The class was composed of fourteen students[12] (8 girls and 6 boys) whose age varied from 12 to 13 years

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[10] Before data collection, I had been their English teacher for one year and a half. 2016 was the second year we were together.

[11] Considering the goals *Colégio de Aplicação* has in terms of teacher education, it is common that undergraduate students from various areas attend classes and implement tentative syllabi in them during the school year as part of their practicum. One thing I tried to avoid was having too many people in class, which could also force me to rush in my cycle implementation.

[12] The real name of the students were replaced by pseudonyms in this study. Most students chose their own pseudonyms.

old. In order to learn more about the students' profile, a questionnaire that aimed at gathering personal information was applied in Portuguese (more information in the instruments section, as follows). As part of their answers in the questionnaire, students reported to live in various neighborhoods around Florianopolis. Most of them said they had been students at CA since primary school and all of them had been students at CA since the beginning of middle school. During their leisure time, students reported many activities they were used to engaging in such as surfing, playing soccer, playing games on the computer, watching TV series, surfing on the internet, using their cellphones, listening to music, playing with friends or family, going shopping, and reading books. In relation to the use of social networks, all students stated to own a smartphone and use it for this purpose. The applications and websites they mentioned to surf on their devices were whatsapp, snapchat, instagram, facebook, skype, tumbrl, kakaotalk and twitter.

Most students reported to have been studying English for 2 years mainly in their classes at CA. Four students said they had been studying the language for 3 years also mostly in CA. Students also mentioned they use applications as well as games to learn the language. Two students stated to be attending classes at a language school as an extracurricular activity. Even then, all students were false beginners at the moment of data collection.

When asked if they consider English important as part of their education, all students said yes. The reasons given by them varied among a) gaining knowledge of other cultures, b) preparing to travel and/or live abroad in the future, c) preparing for future professional needs, and d) learning to communicate with people all over the world as well as engaging in daily activities that require English. When asked if they considered English as an important subject to discuss their formative growth as citizens of their community and of the world, all students answered yes. Their reasons were: because being a world citizen means a) speaking other languages, b) traveling abroad, c)

meeting foreign people. Two other reasons given were: d) because considering the fact Florianopolis is a touristic city, being a community citizen means speaking another language, e) because speaking another language means improving your knowledge. A summary of participants' answers to the profile questionnaire is provided in the appendix section (see Appendix 1).

One conclusion that can be drawn from the questionnaires refers to students' use of social medias to interact with peers and to engage in social activities as part of their daily routine. This fact influenced the development of the tasks used in this study. Another important conclusion drawn from the personal questionnaires refers to students' views on what learning a foreign language, especially English, might be. According to their answers, it seems that all students, at the time the questionnaire was answered, held a view of English as a tool that can be used for communication and that is necessary for their future. No students mentioned the social and discursive role a language has in representing and transforming reality. Hence, developing a (maybe new) critical perspective of language and discourse, one of the goals in the present study, was reinforced as a significant and necessary approach.

3.3.3. Regulations Governing Research Ethical Practices

In accordance with the resolution 466/2012-CNS/CONEP which postulates the respect to human dignity and special protection to participants of scientific research involving human beings, this piece of research was submitted to the system CEP/ Conep under the responsibility of the entitled researcher Dr. Raquel Carolina Souza Ferraz D'Ely and her assistant Priscila Fabiane Farias.

In order to fulfill the requirements proposed by UFSC's ethical committee, this study was registered in *Plataforma Brasil* (www.saude.gov.br/plataformabrasil) and the following documents were sent enclosed: a

detailed version of the research project translated into Portuguese, a concession agreement (a document which was signed by UFSC allowing the entitled researcher and her assistant to conduct research under the name of this institution), a confidentiality clause, a consent letter signed by the school principal of Colégio de Aplicação, a copy of the consent letter signed by the participants' parents (see Appendix 2) and of the one signed by the participants themselves (see Appendix 3) and the instruments used for data collection. After evaluation, this research project was approved with the serial number 2.229.041.

3.4. INSTRUMENTS

Eight different instruments were used in this study for data collection and are detailed as follows, according to their objective. For further reference, the materials applied in the present research are presented in the appendices section.

3.4.1. The Consent Forms and the Profile Questionnaire

The first instruments of data collection implemented are two consent forms and a profile questionnaire. The consent forms (see Appendices 2 and 3) were filled in by participants' parents and the participants themselves and are part of the requirements established by the ethical committee at UFSC. Both forms were designed in Portuguese and contained information about the study such as: the title, the objectives, the procedures for data collection, and the risks and benefits of participating in the study. The participants were also informed that: (i) their participation was volunteer and that they would not receive any type of payment, (ii) they could decide to quit at any time, and (iii) they could require judicial compensation, if they felt violated in some way. The terms also presented the contact information of both researchers who were responsible for this study. Participants and their parents were asked to sign two

copies of the term: one copy for me and the other for them. Moreover, I read the term along with the students and answered their questions when asked.

The profile questionnaire was applied so as to gather information about the participants. It contains questions regarding age, time and context in which students have studied English, students' leisure habits and use of social networks/applications, students' views in relation to the English language, what students were expecting to learn in an English class, among other information, in order to outline the main characteristics of the participants (see Appendix 29). The questionnaire also aimed at unveiling students' views concerning the role of the English language in their lives and concerning the foreign language classroom as a formative tool of their critical citizenship. The questions were asked in Portuguese and participants were given a tablet with the questionnaire to fill in according to their own personal data. The questionnaire was introduced through the tool *google forms*.

According to Mackey and Gass (2005), "when reporting research, it is important to include sufficient information to allow the reader to determine the extent to which the results of your study are indeed generalizable to a new context" (p. 124). Having this need in mind, the collection of bio data through a profile questionnaire proposes to ensure external validity for this research. The results of this questionnaire as well as its implications in data collection were presented in the section that displayed the participants.

3.4.2. The Pre-Tests

After the initial phase of the data collection (needs analysis period, explanation of the research design to participants, signing of consent forms), two pre-tests were administered. Pre-test 1 (see Appendix 4), a grammaticality judgment test (Loewen, 2009), aimed at unveiling students' knowledge on the use of the simple past, structure that was tackled in the main task. In this

pre-test, students were asked to decide whether sentences presented were grammatically correct (or not). The test contains 11 sentences that tell the story of the artist Frida Kahlo. Four sentences were correct and seven made incorrect use of the simple past. The purpose of this test was to determine whether students were familiar with the simple past structure before the cycle was applied. Students were also required to explain their choices so as to achieve a better understanding of their knowledge.

Pre-test 2 (see Appendix 5) focused on the choices made by students when telling a story. They were asked to retell a story based on a cartoon episode they saw. The episode is from the cartoon TV series *Tom and Jerry* and, in it, Tom falls in love with a female cat and attempts to make her fall in love with him using different strategies. He spends a lot of his money to buy her flowers, jewelry and even a car to take her out. However, he does not succeed because another male cat, richer than Tom, buys her similar items, only of a better quality and more expensive. The female cat chooses the richer cat as her date and it is implied that she does so because he has more money. The story does not have any linguistic input except for the word 'perfume' written in one of Tom's gifts to the female cat.

After watching the episode, students were given unlimited time to retell the story using their previous language knowledge. They were encouraged to focus on the message and told they would not be graded in the activity, in order to avoid pressure. They were also provided with dictionaries to be used if they saw fit. The main goals of pre-test 2 were to check whether students would be able to tell the story clearly, accurately and as expected from a narrative, taking into account their limited vocabulary and language knowledge. Moreover, pre-test 2 also served to inform about students' understanding and familiarity of the genre narrative, that is, how they were going to organize and structure their story so that it made sense. Finally, pre-test 2 provides information concerning students' critical perspective on

how the story portrayed gender. Even though students were not told to reflect critically about the story, they were free to retell it in any way they saw appropriate, introducing their own perspective of Tom's tale.

In pre-test 2, students were also asked questions about the story which aimed at perceiving their critical reactions towards it. Question (a) asked them to list the characters and question (b) asked them to describe the relationship between them. Both questions aimed at ensuring their comprehension of the story. Question (c) inquired their perception on how the female character and both male characters are represented in the story whereas question (d) inquired their perception on conclusions they may get to about relationships after watching the episode. The purpose of these questions was to unveil whether students were aware of the gender biased representation in the story and react towards it. The results for the described pre-tests are further discussed in the analysis chapter of this document.

Both pre-tests were later compared to students' performances on similar activities (pre-test 1 was repeated after 2 months and a half, being then post-test 1. Students also wrote another narrative by the end of the task cycle, which served as post-test 2), providing information on students' linguistic and critical literacy growth. After having engaged in both pre-tests, students worked in the cycle of tasks.

3.4.3. The Cycle of Tasks

The aim of the task cycle (see Appendix 6) was to engage students in foreign language and critical literacy development. The task cycle was divided into three phases: pre-task phase, mid-task phase and post-task phase, following the framework proposed by Skehan (1996, 2016). The main aim of the pre-tasks was to provide students with input on the cycle's theme as well as raise students' awareness about it. Therefore, the tasks in this phase were used for critical literacy development and also offer students linguistic input on the topic being

discussed. During the mid-task phase, students were asked to react towards different texts they were presented with, which gave them the chance to continue on the critical reflection process. It was also during the mid-task phase that students were introduced to narrative genres as well as more linguistic input on the task cycle topic. After being presented to stories of other people, students were invited to write down stories about someone in their school community. During the post-task phase, students had the chance to rewrite their story, which also served as a post-test. Moreover, in this phase, students were required to once again reflect upon and report on their views in relation to what had been discussed. Considering the importance of materials design that attempts to meet students' needs and that are based on the context of investigation, a more detailed explanation of the task cycle will be given in chapter four.

3.4.4. The Post-Tests

As previously mentioned, two post-tests were part of the list of instruments used in this study. Post-test 1 (see Appendix 4) is a test in which students were invited to re-do pre-test 1 two months and a half after the task cycle was completed. The aim of this test was to perceive if there was a significant difference in terms of students' language performance, when compared to pre-test 1. It is important to clarify, however, that although the results provided by this comparison may (or not) indicate language gains, this study perceives language also from a social perspective and, therefore, other measures that account for both the processes of language development in which students engaged in while using language and their productions, seen from a holistic perspective, were considered. That is the case of post-test 2.

Post-test 2 (see Appendix 6) is part of the task cycle and requires students to tell the story of a person, within their school community, that has experienced prejudice and/or overcome obstacles imposed by biased gender representations. Students were asked to interview

people from school in order to choose one story they would like to tell. Then, students produced a narrative which was posted in a Facebook page entitled Humans of CA. Post-test 2 served the purpose of informing on students' choices in terms of language and their knowledge of the genre story-telling as well as analyzing their performance concerning task accomplishment. It also provided information concerning students' critical literacy development. Considering this test is also a task that is part of the task cycle, chapter four offers a more detailed explanation of it.

3.4.5. The Post-Task Questionnaire, the Interviews and the Teacher/Researcher's Diary

Three other instruments were also used for data collection. Personal diaries were used as instruments by this researcher in order to register relevant data during the cycle implementation. Additionally, after the task cycle, students responded to questionnaires and took part in interviews so as to unveil their perception of their own language and critical literacy growth.

In relation to the diary used by the teacher/researcher to take notes (see Appendix 7), the notes were based on recorded classes and the teacher's recollection. After each class, I would listen to the recordings and write down the main procedures conducted in that class as well as instances that caught my attention concerning students' performance and/or language and critical literacy development.

The post-task questionnaire (see Appendix 8) used in this study contained four closed questions and five open questions. According to Woodrow (2010), "questionnaires rely upon self-report, that is, the data come from the respondent's own account of their experiences or views." (p. 305). Since one of the objectives of the study is to investigate students' perception of their own development, a self-report questionnaire was considered to better fit the research purposes.

Due to students' foreign language proficiency level (basic), the questionnaire was administered in their first language (Portuguese) so that difficulties in expressing their opinions because of the target language use were eliminated. Another reason for using questionnaires in Portuguese was because students' focus on understanding the questions was expected to be directed towards meaning and not towards comprehending specific words or ideas in another language.

In the first question, students were asked if they believed they had learned something in relation to language. Two options were given to the students: (a) yes, my English improved, and (b) no, I did not learn anything. The next question required students to explain their choice. Question three inquired if students were either satisfied or unsatisfied with what they might (or not) have learned. Students were given four options: (a) satisfied, (b) unsatisfied, (c) not sure and (d) could have dedicated myself more. The following question once again asked them to explain their previous response. Question five asked if they believed to have learned something about gender representation and students were given two options: (a) yes, I learned something, and (b) no, I did not learn anything. Then, they were required to explain their options in the following question. Once again, they were asked if they felt either satisfied or unsatisfied with what they might (or not) have learned and required to explain. Finally, students were asked to mention moments in class they enjoyed and explain why. The responses given by the students are detailed in the analysis chapter where the results are displayed and discussed.

In order to probe some of the answers given in the post-task questionnaires, semi-structured interview sessions were conducted so as to have a more complete view of students' perceptions. The interviews were conducted during class time, one student at a time. Given that they had the purpose of deepening the understanding of how students felt during the performance of the tasks, the interview sessions, which were conducted in

Portuguese, had as a basis the questionnaires that were answered after the cycle of tasks' implementation. Two new questions were also introduced to all students: if they considered the topic discussed important and why, and how they might (or not) have changed during the data collection. Students' answers were recorded and transcribed; however, conversations that deviated from the interview topic were excluded as well as introductions and greetings.

The results gathered with the instruments here described are further explored in the analysis chapter.

3.5. STUDY DESIGN AND DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

Data collection took place during the normally scheduled class periods (Mondays, from 1:30 pm to 2:20 pm and Wednesdays, from 1:30 pm to 3:10 pm) in students' regular classroom and was carried out in three phases. During the first phase, as to ensure a better understanding of the group as individuals and as English speakers, the researcher who was also the teacher of the group, engaged in a needs analysis period through class discussions and observations (more details on the needs analysis results are given in the following chapter). From May 16th on, the researcher stopped working at the school as a hired teacher and continued teaching the classes only as a researcher. Therefore, other teachers at the school were invited to attend the classes as observers. On May 18th, the class was dedicated to explanations about the research design to the students as well as for them to take the consent form to be signed by their families.

The second phase started on May 23rd, when students engaged in the pre-test 1. On the same week, May 25th, students worked on pre-test 2. Then, the cycle of tasks was implemented from May 25th to July 6th. The third phase started on July 6th, when students answered the post-questionnaires. On July 13th, students gave interviews in order to clarify some of their answers in the

questionnaires. Finally, on August 10th, post-test 1 was administered. Table 5 summarizes the research design.

Table 5
General Research Design

Phases	Dates	Instruments
Phase 1	February 15th – May 16th	- Needs analysis period
	May 18th	- Explanation of research design - Consent Forms
Phase 2	May 23rd	- Pre-test 1
	May 25th	- Pre-test 2
	May 25th – July 6th	- Cycle of tasks
Phase 3	July 6th	- Questionnaires
	July 13th	- Interviews
	August 10th	- Post-test 1

3.6. DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

During the needs analysis period, a first draft of the cycle of tasks was designed. After the first phase of the study, participants' profile was organized, listing students' personal background. Additionally, an informal analysis of participants' language proficiency (focusing on the chosen linguistic aspects to be worked with in the cycle of tasks) was considered. The results were contrasted with the first draft of the task cycle and a final version of the task cycle was created[13].

After the second and third phases of the study, both quantitative and qualitative analyses of the data were carried out in order to investigate language and critical literacy development. It is important to reinforce that the main pedagogical goal established for this study was to foster critical language and critical literacy development

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[13] I would like to thank my qualifying committee, who read the first draft of the cycle of tasks and contributed immensely to its final version.

among students, so they could act upon their reality and transform it. Therefore, language and critical literacy are not seen as detached in this piece of research. However, considering different impacts that the cycle of tasks may have had in students' growth, results concerning language development and critical literacy development were looked at and analyzed separately, for organizational purposes. The following sections, hence, describe the procedures used for data analyses considering this rationale.

3.6.1. Data Analysis in Terms of Language Development

Participants' linguistic development was examined both quantitatively and qualitatively, considering the research questions established. Therefore, the teacher/researcher's perception of participants' linguistic development, participants' performance in pre and post-tests, as well as participants' own perception of their linguistic development were taken into account, as the following sections describe.

3.6.1.1. Data Analysis in terms of the teacher/researcher's perception: Analysis of Diary Notes and Participants' performances in Tasks During the Implementation of the Task-Cycle.

Teacher/researcher's perceptions of participants' linguistic development were taken into account considering notes made by me in my diary and taking into account participants' performances in tasks they engaged in during the task cycle. The selected data, which was discussed under the light of the literature that informed this study, provided a more encompassing perspective on students' language growth.

3.6.1.2. Data Analysis in terms of participants' linguistic performance: Pre-Test 1 and Post-Test 1 Score Comparison

Scores from pre-test 1 and post-test 1 (both corresponding to the same grammaticality judgment test) were compared revealing students' grammatical familiarity (or the lack of it) with the use of the simple past structure. The number of correct answers in the pre-test were counted and paralleled with the number of correct answers in the post-test. Results were considered having in mind the percentage of correct answers in each test. A dependent t-test (Larson-Hall, 2010) was used to compare students' scores, considering the alpha value of .001[14].

3.6.1.3. Data Analysis in terms of participants' linguistic performance: Pre-Test 2 and Post-Test 2 Score Comparison in Terms of Accuracy

Pre-test 2 and post-test 2, both production tasks in which students were expected to tell a story, were analyzed in terms of accuracy and outcome achievement. For the accuracy analysis, the scores obtained in three texts were considered: a) the scores obtained in pre-test 2, b) the scores obtained in the first version of post-test 2 (from now on referred to as post-test 2a), and c) the scores obtained in the second version of post-test 2 (from now on referred to as post-test 2b).

Accuracy was measured by counting the amount of errors considering the sum of words produced. D'Ely (2011) explains that errors can be considered "any deviation from the norm in relation to syntax, morphology

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[14] Taking into account the number of dependent variables in the whole study and the nature of the tests used (repeated measures), a Bonferoni correction was applied to the alpha value, which was set as .001 in this study.

and lexical choice" (p. 116). However, raters who analyzed accuracy in this study were also instructed to consider both the context of instruction and the participants (that is, the fact students are beginners in a school environment) as well as the pragmatic use of language in other to convey meaning.

For the scores obtained in pre-test 2 and post-test 2b, four raters were invited to read students' productions and decide on whether grammatical errors could be perceived in the texts. Raters received a word document with instructions that included relevant information about the students, the tasks and guiding directions for their analysis (see Appendix 9). They also received a copy of students' productions and a copy of the task students engaged in. Pre-test 2 accuracy raters also received a copy of the episode students had watched.

Two raters read students' productions in the pre-test 2 and two raters focused on students' productions in the post-test 2b. Raters were chosen based on their professional and educational background and their familiarity with the task-based approach. The first pre-test 2 accuracy rater holds a teaching degree and a master's degree in English Language and Literature and is a PhD candidate at *Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina.* He has been working as an English teacher since 2011. The other pre-test 2 accuracy rater holds a B.A. in tourism and is currently pursuing a teaching degree and a master's degree in English Language and Literature. He has been working as an English teacher for three years.

The first post-test 2b accuracy rater holds a teaching degree in English Language and Literature and she has been an English teacher for eight years. Finally, the second post-test 2b rater accuracy holds a teaching degree and a master's degree in English Language and Literature and is a PhD candidate at *Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina.* He has been teaching English for thirteen years. Besides the analysis of each pair of raters concerning pre-test 2 and post-test 2b results, a third

analysis of both pre and post productions was conducted by the researcher.

After comparing the results gathered from the raters of each test, the researcher met with each pair in order to discuss disagreements and achieve a consensus. An example of a disagreement among the accuracy raters is the sentence produced by Panda (one of the students) in post-test 2. The original sentence written by the student said: "she already suffered prejudice for being one girl that fought jiu-jitsu". In their analysis, two raters considered the use of the word "one" an error while the other did not. After their meeting, the three raters agreed that the word "one", in that sentence, would be considered an error since it represented a numeral, not an indefinite article and, even though it could be understood orally, the fact the production is written required the use of the article to better express the intended message.

For the scores obtained in post-test 2a, errors were considered taking into account the feedback given to students by the teacher during the task cycle implementation (see Appendix 17).

In relation to samples of errors that were produced by participants in the pre-test 2, they involved inappropriate use of lexical choices such as in: "the **history** begins with Tom", inaccurate word-order such as "in love with the **cat rich**", and ungrammatical conjugation of verb tenses, as in "she **fall** in love with the other cat". No errors were observed concerning the use of simple past since only one student used the structure once in her text and did it correctly. Regarding errors produced in the both versions of the post-test, they followed similar patterns as the ones produced in the pre-test. However, in the post-test 2a and 2b, students produced a few errors when using the simple past. Deviations concerning spelling or punctuation were not considered errors.

After counting the number of errors produced in each text, a final score was attributed to each participant and the number of errors was divided by the number of words produced. Then, the resulting number was

multiplied by 100 to express the percentage of errors produced in each test. The percentage scores were then compared using dependent t-tests, taking into account the significance value of .001.

3.6.1.4. Data Analysis in terms of participants' linguistic performance: Pre-Test 2 and Post-Test 2 Score Comparison in Terms of Outcome Achievement

Outcome achievement was also based on raters' analysis considering the outcome of each task. Four raters were invited to participate in this phase. The first pre-test 2 outcome rater holds a B.A. and a teaching degree in English Language and Literature and is a PhD candidate at *Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina.* She has been working as an English teacher for four years. The second pre-test 2 outcome rater holds a B.A. in English Language from *Universidade Federal do Pará* and is a PhD candidate at University of Hawaii-Manoa. She has been working as an English teacher for seven years. The two outcome raters of the post-test 2 hold a teaching degree in English Language and Literature at *Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina.* Rater one has been working as an English teacher for seven years and is a M.A. candidate at *Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina.* Rater two also holds a B.A. and an M.A. in English Language and Literature and has been working as an English teacher for eight years.

Since outcome achievement encompasses a more subjective analysis, a more qualitative approach was taken for defining rater scores. Ellis (2003) explains that every task has a defined outcome, which is usually given within the instructions of the task. The outcome then is the objective to be achieved within the task, the final product of the task itself and students' main focus during task completion. Considering that pre-test 2 and post-test 2 can be seen as tasks, therefore, in order to measure the outcome achievement, in this study, a descriptive scale was created with some criteria for determining whether

the outcome had been achieved or not for each production (see Appendix 12).

Before engaging in the analysis, the four raters were asked to explain what makes a good, well-written story in their opinion. Raters' answers involved the use of well-developed characters, clear complication action, the presence of a setting, the use of cohesive devices to connect ideas, a logical sequence of events, imaginative and creative narrative, among others. Raters' responses were considered and served for a reformulation of the outcome analysis scale so as to guarantee raters were familiar with and agreed on the outcomes of the given task. Raters of the post-task 2 were also asked to list elements in a Facebook post in order to ensure they were familiar with the genre students produced.

After the analysis of raters' first responses, a final version of the descriptive scale was made and the scales were sent to raters through *google forms*. Raters of pre-test 2 also received an instructions' file (see Appendix 10) with important information related to the research and guiding directions on how to complete the analysis. Moreover, they received a link for the episode students watched in order to complete pre-test 2 and a copy of pre-test 2. Raters of post-test 2 received an instructions' file (see Appendix 11) too with important information related to the research and guiding directions to how to complete the analysis. Furthermore, they received a copy of post-test 2 and a link to the webpages Humans of New York and Humans of UFSC in order to ensure they were familiar with the genre students worked on.

In relation to the outcome analysis questionnaires, for the pre-test 2, the two raters responded to five questions for each student's written production. All questions were divided into two parts. In part 1, raters had to decide whether they agreed with a statement concerning a given student's text using a five point Likert scale that went from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". In part 2, raters were asked to explain their choices in relation to their previous answer. Question 1

inquired whether the student had told the story successfully. Question 2 asked if the language choices made by the student seemed to contribute successfully to the story telling. Question 3 focused on the story being told in a coherent and cohesive way, contributing to build a complete and well-connected story. Question 4 inquired if the story presented a logical sequence of events that made sense to the reader and within the narrative. Question 5 asked the rater to decide whether the story was told in an interesting way that would catch the reader's attention and motivation.

Outcome raters of post-test 2 responded to six questions for each student's written production. The questions also had two parts, the first making use of the same Likert scale and the second being a space to explaining their answers. Besides the same questions answered by raters who analyzed the narratives built in the pre-test 2, one other question was answered by the two raters who analyzed the post-test 2. The extra question inquired them to consider whether students were able to include elements that had been listed in the task outline as part of the genre storytelling in a Facebook post. This question was considered a subset of question 1, which aimed at understanding students' successful telling of the story.

This researcher also conducted an analysis of each production, using the questionnaires, serving as a third rater for each test. After raters finished completing their analysis, raters' answers were contrasted to their explanations in order to guarantee raters clear understanding of the question and expectations towards students' productions. Then, numerical values were assigned to the results given by each trio of raters, in which the minimum score 10 corresponded to "strongly disagree" and the maximum score 50 to "strongly agree". Therefore, the maximum score a student could get to in terms of outcome achievement was 250.

A Cronbach's alpha correlation was used to test for inter-rater reliability for each test (pre and post).

Larson- Hall (2010) explains that, in general, the acceptable level of Cronbach's alpha varies from .70 to .80. In this study, for the pre-test 2, the alpha resulted in .89 and for the post-test 2, the alpha resulted in .95, which, therefore, indicate raters' analysis were correlated to each other. Thus, since the results given by the outcome raters were considered reliable for both tests, the outcome rates from each trio of raters were added and divided by three so as to achieve a final score for each student in each test, which were then compared using a dependent t-test (significance value of .001).

3.6.1.5. Data Analysis in terms of participants' perception: Analysis of Post-Task Questionnaires and Post-Task Interviews

In this study, language development was also scrutinized taking a qualitative stance. Students' responses to questionnaires and interviews were analyzed in order to have a complete understanding of their language progress. Learners' answers to the questionnaires and interviews were submitted to a language-based analysis (Dörnyei, 2007). Information from both instruments were transcribed and tabulated, according to the question asked. Responses given in the questionnaires were used as primary information to unveil aspects later found in the interviews. That is, some answers given by the participants in the questionnaires motivated some questions asked in the interviews with the purpose of clarifying participants' voices.

The transcriptions from participants' interviews were analyzed following a more complete approach. Aiming at unveiling participants' perceptions (Silva, M., 2003) about their language development, a detailed content analysis (Smith, 2000) of the interviews took place. The content analysis involved a cyclical and inductive scrutiny process during which the student's ideas were primarily coded. Deriving from the established codes, recurrent themes were identified and a list of

emerging themes was produced. The list was then sent to a coder who was invited to independently code a sample of the data in order to ensure coding reliability.

The coder, who holds a teaching degree in English Language and Literature from *Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina* and has been an English teacher for eight years, received a coding manual that is divided into four parts (see Appendix 13). Part 1 required that the coder read some instances of the interviews and categorized them according to the emerging themes list. The coder was also allowed to both suggest new themes, if she believed to be necessary, and to suggest modifications in the name and/or description of the existing themes, if she believed to be the case. Parts 2 and 3 followed the same procedure only different parts of the interviews were given to the coder as well as different themes. Part 4 required the coder to answer the following question: "Do you believe the codes chosen for these interviews were appropriate? If so, why? If not, explain why and also indicate specifically the codes you don't think are appropriate, suggesting new codes if you can". This coding design was chosen considering the types of questions that were asked in the interviews. As previously stated, the interviews started with questions that aimed at deepening the understanding of how students felt during the performance of the tasks and, therefore, better understanding the answers they gave in the questionnaires.

Because each student gave different answers in their questionnaires, the first questions of most interviews are different and specific of each participant. The last two questions of every interview, however, were similar to all students: 1) if they considered the theme discussed important and why, and 2) how they might (or not) have changed from the beginning of the year comparing to the end of the semester. Therefore, part 1 of the coding manual focused on a sample of the first questions of interviews that vary among participants. Part 2, on the other hand, was based on a sample of the interview

answers given to the first question that was common to all students. Part 3 considered a sample of the interview answers given to the second question that was common to all students. Finally, the fourth part of the coding manual inquired the coder about whether she believed the themes/codes given for these interviews were appropriate or not. In order to clarify the procedures to be used during coding, the coding manual also included an introductory text that gives information about the research as well as a step-by-step description of how the coding is supposed to be conducted.

In order to engage in coding process, the coder received the complete coding material as well as the corresponding interview samples before coding. The samples were chosen aiming at guaranteeing that at least one example of each theme was included. The coder was then asked to read the instructions and make sure she was able to understand what was expected of her. On a previously agreed date, I met with the coder and together we read each sentence. She was given the opportunity to code each sentence according to her understanding. Then, we discussed her choices in order for me to understand her rationale and achieved a final code for each sentence. The answers given by the coder were compared and contrasted to the coding previously made by this researcher.

Considering the coding list suggested by the coder, some modifications were made in the final version of the emerging themes. Five changes were made, all in part 1: one code received a different name, one theme received different a name, one code was removed, and two new themes were introduced. Code 1 was previously named "Learning Awareness of the Content". However, the coder explained that she did not believe the word "content" was a good choice since the student was not expected to learn any specific content. Instead, the student was expected to reflect on the topic being discussed (gender representation). Therefore, code 1 was re-named "Learning Awareness of the Topic". Additionally, theme

3, that was previously named "evidence of content understanding", was also questioned by the coder. According to her, once again, the chosen name did not describe accurately the instances produced by the student. After discussing some possibilities, we both agreed on the new name and theme 3 became "evidence of awareness of matters related to the topic". Moreover, the code previously named "like/dislike", under the theme "feelings" was removed considering that it did not in fact reflect a feeling, instead it reflected preferences or interest. This code was then renamed as a new theme entitled "personal interest". Finally, a new code was introduced and named as "Suggestions of Transformative Actions".

After the previously mentioned changes, a final list of ten emerging themes with twenty codes was developed as follows:

Part 1:

Theme 1: LA – Learning Awareness:

- Code 1 - LAC – Learning Awareness of the Topic – the student seems to be aware of his/her learning/improvement in relation to the topic that has been discussed in class. Usually happens when the student states he/she has learned something and brings as examples aspects related to the content discussed in class (gender representation and/or issues)

- Code 2 - LAL – Learning Awareness of Language – the student seems to be aware of his/her learning/improvement in relation to the English language. Usually happens when the student states he/she has learned something and brings as examples aspects related to the English language.

Theme 2: AG – Agency:

- Code 3 – Agency - The student describes instances in which he/she acted towards transforming his/her reality. Usually happens when students clearly describe moments in which they engaged in an action, mostly as a reaction because of the classes or towards someone's behavior.

Theme 3: EMA – Evidence of Awareness of Matters Related to the Topic:

- Code 4 – Evidence of awareness of matters related to the topic: the student's voice shows clear evidence he/she understood some of the concepts discussed in class. Moreover, student seems to be aware of different matters related to the topic under discussion (gender representation). Usually happens when the student gives examples or explanations of specific themes, constructs or topics without necessarily being asked to.

Theme 4: CRI – Critical Reflection during the Interview:

- Code 5 – critical reflection during the interview: the student's voice shows moments in which he/she is engaging in a critical reflection at the moment of the interview. Usually happens when the interviewer asks the student to explain his/her answers with more details, guiding the student to a deeper understanding of his/her answers. The moment of critical reflection refers to the moment the interview is happening, that is, the interview also serves as a site for reflection.

Theme 5: FE - Feelings:

- student's voice expresses feelings he/she may have experienced or is experiencing at the moment of the interview.

Code 6 - Confident/Not Confident

Code 7 - Proud of him/her self

Code 8 - Validated

Code 9 – Powerful

Theme 6: PI – Personal Interest:

- Code 10 – Personal interest: student's voice reflects something the students seems to like/dislike and/or be interested about.

Theme 7: STA - Suggestions of Transformative Actions:

- Code 11 – Suggestions of Transformative Actions: student's voice reflects he/she seems to be aware of an issue related to the topic. However, the student goes further and brings possible suggestions of transformative

actions that could maybe solve and/or impact the identified issue.

Theme 8: ESS - Evaluations about someone or something

- Code 12 – Evaluations about someone or something: when the student's voice reflects some kind of evaluation he/she is making about something or about someone.

Part 2:

Theme 9: RTI - Reasons why the topic is important:

- Code 13 - Reason 1: it's important because people may not know or be aware of the topic
- Code 14 - Reason 2: it's important because it may change our reality
- Code 15 - Reason 3: it's important because we need to learn this for life
- Code 16 - Reason 4: it's important because it can help people who need/want to talk about it

Part 3:

Theme 10: IOS - Impacts on students

- Code 17 - Impact 1: the student believes he/she is now more aware of matters in relation to the topic studied
- Code 18 - Impact 2: the student believes he/she is now more confident
- Code 19 - Impact 3: the student believes the classes had an impact in his/her actions
- Code 20 - Impact 4: the student believes he/she improved in terms of language

The final list of codes/themes as well as the coding produced by the coder were considered and students' answers to the interviews were re-coded (see Appendix 22). The coded data was used to understand students' perceptions considering the literature that informed this study.

3.6.2. Data Analysis in Terms of Critical Literacy Development

Critical literacy growth was analyzed both qualitatively and qualitatively, also considering the aspects established by the research questions. The methodological procedures for each analysis are described in the following sections.

3.6.2.1. Data Analysis in terms of teacher/researcher's perception: Analysis of classroom discussions, students' task responses and teacher notes

Students' task responses, transcriptions of classroom discussions as well as teacher/researcher's diary notes were analyzed in order to better comprehend the process students engaged in while developing critical literacy. Five classroom discussion moments were chosen to exemplify this process (see Appendix 21). The instances were described in details and combined with students' answers to tasks and the teacher's perceptions annotated in her class diary (see Appendix 7). Data was analyzed considering the literature that informed this study.

3.6.2.2. Data Analysis in terms of participants' Critical Literacy Performance: Pre-Test 2 and Post-Test 2 Score Comparison

Students' critical literacy development was measured quantitatively considering raters' responses to a questionnaire. The same raters who read students' pre-test 2 and the ones who read students' post-test 2, focusing on students' outcome achievement, also reflected about their critical development. Raters of the pre-test 2 answered a question that inquired them about students' critical perspective in their narrative. Once again, using a Likert scale that varied from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree", raters had to decide if students told their story in a way that issues of gender representation could be thought

of from a critical perspective. Similarly, raters of the post-test 2 were asked to engage in an analogous reflection. However, raters of the post-test 2 were asked two questions instead of one. Besides the same question answered by raters of the pre-test 2, an extra question inquired raters of post-test 2 if they believed the students seemed to have a general idea of what gender representation is. The reasons for this extra question was to gather information about raters views on students' reflections on the issue being discussed since gender representation was the topic approached in the cycle of tasks.

The maximum score to be achieved by a participant considering their critical development was 50. Raters were also asked to explain their answers giving reasons to their choices. These reasons were used to understand how each rater perceived the construct critical perspective, aiming at guaranteeing their coherence. After the inter-rater reliability was confirmed, the results given by the raters were added and divided by three so as to achieve a final score for each student in each test, which were then compared using a dependent t-test (significance value of .001). Results were interpreted in light of the theories that inform this study.

3.6.2.3. Data Analysis in terms of participants' perception: Analysis of questionnaires and interviews

Another data set used to unveil students' development in terms of critical literacy were the responses given in the questionnaires and interviews. The methodological process used for this analysis is the same as the one used for unveiling students' perceptions concerning their linguistic development, taking into account emerging themes, as described above.

3.7. SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter provided the objectives and research questions that guided this study, as well as the methods

and procedures used to collect and interpret data. Also, it situated the reader into the dissertation by describing the research setting and the participants. The following chapter presents the cycle of tasks designed for this research and its pedagogical procedures.

CHAPTER IV

THE CYCLE OF TASKS AND TEACHING PROCEDURES

Taking into consideration that this study aimed at elaborating and implementing a cycle of English thematic tasks for an elementary school group in order to encourage critical literacy while fostering language development, this chapter presents the cycle of tasks that was designed for these purposes. The decision of presenting these instruments in a separate chapter lies on the acknowledgment of how urgent and relevant and, at the same time challenging, it is to design materials for EFL contexts, specially following the task-based approach and a critical understanding of language.

Still, two considerations must be made before continuing the chapter. One of them has to do with the understanding that this cycle of tasks is, by no means, supposed to be seen as a formula for critical foreign language teaching. Instead, it should be perceived as a tentative sample for this purpose, which needs to be reformulated or adapted, according to the context and to students' needs. Another important consideration lies on the recognition that tasks cannot be critical by themselves. That is, it is part of the teacher's role to encourage learners to have a critical perspective, acting as a mediator that may guide students in the process of analyzing discourse critically and acting upon it, fostering transformation. Similarly, teachers are a key figure in the implementation of tasks, since they function as mediators who actively contribute to language development (Van den Branden, 2016).

When it comes to materials design in the Task-Based context, Long (1985; 2015; 2016) has consistently argued that the tasks should be learner-based, following information provided by a needs analysis process. The author highlights that TBLT is by definition a learner-

centered approach, which means that learners' needs and individual/group differences must be accounted for and tasks should be developed according to them. In a similar direction, East (2017) makes a case for teachers' experiences and contextual knowledge in informing theory and practice. The author emphasizes that teachers themselves hold much knowledge about their teaching context and, hence, can contribute greatly to the advance of task developments that are specific to their realities.

From Critical Pedagogy and Critical Literacy perspectives, aspects such as learners' needs and individual differences, teachers' perspectives and situational contexts should also be seen as features that may impact learning, validating the need for material development. Moreover, designing critical materials becomes mandatory, considering the scant number of textbooks in the EFL field that tackle language from a critical viewpoint (Silva, L. Farias, & D'Ely, 2017). Crookes (2013) calls attention to the important role that critical materials may have as the starting point to teachers who aim at implementing critical ELT.

Following Task-Based and Critical Pedagogy/Literacy theories, therefore, material development is both beneficial and compulsory. It is necessary to have in mind, however, that although designing materials to specific contexts is clearly relevant, the reality of many teaching/learning settings does not always allow for it to happen. That may be the case of the Brazilian context, where the workload of many teachers is exceedingly heavy and several schools do not always have the necessary infrastructure that certain materials and learners' needs may require. Hence, if one aims at teaching language critically and communicatively in such scenarios, presenting material samples to be adapted by teachers as they see fit (D'Ely & Mota, 2004) may be a way to overcome possible difficulties.

With these ideas in mind, the task cycle used in this study was developed aiming at tackling some specificities of the given context and attempting to fulfill

some of the needs of given learners. Being a teacher for two years in the data collection context provided me with experience and knowledge about the teaching setting, allowing for informed decision-making. Moreover, being acquainted with students and their lives and taking part in various debates with them about diverse topics was paramount for effective needs analysis to take place. Still, designing a complete task cycle that accounted for the development of learners' language use from a critical and communicative perspective, taking into consideration the peculiarities of the context, was indeed a great challenge. This researcher, therefore, calls attention to the substantial significance of studies such as Pereira's (2015), Afonso's (2016) and Silva et al's (2017), to mention but a few, that engaged in designing their own task cycles, making a case for the importance of materials development that consider both learners and teaching context.

Having in mind how little attention materials' design has received until recently in the literature on applied linguistics (Tomlinson, 2012), and considering the relevance of such endeavor, that in the case of this study, attempted to develop critical and task-based foreign language learning materials, this chapter describes the cycle of tasks used for data collection. The task cycle here presented was designed under the following theoretical basis: 1) Ellis's (2003) definition of a task; 2) Skehan's (1996; 2016) framework for task implementation, 3) Ellis's (2003; 2017) concept of focused tasks; 4) recommendations found in the Brazilian official documents for EFL education, the NCP (1998) and the CNCB (2017); 5) Freire's (1970) perspectives on Critical Pedagogy; 6) Crookes's (2013) understanding of Critical Pedagogy in Language Teaching and 7) McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2004a; 2004b) framework and strategies for a Critical Literacy Lesson. Furthermore, this chapter presents the respective teaching procedures used during task implementation and which follow the aforementioned pedagogical principles.

According to Ellis (2003), a task is a workplan for an activity that focuses learners' attention primarily on meaning-making while they work towards a real world communication goal, that is, an outcome to be accomplished. Skehan's (1996) framework for task implementation proposes that tasks should come in cycles composed of three stages: pre-task, mid-task, post-task. The aim of the task cycle is to offer learners the necessary support for accomplishing the cycle's goal. Therefore, the pre-task(s) prepares learners to work on the mid-task(s) while the post-task accounts for aspects that were not attended to in the previous stages. However, it is important to mention that, although learner's attention is supposed to be meaning-centered during task implementation, a focus on form is also possible (and many times necessary).

One way to focus students' attention to form is through the use of focused tasks. Ellis (2003; 2017) explains that focused tasks are the ones that are designed to elicit the processing of specific, pre-determined linguistic features by the students. In this sense, focused tasks, when used selectively among unfocused tasks, may be beneficial for language development. The theoretical principles proposed by Ellis (2003; 2017) and Skehan (1996) guided the tasks developed in this study, which were also produced under some of the Critical Pedagogy and Literacy underpinnings.

Freire, by many considered the father of critical pedagogy, understands language as a powerful tool for social change (Freire, 1970). According to the author, teaching should also aim at developing critical literacy so then learners are empowered to reflect about discourse and language use in order to promote changes in his/her own contexts and in the world. Crookes (2013) defends the practice of a critical pedagogy in language teaching that teaches for social justice "in ways that support the development of active, engaged citizens" (p. 8). The author introduces nine components for a critical language pedagogy for ELT, being: language organization and

classroom management prerequisites, critical stances taken by the teacher, critical needs analysis, negotiated syllabus, the use of codes, the importance of critical dialogue, the use of critical content in materials, participatory and democratic assessment and action orientation. According to him, even though they should all be implemented in an ideal critical classroom, all concepts "provide practical challenges to 'mainstream' classroom practices" (p. 46) and can be explored separately, considering the teaching context demands and characteristics. McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2004a; 2004b) see Critical Literacy as an approach that focuses on issues of power and promotes reflection, transformation and action. It does so by focusing on social problems and their complexities and by making use of strategies that disrupt the commonplace while examining multiple perspectives.

The Brazilian National Curricular Parameters (NCP) seem to encourage teachers to foster critical literacy in L2 classes. The document recommends relevant topics to be discussed in classrooms in order to support students' development as social agents. Currently, the new document for guiding Brazilian education, Common National Curricular Base (CNCB), claims that teaching a second language is preparing students for acting upon the world. Even though a lot has changed from one document to another, which has been the topic of controversial debates among educators, some principles seem to continue as part of suggestions for teachers in the new document. Thus, the cycle of tasks used in this research follows some of the principles introduced by the Critical Pedagogy and Critical Literacy theory as well as some of the recommendations brought by the NCP and the CNCB.

Having the aforementioned in mind, the cycle of tasks designed for this study meant to offer the students an opportunity to develop critical literacy while effectively engaging in their learning of English as a foreign language. Thus, this chapter, which presents a detailed description of each task within the task cycle, as well as

its rationale and teaching procedures, is organized into five sections, which are further subdivided. Section 4.1 presents the process of needs analysis, discussing specific features of the context of investigation. Section 4.2 brings general details on the cycle of tasks. Section 4.3 provides information about the pre-task phase. Section 4.4 refers to the mid-task phase of the cycle and finally, section 4.5 presents the post-task phase.

4.1. NEEDS ANALYSIS AND THE CONTEXT OF INVESTIGATION

In order to achieve the main objective of this study, some decisions regarding the cycle of tasks were made. One of the main aspects that influenced these decisions is the process of needs analysis. Crookes (2013) sees needs analysis as a prerequisite for promoting critical language pedagogy. According to the author, "the results address students' needs, considering them in term of the role the learner as a potentially active agent in society, not merely as a worker performing tasks or a student studying language" (p. 55).

West (1994) points out that although much of the literature related to needs analysis focuses on English for Specific Purposes (ESP), there is also an interest in understanding the impact of it in general language learning. Long (1985; 2015; 2016) reinforces the importance of a needs analysis so as to establish the target tasks that might seem to be relevant and meaningful for a specific group of learners. Target tasks, in this sense, are real world tasks that students need to learn for daily life purposes. These tasks then become pedagogical ones once the teacher employs adaptations to the classroom environment. However, it can be argued that the process of needs analysis goes beyond the identification of daily activities and should also tackle issues related to unequal power relations that permeate learners' contexts, offering possibility of transformation (Benesch, 1996).

Because this researcher acknowledges the significance of the needs analysis process, nevertheless

considering the study timetable and the school's schedule, the needs analysis period happened prior to data collection, following some specific procedures here described. Taking into account that this researcher was also the English teacher at the school in which this study was carried out, a general observation phase took place during the years of 2014 and 2015, focusing on the overall profile of the students in that institution as well as possible specific features of the teaching context that could influence learning. Relevant information concerning a) students' common needs and general proficiency, b) school syllabus and c) school environment were gathered and considered during task design. Then, a more careful observation phase happened during the three months before data collection, only, this time, the participants of the research were its main focus. Considering the researcher was also the English teacher of the participants, this was an opportunity to get to know the students, their contexts and lives inside and outside the school environment, learn about some of their needs and gaps in terms of language development and collect information during class discussion that strongly contributed to task creation.

Jasso-Aguilar (1999) talks about the importance of using multiple sources and methods for identifying learners needs, and emphasizes the reliability of "insiders", that is, the people who are part of the context (teacher, students, etc.), when it comes to exploring needs. Hence, debates related to topics students saw as relevant and seemed to be interested in, as well as a questionnaire that focused on students' daily activities, interests and relationship with English were instruments used to gather needs data as well. The responses from the questionnaire indicated students had been studying English for two years or more, mostly at school. Six students mentioned they use language learning apps and/or games to practice their language proficiency and three students reported studying English in private language schools. All students also reported making use of social networks and apps to

pass their free time and communicate with friends. In relation to topics they would be interested in studying in class, students reported "topics related to my daily life, football, books and music". Moreover, from the discussions we had in class, the teacher/researcher identified some topics that seemed to be part of students' context, such as gender issues at school, differences in terms of social class, difficulties dealing with emotions, difficulties related to group work.

Furthermore, the recommendations brought by the NCP and by CNCB as well as the school syllabus for 7th grade were also contemplated. The textbook used for this grade in this school during the year of 2016 was called *Alive!* (2012) and it is divided in 8 units that offered different possibilities in terms of topics and structural content, all making use of a communicative/ functional approach to language learning. Unit 3, more specifically, was entitled "Special Women" and aimed at aiding learners in communicating about past events and habits by making use of the simple past while discussing gender.

Considering all the information gathered during the needs analysis period, some decisions were made. The selected target genre to be developed (together with other secondary target tasks) during the task cycle was storytelling. As Toolan (2001) explains "narratives are everywhere. Or are potentially so. Everything we do, from making the bed to making breakfast to taking a shower (and notice how these combined – in any order – make a multi-episode narrative), can be seen, cast, and recounted as a narrative" (p. VIII). Thus, preparing students to tell stories about themselves or about others is a pedagogical task that resembles the real world and that, if mastered in a second/foreign language, can be seen as useful in their routine. Moreover, another reason for the choice of story telling as the main task in the cycle had to do with students' habits of using social network, playing role playing games and engaging in communicative activities that require the ability to tell stories. During class discussions, students reported they would be interested in

communicating stories about themselves and others in another language within these scenarios as well as understanding narratives they hear or read about in the media and social media. Not only this seems to be a valid need reported by the students themselves, but also this researcher/teacher considered important for students to reflect on the innumerous representations and meanings that lie behind stories told in the media (to which students are usually exposed to) and by others, as well as the many reasons why they are told they way they are.

Regarding the language emphasis, the simple past was chosen as the main structure to be worked with in the cycle of tasks. The structure was chosen considering the school syllabus for the 7th grade as well as the teacher's reflections concerning students' proficiency level during the observation phase. Crookes (2013) explains that "the closer we are to a basic beginning level of English among our students, the more need there may be for careful recognition of what language forms and functions, speech events, indeed pedagogical tasks, will need to be pre taught" (p. 48). It is important to clarify, however, that the focus on this linguistic aspect (simple past) does not, by any means, characterize this study as one that employs a synthetic approach [15] to language. On the contrary, the language focus of the cycle of tasks in this research is meaning centered. Nevertheless, students engaged in the given tasks whose input included the past structure both implicitly (through unfocused tasks) and explicitly (through focused tasks), in order to employ the narrative structure to tell stories.

Finally, a guiding topic was chosen to be discussed with the students throughout the task cycle implementation. Taking into account the topic suggested

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[15] Long (2015) differentiates synthetic and analytic approaches to language teaching explaining that a "synthetic approach begins by focusing on the language to be taught" (p. 19) while and analytic approach does the opposite, starting "with the learner and learning process" (p. 20).

in the textbook used for this grade; the representation of gender in society was the selected topic. This topic was also chosen due to students' impetus in discussing and reflecting on gender related topics. During class discussion, debates concerning gender differences would commonly appear, mostly being characterized as girls and boys defending themselves/attacking each other. After careful observation and reflection, I decided to discuss gender representation in the media as a way to motivate students to reflect about the stereotypes they might have about their and other genders as well as a way of empowering students to talk and perform their own identities.

Therefore, at the end of the cycle, it was expected that besides reflecting critically about gender representation in society and their own identities, students would be able to tell stories about people who have overcome/fought against stereotypes and, in doing so, students would have the chance to re-signify their perceptions and, maybe, even engage in promoting changes in their school community. By telling other people's stories, students were expected to attempt to understand different representations they may find in their own context while promoting social change by engaging in a process of using social media to foster gender equality and tolerance. Hence, story telling was seen in this study as a tool for advocacy and critical engagement. The following section presents the general aspects of the task cycle used for data collection.

4.2 THE CYCLE OF TASKS: GENERAL DESCRIPTION

In order to create a cycle of tasks that could give the students the chance to improve their ability to use English as a second language while fostering critical literacy, the tasks developed for this study (Table 6) had, as a starting point, a brainstorming game followed by a video activity, in order to introduce the main topic under discussion. Next, students engaged in activities to become

familiarized with both the language focus of this study and to personal narratives of various people while reading, listening and writing activities in the mid task phase. During this stage, students initiated the target task, that is, they wrote the first draft of their narrative. Finally, during the post-task phase, learners were asked to improve their text produced during the target task. They were also invited to engage on a reflection process about the main topic and about their classmates' productions.

Table 6
The Cycle of Tasks designed for the study

The Cycle of Tasks			
Pre-Task Phase	Task 1	Class 1	**Brainstorming Game**
	Task 2	Class 2, 3	**#LikeAGirl**
Mid-Task Phase	Task 3	Class 3, 4, 5	**Yes, They Can**
	Task 4	Class 5, 6, 7, 8	**I Wanna See You Be Brave**
	Task 5	Class 9, 10, 11	**Humans of CA – On the move**
Post-Task Phase	Task 6	Class 12, 13	**Humans of CA - Reviewing**
	Task 7	Class 13	**What Did We Learn**

As Table 6 shows, the cycle of tasks, which is composed of seven different tasks (some subdivided in subtasks), was designed and divided following Skehan's (1996; 2016) framework for task implementation: pre-task, mid-task and post-task phases. However, it is important to point out that all tasks are interconnected being one a pre task to the next.

The next sections provide details on each stage of the cycle, starting with the pre-task phase. Theoretical grounds that served as basis for each task are presented as well as the procedures to be used for implementation. It is important to highlight, however, that the procedures for each task are here described in the present tense since, in this chapter, the cycle of tasks is to be seen as a work-plan. The cycle of tasks as a process is further discussed in the results chapters.

4.3. THE PRE-TASK PHASE

In this study, the pre-task phase aimed at introducing the main topic to the students, initiating the process of critical reflection about this theme. It also aimed at presenting the learners with language input related to the theme, in order to prepare them to engage in the tasks that followed. Therefore, during this phase, not only were students expected to take part in activities that would allow them to "have clearly activated schemas when the real task is presented" (Skehan, 1996, p. 54), but also the two designed pre-tasks attempted to encourage students to react critically to discourse normally presented to them as natural.

McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2004a) suggest directions for engaging students in practice and reflection since, as the authors put, this is the first step for becoming critically literate. One of the suggestions brought by the authors involves juxtapositioning texts, photos, videos, lyrics, etc; since, as they explain, this technique "helps demonstrate multiple perspectives" (p. 58). Hence, during the pre-task phase, different materials discussing the theme were used (videos and texts). To achieve the mentioned purposes, two tasks were designed: *Brainstorming Game* and *#LikeAGirl*. The next subsection provides details on both tasks and on their teaching procedures.

4.3.1. Brainstorming Game

According to Wallace (2001), "critical literacy is concerned with relations of power and thus with the manner in which power circulates both in the real world and within particular texts" (p. 210). Thus, a classroom focused on critical literacy development may encourage students to reflect and act upon discourses presented in the texts and reproduced by them in their everyday lives. In order to do so, "critical literacy comes into play, not just in the awareness and interpretation of written texts but in talk around texts" (Wallace, 2001, p. 216). Therefore, Task 1 (see Appendix 6) intends to promote a discussion around various texts that (re)produce gender roles in society.

Also, one of the goals of Task 1 is to raise students' awareness on how identity is not necessarily connected to gender. Butler (1999) clarifies that although it may not be possible to locate oneself outside the systems of representation one is inserted in, "'culture' and 'discourse' mire the subject, but do not constitute that subject" (p. 182). Therefore, by engaging in Task 1, students are given the chance to reflect on their own identity(ies) and the relations it has to their gender and the social discourse around them.

Another main goal of Task 1 refers to the linguistic input students receive while performing the task. Skehan (1996) explains that "pre-task activities can aim to teach, to mobilize or make salient language that will be relevant to task performance" (p. 53). Thus, while performing Task 1, students are also exposed to language input related to gender representation.

Task 1 takes the format of a game. It is called 'brainstorming game' since, after playing the game, students are invited to brainstorm on the relationship between gender and identity. The class is, therefore, divided into two parts. Whereas in the first part students play the game divided in two groups (boys versus girls), in the second they answer some questions about the game individually. These questions aim at reflecting on pre

conceived ideas about boys' and girls' possible behaviors and preferences (e.g. *Considering the scores, do you think our fears are based on our gender?*). In order to facilitate the explanation and discussion of the game, a power point presentation (see Appendix 14) was created to be used during all the classes (from class 1 to class 13) thorough the cycle. Table 7 provides an overview of the first task in the cycle. In the next paragraphs, the procedures to be used in Task 1 are described at length along with how Task 1 is connected to such procedures.

Table 7
Task 1: Title, Objectives and Procedures

Task 1	
Title	Brainstorming Game
Objectives	Students participate on a game to: - reflect on how their tastes, opinions, habits are not necessarily related to their gender. - reflect about possible reasons why gender discourses are usually seen as related to people's opinions, tastes and habits - become familiar with and practice language related to gender representation.
Teaching Procedures	- Discuss the meaning of "brainstorming game" using the power point presentation; - Explain how the game works and check for comprehension using the power point presentation; - Divide the students into boys x girls groups - Play the game using the power point presentation. Ask the questions one at a time. After each question, before they give their answers, check for comprehension.

	Also, make notes on the board of the score for each question before moving on to the next; - Hand in task 1, part 1. Read the instructions and check for comprehension. Allow students to answer the questions about the scores; - Hand in task 1, part 2. Read the instructions and check for comprehension. Allow students to answer the questions for part 2; - Collect their answers. Discuss the answers with the students making use of the power point presentation; - Explain homework on *Facebook* group

Before starting the class, the teacher and the students move all desks to the back of the classroom. The teacher then draws two big circles on the classroom floor and writes 'yes' in one of them and 'no' inside the other. Next, the students are told to sit on the floor. To begin the class, the teacher opens the power point presentation previously mentioned, and shows students slide 1, which contains the title of the class. The teacher explains that in the first class, students will play a game. She forwards to slide 2 where students can only see the title "Brainstorming Game" and an image that aims at representing the literal meaning of the title. By making use of the image, the teacher inquires students about the definition of the word "Brainstorming" in that context. This procedure not only is important in terms of vocabulary acquisition but also to aid students in the understanding of the nature of the task. Moreover, by engaging students in attempting to understand the meaning of the new words by themselves, the teacher promotes learner participation and empowerment.

Next, using the power point presentation, students read the rules one by one and, after each rule, the teacher

confirms their comprehension by asking them to explain it to the class. Once the details about the game are elucidated, the teacher divides the students into two groups: one composed of only boys and the other composed of only girls. The teacher then asks each group to move to a different corner of the classroom. It is important to highlight that although students are divided in groups, the game is played individually, that is, groups do not have to achieve a consensus about their answers. Each player may answer the questions according to his/her own beliefs. The reason why students are separated as boys and girls is for them to realize later on that not all boys and not all girls have similar opinions.

When the students are organized, the teacher moves to slide 3 where each question appears one at a time. The questions were created to tackle daily aspects of people's lives and identities such as opinions, fears, tastes, abilities, plans for the future. All the statements can be classified as yes/no questions and in order to answer them, students do not have to respond orally, but instead, move to the corresponding circle. Before allowing students to move, the teacher checks their comprehension on each question. After they have responded, the teacher writes down on the board the score for each group (that is, for instance, the amount of boys who answered yes in question 1 and the amount of girls).

When the game is finished, the teacher asks the students to return their desks to the previous place and hands in activity 1. The teacher reads the instructions and alternatives with the students in order to ensure comprehension before they engage in answering it. The students then are given some time to reply to the questions based on the scores they see on the board. Next, the teacher and the students carry out a discussion about each score. For each question, the teacher will ask students "*how many girls answered yes for question X? And how many boys? How about 'no'?"*. The main objective of this discussion is to show learners that not all boys and girls think alike and stereotypes (such as girls do not like video

games or boys are never afraid of anything) cannot always be confirmed. McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2004b) talk about how people usually "accept − without question − roles we see constructed in texts and in other events. But people who are critically aware challenge the socially constructed roles so that neither they nor others are unjustly limited" (p. 90). Following this perspective, Task 1 attempts to aid students in exploring identities beyond representations we normally find in texts.

After the discussion in activity 1 is finished, the teacher shows students slide 4 which will be used to introduce activity 2. Students are asked "*If our opinions, fears, tastes, abilities, plans for the future, are not based on our gender, then, what are they based on?"* and then given some time to reflect on their answer. After students are finished, another discussion is carried out. It is expected that students mention family, background, culture, media, and many other aspects that may influence our identity as possible answers for activity 2. By engaging in Task 1, more specifically in activity 2 and the discussion after it, students are expected to "examine influences that shape our sense of self − who we are, what we do, how we speak" (McLaughlin and DeVoogd, 2004b, p. 90), as well as reflect on why stereotypes exist. Therefore, as part of the discussion in activity 2, the teacher may ask students questions such as "*why is it that tastes, opinions and abilities are commonly related to gender in our society if we agree there is no obvious relation?".*

After the discussion is finished, students are instructed to keep Task 1 in their English folder and the teacher explains homework. By making use of slide five, the teacher invites students to post in the classroom's *Facebook* group[16] a sentence that describes some activity

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[16] It is relevant to mention that students must be aware of the Facebook group as well as of all the other procedures and tools to be used in the classes (such as the English Folder, for instance). Previously to class 1, a class 0 should be carried

they normally do but that is usually associated with the other gender (e.g. girls who like soccer, cars, to wrestle or boys who like to dance, dolls, to cook). The main goal of this task is to continue the critical analysis of gender and identity at home as well as engaging in language practice. The homework of Task 1 will be the driving force that will introduce Task 2.

4.3.2. #LikeAGirl

In Task 1, students were given the opportunity to reflect on the basis of their identity as a way to break some common stereotypes assigned to gender. Task 2 aims at focusing their attention to stereotypes once again, however, more specifically to ones referred to women. In order to do so, the students are presented to a video entitled *Always #LikeAGirl – Unstoppable*. The video, which can be classified as an advertisement, is part of a campaign promoted by *P&G* to keep girl's "confidence high during puberty and beyond" (available at http://always.com/en-us/about-us/our-epic-battle-like-a-girl).

Buckingham (2003) argues that "critical discussions of the media provide important opportunities for 'identity work' – for laying claim to more prestigious or powerful social identities" (p. 109). The media, in this sense, is to be seen as various kinds of texts that provide us with channels through which selected representations and images of the world are communicated. Therefore, understanding why certain versions of the world and not others are represented in the media as well as who these representations may favor is part of a critical education in which learners attempt to develop critical understanding of the media itself. Buckingham (2003) highlights, however, that "unless the discussion of ideology in the media is related to students' own experiences and identities, it will remain a purely academic exercise" (p. 115).

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out in which students are presented to all the relevant details of the classes for facilitating their performance.

Considering the aforementioned, Task 2 (see Appendix 6) was designed with the objective of giving students the opportunity to reflect on stereotypes normally associated with women and with their roles in society, to think critically about the media language and its impact, to reflect on the possible hidden agendas of advertisements and to become familiar with language input on the topic. Table 8 presents a general idea of Task 2. In the following paragraphs, the class procedures for the implementation of Task 2 are described.

Table 8
Task 2: Title, Objectives and Procedures

Task 2	
Title	#LikeAGirl
Objectives	Students watch a video and answer questions to: - reflect on stereotypes normally associated with women and their roles in society - think critically about the media language and its impact - think critically about the possible hidden agendas of advertisement - to become familiar with language input on the topic
Teaching Procedures	- Open the Facebook group page and, with the students, take a look at some of the posts produced by them for their homework. Using the PowerPoint presentation, discuss how they are all examples of stereotypes. Ask students what the word stereotype means; - Explain to them that today's class is about stereotypes normally associated to women. Explain they will see a video

	about that; - Ask the students to guess what the video could be about using the #likeagirl and the image in the PowerPoint presentation. Write students' guesses on the board; - Play the video and students are invited to confirm their answers; - Hand in Task 2, part 1. Read the instructions with students and check comprehension; - Give them some time to answer. Discuss the genre 'ad' and its main implications; - Hand in Task 2, part 2. Read the instructions with students and check comprehension; - Play the video one more time; - Give them time to answer the questions; - Correct the activity - Explain homework on *Facebook* group.

To begin this segment, the teacher starts the class referring to the homework students were given in Task 1. Making use of the power point presentation (see slides 7 and 8), the teacher invites the students to take a look at some (previously selected) posts made by themselves. The idea is to discuss how the posts can be seen as examples of stereotypes. The teacher, then, asks the students to define the word stereotype. A brief discussion can be carried out to guide students to a final definition of the word. Finally, the teacher explains that the class 2 will focus on stereotypes normally associated to women and ask students for some examples they might know. The teacher then writes the examples given by the students on the board and explains they will see a video that explores this theme.

The video in Task 2, which is 2 minutes and 44 seconds long, starts with a blue screen and the sentence "*Do we limit girls? We asked them*" written on it.

Interviews with girls/women of different ages follow and they all talk about different limitations they feel society imposes on them. Another sentence then appears on the screen "*72% of girls feel that society limits them. Always wants to change that*". Then, the girls/women are invited to write the mentioned limitations on white cardboard boxes. The following image is again of a blue screen in which we can read "*during puberty, a girl's confidence plummets making her more likely to accept limitations*". Another part of the interviews is shown and the girls/women describe their reactions towards the imposed limitations they have suffered. The phrase "*Always wants every girl to stay confident so nothing can stop her*" comes on the screen and girls are encouraged to do whatever they feel like doing with the boxes they have written on. Images of girls kicking, pushing, smashing the boxes appear and a girl voice over talks about how girls should trust themselves no matter what. At the end of the video, the face of the woman who is talking in voice over appears as she says "*that is why I love the word unstoppable".* The last image we then see is of a wall of written boxes falling down and behind it, a young girl. The sentence "*share how you are unstoppable #LikeAGirl"* appears as girls are invited to make use of the hashtag that names the video.

Before handing in activity 2, the teacher shows an image taken from the video in the power point presentation (see slide 9). The teacher explains that the name of the video is *#LikeAGirl* and asks the students what they think the video could be about. The teacher may explore the words used in the image as well as the action that is being taken by the girl in the image as a way to aid students in giving their answer. Heberle (2000) suggests some possible questions to contribute to the process of exploring visual elements from a critical perspective: "1) What visual resources are used besides the verbal text (colors, symbols, figures)?, 2) What visual aspect is emphasized or foregrounded?, 3.) In what ways do the illustrations/pictures relate to the verbal text?, 4) What

sociocultural aspects can be identified in the visual signs?" (p. 132). These questions may be included/adapted to the discussion.

Next, the teacher hands in activity 1 of Task 2 and reads the instructions and alternatives in order to check for comprehension. Letters 'a' and 'b' refer to the video genre. Students are required to choose from a list (movie, ad, TV series, snap shot video) the genre that best describes the video and explain why they made this choice. The expected answer is 'an ad' since the brand of the product is shown in the video (*Always*) among other characteristics (it is a short video, as opposed to a movie or a TV series and it is a professional video, as opposed to a snapshot video, etc). Letter 'c', 'd', 'e' and 'f' aim at unveiling aspects of the genre advertisement when it comes to its usual purpose (to sell a product) and the different media where it can be found (television, for example).

McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2004b) suggest the use of problem posing questions that aim at challenging the text, "to see past the literal meaning of the text to examine issues such as what the author wants readers to believe" (p. 62). Considering the selected video is an advertisement, these questions attempt to raise students' awareness about the use of commercials to promote activism and the possible intentions powerful companies might have on doing so (such as relating their product to social movements creating a powerful identity to it, aiming at increasing their sales). Through the correction of activity 1, therefore, the teacher may ask more questions such as "what does the author of the video wants us to believe?", "what possible impacts may this video have in girls/women's shopping list? Why?", "why is it important for the company to be associated to such a message"?, etc, to foster learners' critical reflection.

Letters 'g' and 'h' concern the content of the video. The goal of these questions is to encourage critical reactions towards the video's main message. Students are expected to relate their own views and social context to

the ones mentioned in the ad. Moreover, students are expected to reflect on why such representations are part of their daily reality, hence, perceiving possible reasons for gender stereotypes.

The teacher then hands in Task 2, activity 2. After reading the instructions and checking for comprehension, the teacher will play the video one last time. The aim of part 2 is ensure students' language comprehension of the video itself. Questions 'i' through 'l' invite students to reflect on the sentences written/said by the girls in the video as well as the video's name. Students are expected to understand the messages sent by the girls which refer to examples of things girls usually "can't do" for being girls. The options given in letter 'j' are all correct. In letter 'l', students may realize that the hashtag "#likeagirl" used in the video refers to things people do as girls and the usual negative meaning this expression may have.

After having answered the questions, the teacher corrects them with the students. Once again, a discussion happens as a result of the correction, aiming at making sure students were able to understand the given input. A special focus on the use of the modal 'can' and the possible uses for the word 'like' may be carried out, considering learners' feedback and gaps identified during task completion. After that, students will keep Task 2 in their English folder and hand it to the teacher. It is important to clarify that Task 2 does not require language production, it requires comprehension and, due to that, students can answer it in Portuguese. The reason why this decision was made is related to the cognitive load the video may have on students as they focus on understanding its message (there are no subtitles for the video). Moreover, the aim of the activity is to encourage critical reflection together with providing input. Therefore, giving the students the chance to answer in their mother tongue is not seen as an issue in this case.

At the end of the class, the teacher explains homework to be done in their *Facebook* group. Students

are requested to post in the group according to the instruction that can be read in the power point presentation (see slide 15): "*Think about something you do well. Write a post on our facebook group describing this activity and use #likeagirl or #likeaboy. If you want to be creative, add an image or a videoclip to your post!*". The aim of the homework is to continue the critical thinking initiated in class, as well as give students the chance to find in their own lives, examples of overcoming limitations and stereotypes. Students are provided with an example of a sentence that can be used as a model, if they consider necessary: "*I am a boy and I dance well #likeaboy*".

It is this researcher's belief that after performing both tasks 1 and 2, during the pre-task phase, students are better equipped to perform the following tasks in terms of language. Moreover, students will have initiated their process of critical reflection towards developing a critical literacy. After following the two tasks in this initial stage, students will have received input to work with the next tasks in the cycle, whose final goal is to tell a story about people in their school community and their (possible) gender struggles. The next section provides information on the mid-task phase of the cycle of tasks.

4.4. THE MID-TASK PHASE

The mid-task phase refers to the moment the main task in the cycle is employed. According to Skehan (2003), "the main factor affecting performance during the task is the choice of the task itself with the goal being to target tasks which are of appropriate difficulty" (p. 55). The author points out that a task cannot be so difficult that students processing is overloaded nor so easy that students get bored, make little effort and end up with few linguistic gains. In order to avoid that, he emphasizes some important decisions that can be made during mid-task phase design, such as including visual information to facilitate understanding, for instance, or including surprise elements to increase complexity.

The mid-phase of this task cycle is comprised of three main tasks: *Yes, They Can*; *I Wanna See You Be Brave*; and *Humans of CA*. The three tasks conform to Ellis's (2003) modular approach to task design, one in which two separate modules are conceived – a communicative module, seen as the main component of the approach, which "consists of linguistically unfocused tasks"; and a code-based module, seen as a secondary component, which can be taught "by means of focused tasks such as structure based production tasks, interpretation tasks, and consciousness-raising tasks[17]" (p. 236). The author emphasizes the positive impact of such approach since learners have the opportunity to focus on form while maintaining their main focus on meaning. Moreover, even though it may be argued that focused tasks can run the risk of becoming exercises if not carried out properly, drawing on explicit knowledge may be effective depending on the purpose of the task.

Having the aforementioned in mind, while Tasks 1 and 2 can be considered unfocused tasks, Task 3 can be classified as an interpretation task (focused) together with Task 4 that can be classified as a consciousness-raising task (focused). Ellis (2003) defines interpretation tasks as the ones that "involve 'seeding' the input in such a way that learners are obligated to attend to the target structure in order to understand the information" (p. 230). In this sense, Task 3 presents learners with texts to be read and comprehension questions to be answered in such a way

[17] Because the word 'consciousness' is used in this study departing from two very different viewpoints, a clarification needs to be made. By consciousness-raising task, Ellis (2003) is not referring to tasks that would raise critical consciousness. Ellis does not follow a critical perspective on language development. The author is referring to raising students' awareness of form. On the other hand, Freire (1970) uses the word consciousness to indicate critical awareness of one's own reality and action towards transforming it. A clear definition of consciousness-raising tasks and critical consciousness is provided in chapter 2.

that learners have to comprehend the target structure (simple past and some vocabulary) in order to respond the activities.

Consciousness-raising tasks, on the other hand, are the ones "where the content of the task becomes a grammatical feature" (Ellis, 2003, p. 230). Task 4, hence, fits this categorization since, when performing it, students are guided through some rules of the simple past by reading a text. The main content of the task, therefore, is the rule system itself, which is brought by the analysis of language in use. Considering the presented information, one of the main goals of the mid-task phase in this cycle is to equip students with sufficient language input and knowledge for them to write a story about people in their school community who have overcome gender stereotypes.

Moreover, the tasks to be performed in this stage intend to encourage students to a critical reflection about different roles women may occupy in society. Heberle (2000) states that, "in terms of EFL teaching in Brazil, issues of gender can be highlighted through the analysis of verbal and visual elements that deal with gender differences and those which may reflect biased statements" (p. 130). As indicated by the author "the purpose is, thus, to make students aware of discriminatory language and stereotypical images used in educational materials" (Heberle, 2000, p. 130). However, not only dominant practices and conventions may be a valuable source for engaging in critical reading, but they may also be "confronted with alternative or oppositional ones, with different valuations of languages and varieties, or different ideological investments" (Fairclough, 1992, p. 9).

During the mid-task phase, therefore, students are exposed to texts that tell stories of successful women who have challenged social patterns usually imposed to them. These texts are to be read and analyzed critically by the students at the same time that they may serve as examples for the learners to write their own stories of other

empowering narratives. As emphasized by McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2004b), "critical literacy disrupts the commonplace by examining it from multiple perspectives" (p. 16). The three tasks in this phase, designed to facilitate students' achievement of such objectives, are described next.

4.4.1. Yes, They Can

As previously mentioned, one of the aims of Task 3 (see Appendix 6) is giving students input on: stories of girls/women who challenge stereotypical gender representations, vocabulary related to this topic and the use of the simple past, all in order to prepare them to reflect critically about the texts and the theme as well as to tell similar stories. Another objective of this task is guiding students in exploring the genre 'NEWS', which permeates the activities.

In order for these objectives to be achieved, Task 3 was separated into two phases: a pre task game, with the goal of introducing the main topics and vocabulary that will be discussed in the following texts, aiming at facilitating comprehension; and a reading task, in which students are required to read pieces of NEWS. Because of Task 3's length, each phase might be carried out on a different date. Table 9 provides a brief description of Task 3.

Table 9
Task 3: Title, Objectives and Procedures

Task 3	
Title	Yes, They Can
Objectives	Students will play a game to prepare for a reading activity Students will read different news that tell stories of girls/women who challenge roles

	normally assigned to them to: - reflect on the empowering examples these women set - reflect critically about the texts - be exposed to input on simple past - think critically about the genre news and its relations - become familiar with some reading strategies that might facilitate comprehension.
Teaching Procedures	- Explain the game using the PowerPoint presentation. - Tell them to get connected on their tablets/cellphones. Play the game. - Review and discuss the information presented in the game using the power point presentation. - Divide students into three groups and hand in Task 3. - Explain the task. Check for comprehension. - Correct each task and, as the groups give their answers, complete a table on the board with the whole class that will contain the most important information. - Tell each student to hand in his/her own table with all the information. - Explain homework on *Facebook* group.

Task 3 deals with three different pieces of news that tell the stories of girls/women who engaged in projects that fight for gender equality and against stereotypes. Text 1 tells the story of two high school girls who invented an online game that aims at breaking stereotypes. Text 2 narrates the story of the project *Guerreiras*, a Brazilian initiative to promote gender equality through soccer. Finally, text 3 describes the

successful attempt of female engineers to reframe their representation within their own profession. All texts were chosen not only for the attempts these projects make towards gender equality but also because they tell empowering stories of women who break stereotypes themselves (women inventing games, women playing soccer, women working as engineers). By engaging in Task 3, therefore, students are expected to engage in a critical reading, reflecting on "whose voices are represented, whose voices are missing, and who gains and who loses by the reading of a text" (McLaughlin and DeVoogd, 2004a, p. 53). Moreover, since one of the aims of this task cycle is to equip learners with necessary language and critical stance to tell stories of empowerment, the stories used in Task 3 can be seen as examples of the topic. The procedures and details of Task 3 are provided below.

The first part of Task 3 comprises of a pre-task guessing game (see Appendix 15). The game was developed online, in the website www.kahoot.it, and aims at providing students with relevant information and vocabulary to be found later in the texts they will read. The game consists of eight multiple choice questions that refer to the main information presented in each text. However, since it is considered a guessing game, students' answers will not be based on a previous input, only on the input given in the question itself. In order to play it, students will make use of mobile devices (cell phones or tablets) in which they will click on the alternative that best fits their guess (for a more detailed explanation of the game, see slides 12 and 13).

At the beginning of the class, the teacher introduces the game by explaining its rules and procedures. Using the power point presentation (slides 12 and 13), she goes through each step always checking for students' comprehension. Students then are invited to get

connected through their mobile devices[18] and the game starts. After each question is posed on the big screen, students have 120 seconds to answer it. During this time, therefore, the teacher reads the question out loud and checks for comprehension of both the question itself and the alternatives. Students then, click on the alternative they consider a best fit. Once all students have answered, the game stops and the right alternative is given together with the percentage of people who answered each alternative (see Appendix 14). The score is also provided to the students before the next question comes up (see Appendix 14). After the game is finished, the teacher uses the power point presentation (slide 14) to review and discuss the information presented. This is the end of the first part of Task 3 and, consequently, the end of the class. It is important to mention that, although the game is played online and makes use of electronic devices to be carried it out, as an alternative plan, the teacher may have the game in a PDF file or even flash cards.

Next, the teacher explains that they will read the texts they discussed in the game, only each group will read a different text. The teacher goes through the instructions with the students, checking for comprehension. Before allowing students to start reading, the teacher briefly emphasizes some important reading strategies (slide 18) that can aid their comprehension, such as: 1) paying attention to images, title and other

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[18] It is important to clarify that the researcher decided to use a game as well as mobile devices in this activity as a way to encourage an alternative use of these appliances for educational purposes, also considering students' profile that resulted from the needs analysis. However, it must be acknowledged the researcher's previous knowledge that the school in which data was collected has at the disposal of teachers a considerable number of mobile devices to be used in class, provided by the project LIFE, which aims at fostering and promoting teacher education while improving basic education. This researcher is aware that this is not the reality of many other schools.

information that are not in the text body; 2) focusing their effort on familiar words; 3) keeping the questions in mind while reading the text so as to be directed to most relevant information. The teacher then highlights that it is not necessary for them to understand the whole text and that their main focus should be grasping the gist of the text.

Although the texts are different for each group, some of the questions about them are similar. Letters 'a' through 'd' inquire the learner about the genre. For all the three texts, the students have to decide which is the best genre that fits the text he/she is reading (*news, an ad, a poem, a narrative*). Then, the student is expected to explain his/her choice. Moreover, the students are supposed to mention where the text was published (internet) and its purpose (to inform). Before correcting these questions, the teacher also inquires students about who decides what information is presented in a journalistic website, what factors may influence this decision, who is telling these stories and how different could the story be if told by someone else, so as to foster a critical perspective related to the genre news.

Letters 'e', 'f', and 'g' refer to specific information about each text as a way of checking comprehension. In order to answer these three questions, students are expected to understand the information in the text, more specifically, the ones that make use of simple past. In fact, all texts make use of the input enhancement strategy in a way to call students' attention to this linguistic aspect. However, no mention of the structure itself is made. Therefore, students still have to focus their attention mainly to meaning, but while they do so, they must focus on the use of such form in the given context to be able to respond the questions. As mentioned before, this is a characteristic of interpretation tasks, which is the case of Task 3.

Letter 'h', similar to all texts, asks students if they believe the presented story reinforces or challenges stereotypes about women. It is expected that students will agree on the fact that all stories challenge stereotypes on

women, since they are stories that report on empowering examples of female roles in society. Before moving on to the next activity, it is necessary to clarify that this activity is done in Portuguese so that students do not retrieve information based on guessing, but based on what they could understand from reading the text. As previously mentioned, this task attempts to aid students in understanding the main information, the gist of each text.

Finally, in order to achieve the task's outcome and summarize the given information, while checking students' answers in part 1 (questions a to h), a table is then completed by the groups with the following: 1) text type, 2) text title, 3) text main topic and 4) text message - does the text challenge or reinforce stereotypes?. Because this activity happens during the correction of the previous one, the table is completed little by little as students from a group give their answers to each question and these answers are used to help the completion. Students receive a copy of this table to be filled in. The table is to be filled in in English, since they are all completing it as a big group with the teacher's aid.

During the completion of the table, the teacher will also ask students questions related to the genre (news) and the choices made for titles of each piece. In relation to the genre, the teacher will ask students to summarize the main characteristics of a piece of news, considering the previous activities, their background knowledge and the examples they read. Concerning the questions about the titles, the teacher will aid students in analyzing the choices made and the possible impacts of these choices on the reader, for instance, the fact that the first and the second texts put the main 'characters' in both stories as active participants who 'create a game' or 'take on gender bias'. Halliday (1994) talks about the ideational meanings of texts revealed through the system of transitivity, in which verbs represent different processes that indicate how we relate with the world. The verbs 'create' and 'take on', in these cases, indicate material processes since they represent actions. Considering this perspective, hence, the

female characters in the stories become social agents engaged in material processes, which represents an empowering role.

Heberle (2000) talks about different studies that provide linguistic evidence from female magazine articles to show how linguistic choices "still contribute to convey a conservative model of sexuality" (p. 129). Macedo, L. (2014) discusses how women are represented as the "senser" of mental processes as well as the "receiver" of verbal processes in texts such as romantic movies, instead of as "actors" of material processes. The chosen texts, therefore, go against this trend and, engaging students in perceiving the impact of these linguistic choices contributes to a critical understanding of the texts they have read.

In order to finish the class, the teacher explains homework. Students are invited to post on *Facebook* group once again, only this time in Portuguese. Since very little information about story telling has been given to students so far, homework will be done in their mother tongue and its focus will be on promoting critical reflection. The instructions of homework are: "*think about a story you know about someone who has challenged stereotypes. It can be your own story, your mother's or father's story, your neighbor's, anyone you know, or even a famous person. In Portuguese, write a post on our Facebook group telling us this story. Also, explain why you consider this story to challenge stereotypes*". It is expected that students will use the reflections they had in class to decide on the story they want to share and explain why it fits as an example of a story that challenges gender stereotypes.

4.4.2. I Wanna See You Be Brave

Task 4, "I Wanna See You Be Brave", is categorized as a consciousness-raising task (CRT) since it draws "learner's attention to a particular linguistic feature through a range of inductive and deductive procedures" (p. 98, Nunan, 2004). Studies have shown the importance

of using consciousness-raising tasks in a communicative classroom setting as an alternative to provide students with more explicit grammatical knowledge whenever gaps appear (Takimoto, 2006; Eckerth, 2008; Roscioli, Toassi, Farias & D'Ely, 2015). According to Roscioli et al (2015), by making use of CRT in a task based classroom environment,

> "the primary focus of the activities would still be on pragmatic meaning but, whenever a problem appeared of a more grammatical nature, students could be helped by being exposed to explicit knowledge through the use of consciousness-raising tasks and, consequently, improve performance and, maybe, acquisition" (p. 92).

Ellis et al. (2001) point out that this type of task contributes indirectly to the development of implicit knowledge since it involves three processes: (1) noticing, when the learner becomes conscious of the presence of a linguistic feature in the input and, therefore, input is absorbed in short-term memory becoming intake; (2) comparing, when the learner has the opportunity to compare linguistic features noticed in the input to other language hypothesis she/he had about language; (3) integrating, when the learner integrates the representation of this new feature into his/her mental grammar so intake is caught by long-term memory and the form may be used successfully in the output. By analyzing Task 4, the three processes brought by Ellis et al (2002) can be seen as students are given the chance to perceive the input, compare it to their own mental hypotheses and integrate the intake knowledge into their mental grammar.

Task 4, activities 1 through 6, explore two movie trailers (downloaded from Youtube.com) that tell the story

of Lizzie Valesquez and Malala Yousafzai. Both stories recall experiences of these two women who have fought for gender equality and better female representation. Activities 7 through 10 focus on Chimamanda Adiche's speech *The Danger of a Single Story* in order to encourage students' reflection about stereotypes as well as call their attention to the use of simple past to tell stories. The procedures and details of Task 4 are summarized in table 10.

Table 10
Task 4: Title, Objectives and Procedures

Task 4	
Title	I Wanna See You Be Brave
Objectives	Students watch two movie trailers to -become familiar with input on the use of simple past to tell stories. -be exposed to stories of girls/women who challenge prejudice as well as vocabulary related to this topic. - reflect critically about the texts and their representations. Students read parts of a speech to -reflect on the negative impacts of stereotypes -become aware of the use of simple past to tell stories
Teaching Procedures	- Ask students questions to check whether they already heard of Lizzie using the PowerPoint presentation. - Hand in Task 4, part 1. Explain and check for comprehension. - Watch the trailer of the movie "A Brave Heart" and work on the activity. - Check the answers and discuss the story. - Explain part 2. Check for

comprehension. Give students some time to work on it.
- Correct part 2.
- Explain part 3 and 4. Check for comprehension.
- Correct part 3 and 4.
- Ask students questions to check whether they already heard of Malala using the PowerPoint presentation.
- Hand in part 5. Explain and check for comprehension. Watch the trailer of the movie "He named me Malala" and work on the activity.
- Check the answers and discuss the story.
- Explain part 4. Check for comprehension. Give students some time to work on it.
- Explain part 5. Check for comprehension and work on the activity.
- Check the answers.
- Explain part 6. Check for comprehension. Give students some time to work on it.
- Check answers.
- Explain homework on *Facebook* group.
- Ask students questions to check whether they already heard of Chimamanda Adiche using the PowerPoint presentation.
- Hand in part 7. Explain it. Check for comprehension. Give students some time to work on it.
- Correct part 7.
- Hand in part 8. Explain it. Check for comprehension. Give students some time to work on it.
- Correct part 8.
- Hand in part 9. Explain it. Check for comprehension. Give students some time to work on it.

	- Correct part 9. - Hand in part 10. Explain it. Check for comprehension. Give students some time to work on it. - Correct part 10. - Explain homework on *Facebook* group.

Activities 1, 2, 3 and 4 in Task 4 refer to Lizzie's narrative. In the trailer students watch, Lizzie Valesquez's story starts with images from when she was born and her parents and her explaining she has an undiagnosed syndrome and because of it she can't gain weight. The screen then focuses on Lizzie's face and she starts talking about a day she went online to look for music on *YouTube.com* and found a video with images of her entitled "The world's ugliest woman". She narrates that not only the video itself hurt her feelings but mostly the cruel comments of many people about the video (e.g. *kill it with fire, what a monster, just put a gun to your head, etc*). The next scene presents two specialists who discuss how children are not aware of what bullying really is and how difficult it can be to grow up being bullied. The screen goes black and the following sentence can be read "*stories of bullying are famous for having victims, not heroes*" while Lizzie's voice over is heard as she says "*how in the world could I forgive the people who told me to kill myself*". The black screen is soon replaced by an image of Lizzie holding a paper that says "*I decided to fight back in a different way*". What comes next represents Lizzie's turning point: a part of her TED talk speech comes on the screen as she talks about how she made the decision to fight against bullying and redefine feminine beauty. The next images are of Lizzie in different places (airplane, talks, TV shows, etc) as we learn she has decided to work as a motivational speaker so as to tell not only her story but everyone's story.

The teacher starts the class by showing the students an image of Lizzie in the power point

presentation (slide 21). She asks them if they know who that woman is. The teacher then tells the students they will watch a movie trailer about Lizzie. She hands in part 1 and reads the instructions with students, checking for comprehension. Together with part 1, students receive a set of six cards that summarizes Lizzie's story. The cards have to be numbered and pasted in part 1 according to the correct order of events. It is important to clarify that the instructions and the sentences in the cards are read previously to watching the video so then, while watching the video, students will focus their attention on the most relevant information required for completing the task. In other to guarantee students will be aware of what is expected from them, the teacher will also explain that there is no need to understand all the words said in the video.

All sentences in the cards have instances of simple past highlighted. The highlights change according to the kind of past being enhanced (regular verbs are in bold, and irregular verbs underlined). Therefore, the activity makes use of input enhancement technique. In order to organize the cards, students have to see the movie trailer. The teacher then plays the trailer and students work on the activity. The main goal of this activity is to offer students input on narratives and on the use of simple past to tell stories. The correction of this activity is done in the power point presentation (see slide 22). As the students give the answers, the cards appear on the screen in the correct order and properly numbered.

In part 2, students are asked to summarize Lizzie's story with their own words, in English. This is the first time students are encouraged to tell a story in English. Although students are not obliged to use the simple past, they are offered the possibility of making use of words from the previous activity. However, an important aspect of this task is that students are given only four lines to summarize Lizzie's main life events. This decision was made so that students would not copy all the sentences from part 1 into part 2. By giving them a size

limit for their summary, they are required to select the information they consider most relevant and reorganize it so as to build a short text. While engaging in this activity, it is expected that students will pay attention to the sentences on the past since they contain the most important events. However, not necessarily they will focus on the differences of each sentence yet.

After finishing parts 1 and 2, students are expected to have comprehended the gist of Lizzie's story. The teacher then asks questions about the video in relation to its genre (movie trailer) and its viewpoint. In relation to the genre, the teacher may ask questions such as "what are some characteristics of this video?" and then guide the discussion to help students recognize the aspects of a movie trailer. The teacher will also briefly discuss with students why stories such as Lizzie's may be interesting to the movie industry. Finally, concerning the viewpoint in the video, the teacher may question the students about who is the narrator in the trailer and whose voice is heard, as well as how different the story would be if it were told by someone else. McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2004b) introduce the strategy of engaging students in the production of alternative texts so then "the reader perceives the text in a different way and begins to understand the complexity of the issue examined" (p. 49). Hence, by considering other viewpoints, students may acknowledge the different impacts that a perspective may have on a story, depending on who is telling it. They may also reflect on how and why some stories are never told from the perspective of minority groups.

After engaging in a brief discussion, students move on to activity 3, which aims at provoking their reflection on the type of fight Lizzie carries out with her work. The instructions ask students to answer the question: "*Can Lizzie's story be used to discuss beauty stereotypes? Explain*". Students are expected to say 'yes' since Lizzie suffers bullying because of her appearance and, through her talks, aims at transforming her and others' realities. Finally, part 4 attempts to encourage

students' reflection on how beauty stereotypes challenge women and men within society since they determine beauty patterns to be followed by everyone. In talking about how to select texts to support the teaching of critical literacy, McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2004b) acknowledge the relevance of texts that disrupt the commonplace and provide multiple viewpoints, that focus on social and political issues, and that focus on action for social justice. Lizzie's story incorporates these three aspects since her fight not only introduces a new perspective in the beauty pattern debate but it also represents an example of how people can be powerful in their own worlds. Malala's tale also follows the same perspective.

Parts 5 and 6 focus on Malala's story. Students are once again shown the image of a woman in the slide presentation (slide 21) and asked to say who the woman is. In case they do not know the answer, the teacher explains it is Malala. The teacher then says they will watch another movie trailer, only this time with Malala's story. Before playing the video, students receive part 5 and the teacher reads with them the instructions and alternatives and checks for comprehension. Students are expected to answer if each alternative is true or false, according to the video.

Malala's story is not similar to Lizzie's, although they both share similar fights. Malala is a Pakistani girl who received a Nobel prize for her campaign in favor of girls' education. The video that tells her story begins with some images of her and a voice over of a man interviewing her father who says: "*you named her after a girl who spoke out and was killed. Almost as if you said to be different*". The screen focuses on her father's face who answers "*you are right*". The next image is of a hospital where Malala stayed after being shot by the Taliban group. The voice of a journalist announces that she was almost killed because she dared to suggest that girls should go to school. Next, some images of her with her family and friends appear and she explains that she is just a teenager. These images are contrasted to others of her

meeting important world authorities and visiting people all over the world as we hear her saying that she wants people to learn from the experience she had. Her voice comes in the video as she then says "*there is a moment when you have to decide whether to be silent or to stand up*". The video then approaches the fact girls cannot go to school in Pakistan and goes back to Malala in the hospital. Malala explains that she tells her story not because it is unique, but because it is the story of many girls. We are next shown the moment she received her Nobel prize, in 2014, contrasted with images of her with her family and friends. The video ends with part of her speech after she won the prize.

Malala's story is explored in activities 5 and 6 aiming at ensuring students' comprehension as well as providing them with extra input in story telling using the past. In part 5, the alternatives have instances of the simple past, all highlighted according to the patterns previously described. Students are expected to understand the core information from the video so as to answer the task. The answers to part 5 are T –T – T – F – F – T. Part 6 asks students to explain in written format "*why did Malala win the Nobel Prize*". Not only does this question help with narrowing down students' focus to the central information of the video (her fight for gender equality) but also induces the students to make use of the simple past to express themselves. At this time, it is expected that students will pay more attention to form in order to make proper choices. However, their focus is still mainly on meaning and they are not obligated to make use of any particular structure. Once again, through a guided discussion, the teacher will explore the given story from a critical perspective, aiming at aiding students in their understanding of the aspects of the video genre (movie trailer) as well as its viewpoint.

Considering the length of Task 4, four classes might be necessary to implement it. After Malala's activities, students are then introduced to their homework (slide 29) that aims at motivating them to think critically

about Lizzie's and Malala's narratives. The activity instructions are: "*In Portuguese, write a post on our Facebook group and answer the question: Why are Lizzie and Malala famous around the world?"*. It is expected that students answer that they both fight for gender equality since Lizzie is against bullying and beauty patterns and Malala fights for girls' education. Since the main focus of this task is on critical reflection, the activity is to be done in Portuguese. However, in case some students prefer to answer in English, they may do it.

The next class of Task 4 starts with the teacher reminding students about their *Facebook* post. A brief discussion is carried out about the two stories discussed in the previous classes. Then, using the power point presentation (slide 30), the teacher introduces another woman and asks students if they are aware of who she is. In the next slide (31), the students then see a table with some biographical information about the woman and learn that her name is Chimamanda Adiche. The teacher explains that she is a Nigerian writer who has written, among other works, the speech called "The Danger of a Single Story".

The teacher points out that they will now read parts of the speech and answer some questions about it. In her speech, Chimamanda goes back to her childhood and talks about the first writings she produced. She explains that when she started to write as a child, she reproduced the European context she was used to read about but that was completely different from her life. She then explains that when she started reading African books, she realized books could also talk about her context and reproduce instances of her life. This changed her perception about books and about writing.

By reading this excerpt from Chimamanda's speech, it is expected that students will reflect on how single perceptions of social contexts, people, cultures, etc do not reproduce its plurality and diversity. Figueiredo (2000) points out that, when exposing EFL students to texts from a different culture, "their process of text

comprehension can be enhanced if they are introduced to a critical perspective of reading, one that sees texts as historically, socially and culturally situated, establishing for writers and readers specific subject positions" (p. 140). Hence, before engaging in the reading of the text, the teacher introduces some important information to the students such as the year the speech was written (2009). The teacher will also ask students questions about their familiarity with the Nigerian culture.

Next, the teacher hands in part 7 and reads instructions as well as the questions with the students in order to ensure comprehension. Students then have some time to answer the questions. As soon as they are finished, the teacher collects the activity and corrects each question with the class. Throughout the correction, a discussion is carried out about the negative impacts a stereotype may have on our perception of the world. Questions a to c focus on information about the genre (a story) whereas questions d to j inquire students understanding of relevant information in the text. After correcting these questions, the teacher and the students engage in a discussion about how Chimamanda becomes active in her own world by telling stories of her people and her reality, disrupting the commonplace she perceived in the literature. McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2004b) see this strategy of exploring identities through alternative texts as a way of demonstrating "how students can free themselves from society's expectations" (p. 115) and redefine stereotypes, or *single stories*.

Finally, questions k and l offer students a chance to transport the discussion to their own reality, considering the books they read. The aim is to engage in a reflection of why do we read certain books and not others, why are certain stories told and not others, why do certain stories are better known than others and so on. By correcting the two questions, the teacher asks students these questions and encourages them to think about what stories they would tell, considering their own reality, and

how representative their stories would be considering the Brazilian context.

In activities 8 and 9, students move on to analyze the linguistic choices made by Chimamanda in her speech. They invite students to explore the text they read in part 7 in order to observe the differences between some words and, together, build an understanding of the use of simple past in English. The text brings many instances of the simple past in real world use and, in it, the instances are highlighted according to the following pattern: **bold** is used to emphasize regular verbs, irregular verbs are in *italics* and negative sentences are presented in red. Being Task 4 a consciousness-raising task, language itself becomes the target topic of the class at this point. It is my belief that, while engaging in parts 8 and 9, students will have the opportunity to think about form departing from context and analyzing the rules by themselves so as to achieve a common understanding on the use of the past. Therefore, students become agents in the process of understanding language instead of only receiving the formal knowledge, following a banking concept of education (Freire, 1970).

In Part 8, therefore, students first separate verbs according to the way they are highlighted in the text (bold or italics for now). To do that, they complete a table with the verbs they find. Next, by looking at the table, they answer some questions that aim at guiding their understanding about the use of past to tell stories. The same happens in Part 9 in which students focus their attention on the negative form of the past. Once again they must go back to the text and, by observing the use of the form in the speech, they get to conclusions in relation to how to form negative sentences in this verb tense. It is important to emphasize that although students are focusing their attention on form in parts 8 and 9, they depart from language use to achieve their goals. Therefore, the aim of both activities is to motivate learners to think about how language was used in a real context to give a certain message. After correcting the

activities, the teacher makes use of slides to help learners systematize the rules together, in English. Finally, part 10 gives students the chance to use the knowledge they have built in parts 8 and 9 in order to ensure their understanding. Students are presented to different vocabulary and asked to use it to tell a story. Forwarding to slide 27, then, the teacher explains homework to students and check for comprehension. For homework, students are expected to try to rewrite the story they told after Task 3, only this time, in English.

It is this researcher's understanding that consciousness-raising tasks, if combined with other unfocused tasks, can be a valid tool for eliciting explicit knowledge from students, which can contribute indirectly to the acquisition of implicit knowledge. Within a communicative task cycle, consciousness-raising tasks can be used, therefore, to aid students in their language development process since, although they have language structure as their theme, students' main focus is still meaning centered. As an attempt to answer the question "when should grammar be taught?", Xavier (2001) explains that (among other possibilities) "grammar can also be taught deliberately when the teacher wants to draw students' attention to marked difficult or problematic structures in the input of a particular task or within a teaching unit" (p. 22). It can be concluded, hence, that grammar teaching, if carrying communicative purposes, can be part of a task-based lesson (Ellis, 2003; 2017).

Another important consideration to be made about this kind of focused task has to do with the use of CRT in mid-task phases. Ellis (2003) points out that some methodologists recommend the use of form focused tasks in post-task phases of the lesson, being these tasks an attempt to counter the danger that students may develop other kinds of proficiency aspects (fluency, complexity, etc) at the expense of accuracy. The author emphasizes, however, that "a focus on form constitutes a valuable during-task option and that it is quite compatible with a primary focus on message content, which is the hallmark

of a task" (p. 260). According to him, students can be led to focus their attention to form at any phase of the cycle. The author goes on reinforcing that consciousness-raising tasks "constitute tasks in their own right and therefore can be used as the main task in a lesson" (p. 261).

4.4.3. Humans of CA: On The Move

Task 5, entitled Humans of CA: On The Move, is considered the main task of this task cycle since it encompasses the target task of this study. After being exposed to different kinds of input on 1) vocabulary related to gender issues; 2) examples of narratives and stories of women who have fought for gender equality; and 3) a possible structure frequently used to tell stories (simple past); learners now are expected to produce their own story about overcoming gender prejudice, in English, according to given instructions.

The task is to be carried out during at least three classes since it corresponds to a production task. Students will be given time to collect information for their text, plan what they will write about and how and finally, write their text in its final version. Table 11 presents a general idea of Task 5.

Table 11
Task 5: Title, Objectives and Procedures

Task 5	
Title	Humans of CA: On The Move
Objectives	-To encourage students to tell stories using the simple past. -To prepare students to plan and carry out an interview. -To engage students in reflections about their school community and gender representation within it

Teaching Procedures	- Show the page "Humans of New York" and discuss its main goal - Show the page "Humans of UFSC" and compare it to humans of NY - Read two different texts from each page with the students and discuss the main characteristics of the genre - Introduce part 1. Explain all the procedures. - Help students to produce the post

Aiming at introducing Task 5, the teacher opens the presentation on slide 47 and questions the students about their knowledge of the web page 'Humans of New York': "*Have you ever heard of the website 'Humans of New York'? What do you think it is about?*". The teacher then moves to slide 48 where students are presented to the web page and a brief explanation of it. The teacher then mentions there is also a similar page on *Facebook* called 'Humans of UFSC'. She introduces the page to them and questions the students if they have ever given any interviews to that page (slide 49). Slide 50 contains a sample of a post in Humans of New York. The teacher asks a student to read the post and together, they attempt at understanding the story. The teacher then tells students to pay attention to the format of the post and the linguistic choices and to compare to the next post, on 'Humans of UFSC'. Slide 51 comes up with a post from the Brazilian page and the same procedure of reading is done. Next, the teacher asks students to answer the question "w*hat are some characteristics of these posts?*". Together, students and teacher build a list with the most important characteristics in a post for a story telling page (you have a picture of the person, the post is part of a longer speech, it is mostly in the past tense, it contains the most important information of the speech or the most interesting part of the speech, it is short, it might or not contain the name of the person). Then, the teacher

explains they will produce a similar page for their school community. She explains the page will be called "Humans of CA" because the aim of the activity is to tell stories of people in Colégio de Aplicação that have a story related to gender equality or prejudice. The teacher explains that the main goal of the page is to empower girls and boys by sharing their stories with other people as well as getting to know who the humans in CA are.

Part 1 is then handed in. The teacher reads the instructions with the students so as to ensure comprehension. They are required to plan this interview in terms of the available physical structure and content of the interview. After planning, students are given some days to carry out the interview and are expected to bring the data collected for next class.

Christensen (1999) talks about how critical writing "creates spaces for students to tackle larger social issues that have urgent meaning in their lives" (p. 220). The author claims that, by investigating their own contexts beyond classroom walls and writing about issues that are part of their reality, students have a chance to "identify not only how their lives are affected by society, but also how other people's lives are distorted or maligned by the media and by historical, literary, and linguistic inaccuracy" (p. 222). McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2004b) explain that engaging in production activities after reading activities is a way of extending students' critical thinking, giving them an opportunity to challenge commonplace discourse and raise their voice towards social justice. Task 5, therefore, aims at promoting critical reaction from the students' part, offering them a chance to systematize their knowledge about gender representation and, by investigating their own context, tell stories of people who challenge gender stereotypes. Hence, not only students are invited to interview different people and listen to their stories, but they also must choose a story that promotes alternative gender representations, according to their understanding of it from the class activities and discussions.

In the next meeting, students are expected to bring the chosen interview. The teacher hands in part 2. The teacher reviews with the students the main characteristics of this type of text (Facebook post). Students are required to create an outline of their text based on all the data gathered. Using the PowerPoint presentation, the teacher presents an example of a story exploring the main elements of this type of narrative (see slide 58). They are also required to choose an image to illustrate their post. Since this activity seems to be time consuming, it will probably be carried out during an entire class.

Finally, part 2a is handed in in the next meeting. Students then start the process of writing their text. Although students are not told specifically to use the simple past in their stories, it is expected that they will make use of the structure they have been working on during the whole cycle. At this time, no intervention from the teacher will be done in students' texts.

The tasks that are part of the mid-task phase intend to motivate learners to reflect critically on the chosen theme while comprehending, learning and producing language. For this purpose, all tasks were designed so then the previous ones could enable the following and students would be aided by the scaffolding process throughout the cycle. The next section describes the post-task phase.

4.5. THE POST-TASK PHASE

As previously mentioned, the goals of the post-task phase in this cycle are twofold: to offer students the opportunity to review their texts and to give students the chance to reflect critically about the whole process they have gone through during the cycle as well as about the topic being discussed.

Skehan (1996) explains that when a production task is being done, the teacher should not intervene at first in the production process, "allowing natural language acquisitional process to operate" (p. 55). However, a

tradeoff effect of this position may be that students may focus their attentional resources in communicating the message and, therefore, important processes such as restructuring may not be emphasized during task completion. According to the author, post-task activities can have the function of reminding learners about the importance of restructuring and accuracy for communicative purposes.

Bygate (2001) explains that task repetition, as a performance condition, implies giving learners opportunity to repeat a task or to practice the same task type. Ellis (2003) points out that repeating the performance of a task can aid in restructuring as learners production may improve in a number of ways. The author explains that a repeated performance can be carried out in different ways such as under the same conditions as the previous task or under changed conditions. Therefore, Task 6 was designed as a post-task activity that allows students to rewrite their task after teacher and peer intervention. Since writing is seen as a process, students then, are provided with the opportunity to analyze their own text and rethink their choices before the final version. Moreover, students are encouraged to read their classmates' texts and reflect critically about it in Task 7.

4.5.1. Humans of CA: Reviewing

As stated above, the aim of this task is to offer students the chance to rewrite their text produced during Task 5, so as they might improve their performance and continue to engage in their learning process. A general overview of Task 6 (see Appendix 6) is provided in table 12. The procedures for task implementation are described as follow.

Table 12
Task 6: Title, Objectives and Procedures

Task 6	
Title	Humans of CA: Reviewing

Objectives	- To reread and rewrite their own text to rethink their linguistic and narrative choices.
Teaching Procedures	- Tell students to sit in pairs. Hand in task 6. Explain the instructions and check for comprehension. - Hand in the first version of their texts, now with comments from the teacher. - Go by each student's desk discussing the appointments made by the teacher and aiding them in the rewriting process. - Instruct students to post their final text on *Facebook* group.

As a starting point, the teacher will then explain that some adjustments need to be made before they post their text on their *Facebook* group. The teacher then tells students to sit in pairs, hands in Task 6, explains the instructions and checks for comprehension. Students are invited to discuss the comments brought by the teacher with a classmate. However, the re-writing process must be individual. Next, the teacher hands in students' productions together with some appointments that aim at helping students in their rewriting process. The appointments made by the teacher will focus on form aspects as well as meaning making aspects in order to ensure the intended message is being conveyed. The appointments will be characterized in different colors, according to the nature of the comment. Therefore, the comments aim at directing students' attention to possible communication problems, that is, the teacher will not offer corrections nor ready-made answers; instead, the appointments will call students' attention to the problems and, to improve their text, they are expected to reflect on these comments (together with a classmate) in order to

improve their own text. The students will also be allowed to make use of dictionaries and other tools such as online websites to research, in case they consider necessary.

Canagajarah (2013) warns us about error correction during critical writing, emphasizing the "the writers' identities, values, and interests" as important aspects of the writer's production. According to the author, "what we may reject as an error may be motivated by serious concerns of values and identity for the student" (p. 52). Canagajarah explains that instead of merely correcting or pointing out students' possible mistakes, we should attempt to find out from the students the reasons why such a choice was made. The author clarifies that, "such discussions enable students to use grammar meaningfully, rather than opting for certain choices mechanically. In the process, students also develop a metalinguistic awareness of the values and interests motivating grammar" (Canagajarah, 2013, p. 55). Therefore, as students initiate their task, the teacher goes by each desk in order to solve possible doubts students may have as well as discuss possible decisions made by the students, aiming at ensuring an independent and critical writing where students are aware of their choices and agents in deciding what to do with them, whenever a problem appears. Students may also use their classmates' expertise and point of view as a source to make decisions. Through this process, students will rewrite their texts. When students have the final version of their text, they will be asked to post it on the Facebook page "Humans of CA", making use of the hashtag #HumansofCA.

4.5.2. What Have We Learned

As the name of Task 7 suggests, the aim of this activity is to summarize the main reflections made by students during the whole cycle as a way to reinforce the critical reflection carried out during all classes. Moreover, it is expected that after Task 7 implementation, students will be more aware of their learning process. Details on Task 7 are provided in table 13 below.

Table 13
Task 7: Title, Objectives and Procedures

Task 7	
Title	What Have We Learned
Objectives	- to read their classmates' posts to reflect on their comprehension and reaction towards the task - to reflect on their own stories and their classmates stories as a representation of their context - to reflect on the task cycle considering their learning process
Teaching Procedures	- Hand in task 7. Explain the instructions for part 1 and check for comprehension. - Tell students to log in on their Facebook and access the Facebook group. Give students some time to answer the questions. - Encourage students to share their answers with the whole class. - Explain part 2 and check for comprehension. - Give students some time to answer the questions. - Have a final brief discussion with students about the whole cycle.

Task 7 (see Appendix 6) is comprised of a reacting task that aims at unveiling students' opinions and reactions towards the cycle of tasks implementation. In the first part of the task, students are required to visit the

Facebook group and read their classmates' posts. They are then invited to choose two posts they liked most and comment on them. Finally, they are expected to complete a table with summarizing information about the two posts such as personal details of the story's character, the main events of the story, the reasons why they liked that story and if they consider that a story of empowerment.

After students have posted their final text on *Facebook* group, the teacher introduces the final task of the cycle. The teacher hands in Task 7 and explains the instructions, checking for comprehension. The teacher then highlights the importance of students' dedication to this task as asks them to make an effort to include as many details as possible in their responses. Students are, then, given some time to answer the questions. After the whole class is finished, a final brief discussion is carried out summarizing the main issues about the whole cycle.

Crookes (2003) talks about the Freirean understanding of dialogue in which "one person's language, whether statement or question, encourages or presses another to consider the basis for their thinking" (p. 64). Dialogue, in this sense, is used for naming and transforming the world. In order to foster critical dialogue, the teacher encourages the students to express themselves in relation to the experience they had of investigating their own reality and building a web page that puts together the voices and stories of people they know that have challenged stereotypes. The teacher will also ask questions about how representative those stories seem to be of their school community, how important they are for breaking gender stereotypes and if students were aware of these representations in their own reality before engaging in the activity. In order to finish the discussion, the teacher will inquire students about broader actions they could take to promote social justice towards gender equality. As Crookes (2003) points out inspired by Freire's words, "critical pedagogy intends to facilitate students being inserted into the creation of their own histories" (p. 71).

Having described the details of the Cycle of Tasks elaborated for serving as instruments in this study, as well as the procedures for task implementation, I consider that the tasks designed for this research fulfill the main objectives this investigation aims at accomplishing. Throughout the chapter, besides providing a careful description of the methodology and the activities to be used in class, theoretical tenets were brought to light in order to validate the choices made during task design and planning. Therefore, it is this researcher's belief that the task cycle developed in this study is in line with the main aspects of the Task-Based Approach and Critical Literacy and can be seen as a valid and relevant instrument for language and critical literacy development.

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

AS REGARDS LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

As previously stated, in this study, teaching a foreign language involves capacitating the learners for communicating, expressing ideas, reacting and acting upon the world, with the aim of fostering social justice. This is because, as Pennycook (2016) highlights, it is impossible to ignore power relations and inequalities when one teaches/learns a language (specially a language such as English that is seen by many as one of the keys to economic success, among others).

Within this context, language development and critical literacy development were explored in this study, during the task cycle implementation, as intrinsic areas that are interconnected. Therefore, the tasks used to teach students did not separately aim at teaching language and then critical literacy or the other way around, as if there is a pedagogical sequence for such. Language was used to discuss and develop critical literacy skills as much as as a critical perspective was encouraged among students when they were making use of or reflecting about language. Hence, the main pedagogical goal established to be achieved by the end of the implementation of the cycle of tasks was to foster critical language and critical literacy development among students, so they could act upon their reality and transform it through discourse.

It is important to recognize, however, that although language and critical literacy were treated as a single, intertwined entity in the classes used for data collection, they are here presented separately in order to demonstrate the different impacts that the cycle of tasks may have had in the participants. Therefore, the main research question that guided this study was: (1) does a critical cycle of tasks promote language development and critical literacy development? If so, how does it take place?

In order to answer this question, three different stances were taken into account, aiming at unveiling aspects related to both language and critical literacy development: i) participants' contributions in both the tasks and the classes, during the implementation of the task cycle, according to the teacher/researcher's perception; ii) participants' performance in pre and post tests, before and after the implementation of the cycle of tasks and; iii) participants' perceptions of their own experience. Considering these three standpoints, the previously posed research question originated six other questions, as follows:

1a) are there elements, perceived during the implementation of the task cycle, that signal language and critical literacy development, considering the teacher/researcher's perception? If so, which are they?;

1b) are participants better able to identify the correct use of the simple past structure, when comparing their performance in a grammaticality judgment test after the implementation of the task cycle, in a pre-test and a post-test condition?;

1c) do participants perform more accurately after the implementation of the task cycle, when writing a narrative, in a pre-test and a post-test condition?;

1d) do participants achieve the expected outcome after the implementation of the task cycle, when writing a narrative, in a pre-test and a post-test condition?;

1e) do participants' texts show critical perspectives after the implementation of the task cycle, when writing a narrative, in a pre-test and a post-test condition?;

1f) are there elements that signal language and critical literacy development, considering participants' perceptions of their own experience? If so, which are they?.

With the purpose of answering research questions 1a, 1b, 1c, 1d, and 1f, this chapter focuses on presenting and discussing the results brought in this study regarding participants' linguistic development. The findings here

described and examined will be further explored in the following chapters together with the results in terms of critical literacy development in order to achieve a complete understanding of the processes and outcomes that implementing a critical task cycle may entail.

This chapter is organized into four main sections, which are further subdivided. Section 1 presents and discusses the results in terms of language development, considering the teacher/researcher's perspective. The second section focuses on presenting and discussing the results in terms of language development, considering participants' performance in different tests. Section 3 explores the results in terms of language development, considering participants' perceptions of their own experience. Finally, the fourth section of this chapter answers the research questions related to language development, summarizing the main results.

5.1. ELEMENTS THAT SIGNAL LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT CONSIDERING THE TEACHER/RESEARCHER'S PERCEPTION: AN ANALYSIS OF DIARY NOTES AND PARTICIPANTS' PERFORMANCE IN TASKS DURING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TASK-CYCLE

Aiming at investigating language development throughout the task cycle implementation, focusing on understanding aspects that might be part of the process it entails and, hence, may not be highlighted when one looks only at the final product of the task-based unit, this section focuses on participants' experiences and performance in various tasks that are part of the cycle. To achieve this goal, most tasks in the task cycle are retrieved as an attempt to unveil participants' language development process since each of these tasks seem to contribute to participants' experience within the task cycle.

Having in mind that the role of the teacher in TBLT is central (Samuda, 2001) since teachers are the ones who "bring TBLT to life" (Van den Branden, 2016, p. 179), my own perspective as both teacher and researcher

permeates this analysis. More specifically, this section focuses on my perception of both 1) students' responses to various tasks and 2) diary notes that seem to contribute to this reflection, considering that each task has a direct impact in the next towards language development.

5.1.1. The Pre-Task Phase

Skehan's (1996; 2016) framework for task implementation was used in this study to sequence the tasks that compose the task cycle. According to his framework, three main stages guide task implementation, each of which with its own purposes. The first of the three stages is the pre-task phase that, through input-processing, aims at establishing the target language of the main task while also reducing its cognitive load.

In this study, the pre-task phase is composed of two tasks: task 1 – Brainstorming Game and task 2 – #LikeAGirl. As previously explained in chapter 4, the aim of the pre-task phase was to provide students with input that would prepare them to the following tasks. Neither task 1 nor task 2 focused on specific language structures, so while working on them, students' attention was expected to be mostly directed towards meaning.

When it comes to language, the emphasis of Task 1 and 2 was, therefore, on developing comprehension abilities through reading and listening of texts as students attempted to process the input, both activating/restructuring previous schemata while dealing with new form-meaning relationships (Skehan, 1996). Moreover, by the end of Task 1, students were asked (as homework) to post, on their *Facebook group,* short sentences in English that were related to the class discussion and that would serve as connections to the classes to come. Henceforth, in the pre-task phase, there was also a small focus on developing the writing ability with the goal of systematizing the concepts discussed in class, both from a critical and linguistic perspective. Having these main purposes in mind, let us look at each task one at a time.

When working on Task 1 – Brainstorming Game, input comprehension seemed to take place fruitfully. In the first part of Task 1, in which students were asked questions about personal information (e.g. *Are you afraid of spiders?*) and were expected to answer them by choosing between 'yes' and 'no', participants seemed able to cope with the questions asked, responding them without major difficulties (see Appendix 16). As the excerpt from the diary notes point out, in order to ensure that, before eliciting students' responses, I confirmed their understanding of the input by asking students to explain either parts of the question or sometimes the entire question. After students gave their answers, scores were kept with the goal of summarizing the responses on the board for further discussion. Hence, no major problems with input processing were noticed.

Diary notes – Day 2

We started the brainstorming game. I explained the game using the power point presentation. Students got very excited. They said they understood the rules and to guarantee, I asked a student to explain it in Portuguese. We organized the room and the students were divided into girls and boys teams. We played the game. After each sentence, students explained their understanding of it before walking towards their answer. Then, we wrote on the board the answers. When the questions were finished, they went back to their places. Students seemed to have enjoyed playing the game. After the game was finished, we discussed the answers on the board and students answered Task 1.

The second part of Task 1 required students to, bearing in mind the results of the game, respond to four questions: "*Do you think a) our opinions, b) our fears, c) our habits and behaviors, d) our sport abilities and tastes, are based on our gender?*". Once again, students were given 'yes' and 'no' options and their main focus remained on comprehending the input given and concentrating on the data from the game presented on the

board, that is, focusing on meaning. The same emphasis was maintained in the next two questions, "*Based on your answers to part 1, what is(are) your conclusion(s)? and What is our identity based on?*", which students were instructed to answer in Portuguese (see answers in Appendix 16). Similarly to activity 1, input processing seemed to have occurred successfully.

Skehan (1996) discusses the role of pre-tasks in activating and restructuring previously learnt elements. Similarly, Willis and Willis (2007) talk about the relevance of pre-tasks as facilitating tasks that help to lighten the processing load of input, preparing learners for more complex tasks that are sequenced next. With that in mind, it seems that students' responses to Task 1 reveal they were successful in forming meaning-mapping relations with the given input during the task. That is, considering students were able to complete Task 1 effectively, one may conclude that students were successful in engaging in input-processing connections.

Both Skehan (1996) and Willis and Willis (2007) also argue for a second possible impact of pre-tasks. According to the authors, during pre-emptive activities, learners are offered the opportunity to incorporate new elements, re-using words and phrases and building up new ways of expressing themselves. This could be seen when students engaged in the following activity, which corresponded to the homework after Task 1, that required them to write a small sentence describing something they like to do and why. The productions[19] of nine students[20] in this activity seem to show that participants were involved in processes of consolidation of some of the forms they had come across in Task 1:

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[19] Students' productions were not altered in any way and may, therefore, present grammar mistakes according to the norm.

[20] Only nine students answered this activity because it was a homework activity. Hence, some did not do it as required.

Ironman (participant 1) - *I want to be an astronaut because I want to "fly" in space*
Dennis (participant 3) - *I like dance because it's fun, cool and relaxing*
Flash (participant 4) – *I like to play basketball because it's cool*
Leandra (participant 8) - *I like super heroes because it's fantastic, amazing and fun!*
Maria (participant 9) - *I like to go football game with my father because it's fun*
Lauren (participant 10) - *I like Ben 10 because it's cool*
Ronaldo (participant 12) - *I like what PLL because is cool*
Tinho (participant 13) - *I like to cook with my sister and my mother*
Vicente (participant 14) - *I like to cook, when I'm alone in my house*

Students' homework sentences reveal that not only they managed to focus their attention to sending the message (selecting and writing about actions that are not usually associated with their gender, as they had been required), but they also succeeded in expressing their ideas in the target language, even though some minor mistakes were made. Furthermore, some students opted to reproduce certain words and/or expressions as they perceived in the input, experimenting with language in ways they seemed comfortable with. All the activities that are part of Task 1, therefore, seem to have provided learners with the opportunity to process input in terms of activating previous knowledge and developing new form-meaning connections, serving the purpose of preparing students to engage in the following tasks, that present a greater cognitive and linguistic challenge.

Task 2 - #LikeAGirl required students to answer comprehension questions about an ad that (among other goals) discussed the impact of gender stereotypes on girls. The ad was in video format. Follow up comprehension questions, all in Portuguese, were presented to students in two activities. In activity 1, the questions were more

general and directed students' attention to aspects of the genre 'advertisement', the main message being delivered, and possible purposes of the video. Activity 2, on the other hand, concentrated on language comprehension questions, requiring students to a) relate the main topic being discussed in the video to the actions of the main characters, b) understand specific sentences as well as the video title "#likeagirl". In order to complete Task 2, therefore, participants were expected to engage in both general and specific comprehension and also relate received information to the main topic being discussed.

Nunan (2004) talks about the value of exposing learners to authentic input as a way of offering them a chance to deal with meaningful real-life messages. However, input complexity may play a negative role in this sense, as the level of proficiency of the student may not match the one in the input. In the case of Task 2, students' responses to both activities (see Appendix 16) reveal that they were mostly able to retrieve the main message embedded in the video, forming meaning-mapping connections that provided them with sufficient information to comprehend the given linguistic input, even though it was not modified or altered. This is probably due (among other reasons) to the task itself, which seemed to contribute to a successful outcome as participants' attention was guided through the questions to avoid attempts to understand every single word in the video and, instead, try to focus on retrieving the necessary information to answer the questions that were asked, diminishing the cognitive load on learners.

One other relevant point about Task 2 has to do with the preparation period for the task itself. As I describe in my diary notes, as follows, before starting the actual task, the class engaged in a discussion about the content of the video, which not only served as a chance to prepare students to receive the input but it also worked as a moment of focus on form.

Diary notes – Day 3.

I introduced the word stereotype and we had a brainstorming discussion about what it means. Then, I showed them the image from the video of Task 2 and they answered what they thought the video could be about (pre-task). Students were very focused on the image and how the girl was kicking the box. I called their attention to the words written on the box. Some of them did not know what Brave means, relating it to the word "brava" which can mean angry, in Portuguese. I told them it meant courageous, so, together, we translated the sentence as "não pode ter coragem". They were still confused but guessed the video would be about girls proving they are brave since the girl in the image is kicking the box and there is an X crossing the sentence "can't be brave".

As the excerpt from the diary notes portrays, when presented to an image of a girl kicking a box in which the sentence "can't be brave" was written, students engaged in processes of forming hypothesis about what the word "brave" could mean. Their first guess referred to a word in their mother tongue, which is understandable since the word in English resembles a false cognate in Portuguese. When I told them to think of 'courageous' as a possible translation for 'brave', students then attempted to translate the whole sentence and relate their translation to the given image. Multimodality, in this case, served as a tool to engage in meaning making (Heberle, 2000) as the images helped learners enhance their comprehension. By focusing on form within a meaningful situation, students were able to learn new vocabulary within context and relate it to the message being conveyed. All in all, Task 2 also seemed to be beneficial in easing the processing load that learners might encounter in the following tasks, by both giving them the chance to recall schematic knowledge while also incorporating new knowledge.

It seems possible to conclude, therefore, that the pre-task phase of the cycle of tasks used in this study

seems to have contributed to promoting language development by providing learners with rich and authentic input and with moments of focus on form within a meaningful context, engaging learners in input-processing and restructuring, all of which served the purpose of preparing them to the following tasks that are part of the mid-task phase.

5.1.2. The Mid-Task Phase

As Skehan (1996) explains, the mid-task phase corresponds to the moment in which the actual task is carried out and learners engage in fulfilling the main outcome of the cycle. During this stage, tasks should be neither too difficult nor too easy and attention to either form or meaning should be manipulated to guide learning.

The mid-task phase of the task cycle in this study is composed of three main tasks. As explained in chapter 4, Tasks 3 and 4 are comprehension tasks and are considered focused tasks since they draw students' attention to specific grammatical structures. The aim of both tasks is to equip students to engage in Task 5, which is a production task. The goal here is, then, to aid students in building linguistic knowledge by processing and incorporating given input and by engaging in producing output, hence comprehending and conveying intended messages. Considering that students' productions in Task 5 are analyzed in following sections of this chapter, let us focus here on understanding how Tasks 3 and 4 contributed to language development by preparing learners to Task 5.

In Task 3, students were presented to texts that discussed the cycle's topic (gender representations). Verbs in the simple past were highlighted in the texts as an attempt to call learners' attention to the structure in use. However, participants' main focus was still directed towards meaning as the task itself required them to answer comprehension questions about the provided message. Moreover, students were asked, at the end of the task, to summarize the main information of each text in a table,

this time in English, as a way to "process and organize the information in a more structured way" (Willis and Willis, 2007, p. 78). As it is exposed in students' answers (see Appendix 16), Task 3 was completed successfully. That may be due to important aspects of it that refer, once again, to previous activities that served to prepare students to engage in the actual task.

Before starting Task 3, two moments served as what Willis and Willis (2007) call 'priming' or 'pre-task stage': students' played a guessing game and I presented them with reading strategies. Both moments were planned with the purpose of diminishing students' cognitive load by giving them the chance to focus their attention on specific parts of the input one at a time, providing them with a more encompassing understanding of the whole message in each text. This decision was made since the inputs in Task 3 refer to rather extensive texts that did not match the proficiency level of the students. According to Willis and Willis (2007), priming before the task helps in the sense that learners can better "understand the topic, activate relevant schemata, recall or ask for useful words and phrases and get ideas flowing" (p. 71).

While playing the guessing game (see Appendix 15), students had their attention directed at the input given in each question. Prior to requesting possible answers from students, each question in the game was read out loud and I checked students' comprehension, trying to make sure they knew what was being asked of them. This movement may have given them the chance to pay attention to less information at a time, hopefully facilitating comprehension. Therefore, before reading the actual texts in which they had to think about the whole message being conveyed, learners played the guessing game that allowed them to focus on form with a communicative purpose, that is, to understand the pragmatic meaning in short pieces of information that would latter appear in the texts themselves.

Presenting the reading strategies was another pre-task moment that seems to have aided in preparing

students to make the most of their reading experience. Before working on Task 3, I discussed with students important strategies that, if used, could facilitate meaning-mapping and form-meaning relations: "a) pay attention to the images, title or other information that is not in the text body, b) focus on the familiar words first, c) keep the questions you have to answer in mind while reading, d) remember that it is not necessary to understand the whole text". Although there is no evidence that students actually used the strategies when reading the texts in Task 3, I consider this a significant part of the task cycle that may have contributed to their successful engagement when completing Task 3.

Task 3 can be seen, therefore, as a preparatory task that introduces learners to more complex input, presents opportunities to reflect on the main topic of the unit and initiates the process of input-enhancement. Similar goals are achieved in Task 4, but this time students have the chance to focus on form more explicitly.

Task 4 was divided into ten activities, seven of which made use of input enhancement, once again by highlighting the use of simple past as a way to direct students to notice form (Schmidt, 1990). Still, in the first six activities, students' focus was still mainly directed towards meaning as students' engaged in comprehension and production processes.

In activity 1, more specifically, students watched a video that told the story of a woman who attempts to break gender stereotypes by discussing beauty patterns. In order to complete the activity, students had to sequence the main events of this story according to the order established in the video. Willis and Willis (2007) discuss how sequencing information requires from learners more cognitive effort than simply making lists but less than other cognitive processes such as problem-solving. In this sense, sequencing seems to be a valid alternative to be used in comprehension activities that deal with more advanced material considering that much of students' attention should be directed towards understanding the

input in order to implement the expected sequence. All students (except for Flash – participant 4, who mistake the order of events 4 and 5) were able to organize the events into the appropriate order (see Appendix 16).

As a follow up, in activity 2, participants were asked to write a short summary about the character's life. The goal here was to give students the opportunity to use the input from activity 1 to produce output, while making their first attempt to write a story. Students could not simply repeat the sentences used in activity 1 because of space constrains (they were only allowed to use 4 lines to complete the task) but they were encouraged to select necessary vocabulary from activity 1 to write their own version of the story. As a quick analysis of participants' productions reveals (see Appendix 16), most students were able to retell the story without major communication gaps, however only a few of them included all the most relevant facts to complete their narrative. Leandra's (participant 8) production can be used as an example of a successful summary:

Lizzie has an undiagnosed syndrome. One day, she decided to look for music on Youtube. She found a video of her with the title "the world's ugliest woman". She read the comments and she felt really sad. Lizzie became famous and started giving many talks around the world about her story.

As it can be seen, Leandra made use of a great amount of vocabulary and structures that were presented to her in the input of activity 1. Still, she was able to reorganize the information and remove unnecessary words so as to meet the requirements of the task. On the other hand, most of her classmates were not as successful as she was, choosing to remove or modify words that somehow compromised meaning. Nevertheless, in most of these cases, the main message was still maintained, and students seemed to have benefited from the previous tasks. Batman's (participant 5) story can be used as an example:

Lizzie is a woman. She has a syndrome. One day she found a video of her with the title "The World's ugliest woman". She decided to gave a talk about her story for an organization called TED.

Although Batman's story does not contain all relevant information (specially the end of the story seems to be missing), the narrative is successful in sending the intended message. Moreover, even though Batman modified a sentence from the input and instead of saying "she gave a talk", he wrote "she decided to gave a talk", forgetting to also modify the conjugation of the verb 'give'; meaning seems to have been preserved.

Carlos' (participant 2) story is the only one that makes use of code-switching. The strategy is not negative, however, it may indicate Carlos was not able to understand the input as well as expected, since some of the words he used in Portuguese were actually already given to him in English in the activity. Instead of using the words from the input, Carlos seems to focus on the message he wants to convey almost entirely, in detriment of paying some attention to his choices in terms of form:

Lizzie is considered the woman ugliest world's. After she deu talks em todo world's. Logo em seguida, ficou famous.

As it can be seen, despite having certain expressions already provided in the input, such as "the world's ugliest woman", Carlos' narrative seems to follow a rationale used in his mother tongue, as he transforms the sentence into "the woman ugliest world's" (considering that would be a possible word order in Portuguese). Moreover, Carlos seems to notice gaps as he makes use of words in Portuguese whenever he is uncertain of their equivalent in English such as his use of "deu", "em todo", "logo em seguida", and "ficou". In Carlos' case, his focus seems to be completely on sending the intended message, as his text seems to be entirely meaning-oriented.

Activity 2 in Task 4, therefore, appears to offer learners a first attempt to put into practice input they had received in previous activities, but it does so in a controlled manner, as students are allowed to experiment with expressions and acquired vocabulary without the pressure for much creativity or much divergence from the original story.

In activities 3 and 4, on the other hand, learners are asked questions about the video they watched in activity 1, only this time they are encouraged to write freely in English, that is, there is not an original for them to base themselves on. This means that, although they might use vocabulary and structures they have been exposed to, it is also necessary to put much more effort in organizing their ideas and structuring their sentences so then the intended message can be successfully conveyed.

Activity 3 asked "*In your opinion, can Lizzie's story be used to discuss beauty stereotypes? Explain*" while activity 4 asked "*Do you consider beauty stereotypes a challenge to women and men? Why?*". Students' responses (see Appendix 16) show that they were effective in recycling the acquired vocabulary to organize their ideas, even if small occurrences deviate from the norm. In fact, learners' choices seem to indicate they were experimenting with language given to them in input as they appear to test hypothesis about how to put it into practice. Carlos' and Dennis' answers to question 3, respectively, can be perceived as illustrations:

Yes, because beauty her no can fit in stereotypes
Yes, because she suffered bullying during the your life

In answering activity 3, both students make use of words previously provided as input, such as "beauty", "stereotypes" and "suffered" while, at the same time, putting their previous knowledge and schemata into practice and experimenting with expressions such as "no can fit" instead of "can't fit" and "your life" instead of "her life". Similar examples can be found in answers

given to question 4, as Ironman's and Vicente's replies illustrate, respectively:
Yes, because somebody fit in beauty stereotypes
No, because don't have a people beautiful and no have a people ugliest.

Once again, words like "stereotypes" and "ugliest" are reproduced from input at the same time that hypotheses testing such as in "somebody" instead of "nobody" and "don't have a people beautiful" instead of "there aren't beautiful people" take place. Activities 1 to 4 in Task 4, henceforth, provide participants with opportunities to reformulate input and experiment with output towards language development. Similar processes occur in activities 5 and 6, only this time students were exposed to another video about a different protagonist (see Appendix 6 for the task sample and Appendix 16 for students' answers).

In activities 7, 8 and 9 in Task 4, students worked with a written text in which a Nigerian writer discusses why stereotypes can be problematic. In the text, the use of simple past structure is again highlighted. Three important steps are taken during activity completion: a) the preparation before the activity, b) the comprehension of possible intended messages in the text, and c) rule formation based on input. Each step is described as follows.

Before engaging in responding the comprehension questions posed in activity 7, I inquired students about their previous knowledge on the writer and the title of the text, aiming at activating their schemata to facilitate further interpretation. During this process, learners seemed to have had the chance to think about form, building up new vocabulary and strengthening their language background, as described in the following diary notes.

Diary Notes - Day 7

I asked them about the meaning of "The danger of a single story". Although they were able to translate it easily, they had difficulties grasping the non-literal meaning. We focused on the word single as a representation of being only one story. We then focused on what stories are and how they talk about people, who they are, their identities. I used Malala's example as I asked them how Malala's story would be if told by the Taliban. They realized the story would be very different. I then asked them what would happen if we never heard Malala's version of the story. They were quick to answer we would not know she is a hero. So, I asked them why are single (only one) stories dangerous? They understood they are dangerous because they don't include other versions. I asked them what could be the relation between "single story" and "stereotypes". They were then able to realize that stereotypes are single stories.

By focusing on the excerpt, it is possible to perceive that the questions asked before students engaged in reading the text to answer the activity contributed for a deeper understanding of the message being conveyed. Furthermore, students were given the opportunity to unveil specific meanings of words such as "single", applying their pragmatic senses into context. Students seemed, therefore, prepared to answer the questions posed in activity 7, which aimed at general comprehension of the message being conveyed in the input (see students' responses in Appendix 16).

The following activities, 8 and 9, reflect a different goal as learners were guided to think about form explicitly in a metalinguistic fashion so as to create their own rules on the use of the simple past structure in storytelling. Activities 8 and 9 required learners to focus their attention on the highlighted words, which all referred to verbs in the past. Some of them are regular verbs, others are irregular verbs and others are in their negative form.

Students were also instructed to go back to the other activities in Task 4 and pay attention to the highlighted verbs in there too. Then, by keeping their focus on these verbs used in context, learners are guided into forming their own rules about how to use the simple past when narrating a story.

As it is possible to perceive when analyzing participants' answers in these activities (see Appendix 16), all students were able to differentiate regular and irregular verbs. They all also perceived that regular verbs behave similarly while irregular verbs do not (e.g. Lauren, participant 10 - *o regular é os verbos que usam ED no final e o irregular é os verbos que sofrem mudanças*). Finally, they were also able to identify how verbs behave in negative sentences such as in Dennis' case, for instance, "*quando o didn't vem, eles não colocam o ED no lived, deixam normal*".

Activities 8 and 9, thus, can be seen as an opportunity for students to participate actively in building knowledge and reflecting about language in meaningful ways as they organize their own understanding of how language may function according to the context it is being used. Additionally, these processes seemed to have contributed to students' language development not simply as a rule-making process but mostly as co-construction of meaning since learners were provided with a "safe" and "flexible" environment to engage in form-meaning connections.

While working on the first activities of Task 4, therefore, students were provided with chances that steered them into testing hypothesis, noticing gaps and engaging in metalanguage processes (Swain, 1995). Moreover, the possibility of reflecting upon meaningful input was offered to students adding to language development. The final two activities in Task 4, additionally, gave learners the chance to direct attentional resources in order to notice form-meaning relations more explicitly (Schmidt, 1990). These processes are all seen as

contributions for students to work on Task 5, in which they were expected to write a narrative.

The results brought in Task 5, as well as the ones in the post-task phase of this study, are further explored in subsequent sections of this chapter, as they also correspond to one of the post-tests used in this study. However, before moving on to reflecting upon these findings, some considerations ought to be made.

First of all, considering the analysis presented above of the pre-task and mid-task phases of this study, it can be concluded that each task contributed to and prepared students to engage in the next through processes of input-processing, which resulted in activation of schemata and incorporation of new knowledge. Furthermore, learners were given the chance to engage in producing output, attempting to reformulate their previous understandings. Moreover, students were also provided with opportunities to direct their attentional resources to form, actively restructuring and building their own structural knowledge. Language growth, thus, seems to have happened within a process approach, throughout the entire task cycle.

Considering these results, one significant claim that can be made concerns the positive impact of task-based framework for task implementation (Skehan, 1996; 2016). The use of pre-tasks, mid-tasks and post-tasks, all interconnected as a task cycle, seemed to have provided students with necessary scaffolding and support, hence making successful performance possible.

Another important conclusion that seems to derive from these findings regards the role of the teacher in task elaboration and implementation. Almost two decades ago, Samuda (2001) endorsed how imperative it is that the relationship between task and teacher is complementary, since teachers are the ones who put TBLT to practice according to their students' contexts and needs. As emphasized by Ellis (2003), tasks in practice can often end up being quite different from tasks-as-workplan, so when implementing TBLT, teachers must make choices

that go from offline decisions, such as task design and planning, all the way to online decisions, such as negotiating meaning, focusing on form, controlling attentional resources, among others.

Van den Branden (2016) explains that the teacher has a pivotal role in planning, designing and mediating lessons that result in language learning. In this sense, the author lists some actions that a task-based teacher should take:

> -The teacher should engage in the *negotiation of meaning* while the students try to deal with the input and output demands raised by the task (clarify in the 7 C's[21]).

> -The teacher should produce a wide variety of *questions, cues, and prompts* to elicit learner output.

> -The teacher should provide *feedback* on the students' written and oral output. Feedback may come in different shapes, including explicit corrections, recasts, confirmation and clarification requests, metalinguistic comments, extensions, and elaborations (consolidate in the 7 C's).

> -The teacher should incorporate a *focus on form* in

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[21] Van dan Branden refers to the 7C's, which correspond to behaviors of effective teachers. They are: care, challenge, clarify, captivate, confer, consolidate and control.

> the meaning-oriented work the students are doing (pp. 170-171)

Having in mind the significance of the teacher to task-based learning, an important inference that can be made upon the results brought in this section have to do with the impacts of the choices made in terms of task cycle design and implementation. As clearly stated in the paragraphs above, much of what was accomplished by the students is a result of careful planning and task-design but it is also due to decisions made during task implementation. This teacher/researcher, henceforth, sides with East (2017) who emphasizes that "teachers' experiences with TBLT must be allowed to inform theoretical arguments about TBLT going forward" (p. 414).

The next section approaches indications of language development considering the results of two pre-test and post-test comparisons.

5.2. ELEMENTS THAT SIGNAL LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT CONSIDERING PARTICIPANTS' PERFORMANCE

This section presents the results related to two pre-test and post-test comparisons [22]. Each comparison is presented and discussed separately at first. Then, the findings are later discussed together, as a way of having a

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[22] It is important to clarify that, although the word 'test' is being used here to name pre and post-test 2, these instruments are not tests per se, in the literal sense of the word. That is, they were not used as assessment tools to grade students. Both pre and post-test 2 are tasks but they are called tests, following the nomenclature used in statistics, since they correspond to the pre and post phase of students' productions.

more complete understanding of the results that have been brought.

The first subsection, therefore, focuses on results regarding pre-test 1 and post-test 1 comparison.

5.2.1. Signs of Language Development Considering Participants' Performance in Terms of Their Knowledge of the Simple Past Structure: An Analysis of Scores in Pre-Test 1 and Post-Test 1

With the intent of scrutinizing participants' language performance, two pre-tests and two post-tests were used in this study. This section focuses on pre-test 1 and post-test 1. The comparison of students' scores from pre and post-test 1 aimed at checking whether students had knowledge about how to use the structure they would mainly work with during the cycle of tasks: the 'simple past'. The reason why this information was important was because I wanted to know whether participants already knew how to use the simple past tense or not before they engaged in writing their narratives. In this sense, the possible lack (or fewer indications) of previous knowledge on the use of the simple past structure, contrasted with indications of it after the implementation of the cycle of tasks, could show that participants benefited from the tasks in terms of language development.

The same test was used for the pre and the post-test phases and it consisted of a Grammaticality Judgment Test (GJT) in which participants had to decide whether eleven sentences were grammatically correct or incorrect (see Appendix 4). They were also asked to explain some of their answers as a way to investigate if their decisions had to do (or not) with familiarity with the simple past (or not). The time gap between the applications of the tests was 2 months and a half (pre-test 1 was administered on May 23rd, 2016 and post-test 1 on August 10th, 2016) in

order to avoid task-effect [23] (Bygate, 2001). After data collection, the percentage of correct answers in both tests was computed (see Appendix 25). A dependent t-test was used to compare students' scores (p ≤ .001).

The following paragraphs, therefore, present the findings from the statistical analysis used to compare students' structural knowledge of the simple past considering the scores of the pre and post-test 1. The descriptive statistics, as in table 14, show the minimum and maximum scores achieved, the mean scores for both tests, as well as the standard deviation and the standard error for each of them.

Table 14
Descriptive Statistics: Means, Minimum, Maximum, Standard Deviation and Standard Error - GJT

Test	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	SD	SE
Pre-test 1	46.74	27.27	63.63	10.61	2.83
Post-test 1	79.21	54.54	100	13.06	3.49

The results presented in table 14 suggest that participants' knowledge of the simple past structure when post-test 1 was administered was higher than when pre-test 1 was applied, possibly indicating that participants

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[23] Bygate (2001) investigates the effects of task repetition and discusses the possibility of the same task, performed twice, influencing learners' performance. The author explains that when performing the same task for the second time, performance might improve, not necessarily because of language gains, but due to the repeating nature of the task itself, that is, learners learn with the task. Therefore, as a way to avoid task effect, in this study, the task was repeated after a long period of time, which diminishes the possibility of learners' improvements being related to the fact they were repeating the task.

profited from the cycle of tasks in terms of language development. The mean difference between both tests (M= 46,74 for the pre-test 1, in contrast with M= 79,21 for the post-test 1) shows that participants' performances improved, that is, they were better able to identify correct and incorrect uses of the simple past, which means they had a higher percentage of correct answers in post-test 1. The standard deviation of each test (SD= 10,61 for the pre-test 1, compared to SD= 13,06 for post-test 1) indicates larger variance for post-test 1, even though the discrepancy is not too big. The results of the dependent t-test reveal that there is a statistically significant difference between participants' performance in both tests (p ≤ .000 / t= -12.26).

The results presented in graph 1, which illustrates students' individual performance in pre and post-test 1, also indicate students' gains in terms of knowledge about the simple past structure. As it can be seen in the graph, all participants considerably improved when comparing their scores from pre to post-test 1.

Graph 1
Pre-test 1 and Post-test 1 Scores of Each Participant
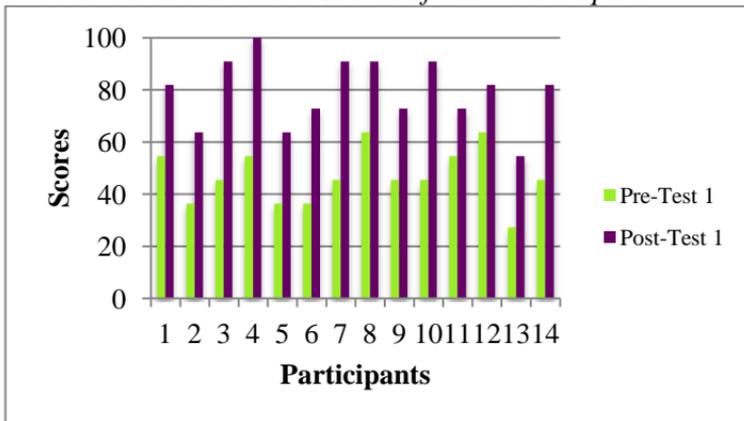
According to the graph, five participants (participants 1, 4, 8, 11 and 12) scored over 50 per cent of correct answers in their pre-test 1, which may reveal some

previous knowledge on the use of the simple past structure before the task cycle. Even so, the same participants improved at least 20 per cent according to the results of post-test 1. The other nine participants all scored below 50 per cent of correct answers in their pre-test. These participants also improved considerably in their post-test 1.

Eight participants (participants 1, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 12 and 14) scored over 80 per cent in post-test 1 and five participants scored between 60 and 80 per cent in post-test 1, which shows the great majority of students performed above average in their post-test 1. Flash (participant 4) was the only one with a perfect score (100%) in her post-test 1 and Tinho (participant 13) was the only participant who scored 50 per cent in his post-test 1. Tinho also had the lowest score in his pre-test (27%), which seems to indicate improvement.

The comparison used in this analysis serves the purpose of revealing students' knowledge of the simple past structure before and after the task cycle. Therefore, based on the results here presented, it can be stated that after the implementation of the cycle of tasks, students seemed to improve their knowledge of the simple past structure if compared to before the cycle of tasks was implemented. These findings may indicate students have benefited from the task cycle, considering a structural perspective of language.

However, seeing that the main goal of this study is to develop students' linguistic knowledge from a critical and communicative perspective, the subsequent sections will discuss students' linguistic development from a task-based point of view, that is, students' linguistic productions will be analyzed considering accuracy and outcome achievement. Hence, while the comparison between pre-test 1 and post-test 1 seemed to inform that students' structural knowledge of the simple past structure improved, possibly due to the task cycle, it does not inform if students were able to use this structure to communicate. Therefore, the comparison between pre-test

2 and post-test 2, which focuses on students' written performance, attempts to fill in this gap, assessing, from a communicative perspective, participants' performance.

5.2.2. Signs of Language Development Considering Participants' Performance: An Analysis Of Scores In Pre-Test 2 And Post-Test 2

As previously stated, two pre-tests and two post-tests were used in this study as a way to unveil learners' linguistic performance. While pre-test 1 and post-test 1 consisted of the same GJT and were used to signal students' knowledge of the simple past structure, pre-test and post-test 2 were somehow different from each other and the comparison of their results aimed at investigating learners' linguistic development from a communicative perspective.

Both pre and post-test 2 required students to tell stories. For pre-test 2, students were asked to retell the story of a *Tom and Jerry* episode they watched in class (see Appendix 5). Students were given unlimited time to work on this activity and were asked to use their previous language knowledge to do so. They were encouraged to focus their attention mainly on communicating their ideas and were provided with dictionaries to be used in case they felt the need to do so. The main goal of pre-test 2 was to check whether students would be able to tell the story clearly and accurately, even though they had access to limited vocabulary and language knowledge and no instruction or scaffolding to guide them. Moreover, pre-test 2 also served to inform on students' understanding and familiarity of the genre narrative, that is, how they were going to organize and structure their story so as to make sense (see answers in Appendix 26).

Post-test 2 also required students to tell a story (see Appendix 6, Task 5). Because it is a part of the task-cycle and, therefore, it is connected to the other tasks in the cycle, it was a product of interviews students carried out with people in their school community. After collecting their data, students wrote narratives telling the

interviewees' stories. Once they had produced the first version of their text (from now on referred to as post-test 2a), students were given feedback on it by the teacher and classmates (see Appendix 17) and had the chance to write a second and final version (from now on referred to as post-test 2b) of their text. Post-test 2 served similar purposes to pre-test 2, that is, informing on students' choices in terms of language used to tell a story and their knowledge of the genre narrative as well as analyzing their performance concerning task accomplishment (see answers in Appendix 17).

The time gap between the writing of both narratives was two months (pre-test 2 was administered on May 25rd, 2016; post-test 2a on June 29th, 2016 and post-test 2b on July 4th, 2016). After data collection, dependent t-tests were used to compare students' scores in terms of accuracy and outcome achievement. The following sections will provide more details on each analysis.

5.2.3. Signs of Language Development Considering Participants' Performance in Terms of Accuracy: An Analysis of Scores in Pre-test 2 and Post-test 2

In order to analyze participants' performance in terms of accuracy, three scores were considered: scores from pre-test 2, scores from post-test 2a (the first version), and scores from post-test 2b (the second version). This is because, as previously stated, during the production of their post-test, participants wrote a first draft of their narrative (post-test 2a), which was then reviewed by the teacher. Then, considering the appointments made by the teacher and with their classmates' help, participants had the opportunity to write a second draft of their narrative (post-test 2b).

Accuracy was perceived as the percentage of errors by words produced. Four raters were invited to analyze students' performance in terms of accuracy, considering pre-test 2 scores and post-test 2b scores. Two raters focused on the texts produced for pre-test 2 and two of them worked on the texts produced for post-test 2b. I

worked as a third rater for each test. After achieving a consensus regarding the number of errors produced by each student (see Appendix 19 for pre-test 2 evaluation and Appendix 20 for post-test 2 evaluation), a final score was given to each participant and it was divided by the number of words written. This number was multiplied by 100 to express the percentage of errors produced in both tests. Moreover, in order to determine the percentage of errors produced in post-test 2a, teacher's appointments on students' first draft were considered (see Appendix 17). Once again, a final score was given to each participant and the number of errors produced was divided by the number of words written. The resulting number was multiplied by 100 to express the percentage of errors produced in this test (see Appendix 24 for percentages of each test).

The percentage scores of each test were then compared using dependent t-tests in order to check if students wrote more accurate stories after engaging in the cycle of tasks. Hence, three dependent t-tests were run for accuracy purposes: a comparison between pre-test 2 and post-test 2a (that is, students' production before the task cycle and students' first draft after the task cycle), a comparison between pre-test 2 and post-test 2b (that is, students' production before the task cycle and students' second draft after the task cycle), and a comparison between post-test 2a and post-test 2b (that is, students' first and second draft after the task cycle).

Before presenting the results, though, a clarification ought to be made. One of the reasons why accuracy was considered an important measure to be used in this study had to do with the fact that it is, together with the other measures that are part of the CAF group (complexity, accuracy and fluency), a strong trend in task-based studies. However, as regards a classroom-oriented perspective, these measures may not always fit the pedagogical context in which tasks are implemented. Canagajarah (2013) points out that simply expecting that students reproduce a rule-governed system in their

productions may not be enough or even suitable since the "grammatically correct answer" may not match the writer's identities, values, and purposes. According to the author, therefore, students should be guided "to make grammatical choices based on many discursive concerns - that is, their intentions, the context, and the assumptions of readers and writers" (p. 56), practicing, hence, critical writing. In this study, hence, bearing in mind the crucial role of critical language development and considering that, in order to express their ideas, students would have to make decisions that were also accurate according to their intentions, students were encouraged to reflect about their language choices considering the message they wanted to convey. Moreover, raters were instructed to evaluate students' productions in terms of accuracy considering the context and the message possibly intended by the student. Therefore, students' productions involved a communicative and critical stance.

The next paragraphs, thus, bring the findings from the statistical analysis of the comparisons among pre-test 2, post-test 2a and post-test 2b, in terms of accuracy. The descriptive statistics, presented in table 15, show the minimum and maximum scores, and the mean scores for the tests, as well as the standard deviation and the standard error for each.

Table 15
Descriptive Statistics: Means, Minimum, Maximum, Standard Deviation and Standard Error - Accuracy

Test	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	SD	SE
Pre-test 2	37.44	18.75	62.50	13.23	3.54
Post-test	15.30	6.52	23.63	5.85	1.56
Post-test	6.21	1.02	11.76	3.68	.98

The statistical findings reported in table 15 show that participants produced less errors in both post-test 2 phases when comparing to their pre-test 2 productions, which suggests improvements in terms of accuracy after the cycle of tasks. The mean difference among the tests (M= 37,44 for pre-test 2, in contrast with M= 15.30 for post-test 2a and M= 6,21 for post-test 2b) indicates that participants' performances improved, that is, less errors were made as participants progressed through the tasks. The final version of participants' post-test 2 (that is, the scores obtained in post-test 2b) exposes great improvement as students' seem to have written narratives that were much more accurate than the ones written before. Furthermore, the standard deviation of each test (SD= 13,23 for pre-test 2, compared to SD= 5.85 for post-test 2a and SD= 3,68 for post-test 2b) reveals larger variance in the pre-test 2 and less discrepancy in both versions of the post-test. This was expected since the cycle of tasks provided input and language knowledge to prepare students to tell their stories. So, it makes sense that all of them would do better after scaffolding and mediation.

The results of the dependent t-tests indicate a statistically significant difference among the tests, considering the three comparisons, as shown in table 16.

Table 16
Dependent t-tests - Accuracy

Paired Sample Statistics	*Sig.*	*t*
Pre-test 2 with Post-test 2a	.000	7.10
Pre-test 2 with Post-test 2b	.000	10.04
Post-test 2a with Post-test 2b	.000	9.41

Graph 2 brings students' individual performances in each test, aiding to illustrate students' improvement

regarding accuracy. As it is possible to perceive, all participants produced substantially less errors in the two versions of post-test 2 when compared to the pre-test 2. Additionally, when comparing both versions of the post-test 2, students improved in terms of accurate performance after teacher's feedback and classmates' contributions.

Graph 2
Pre-test 2, Post-test 2a and Post-test 2b Scores of Each Participant as Regards Accuracy
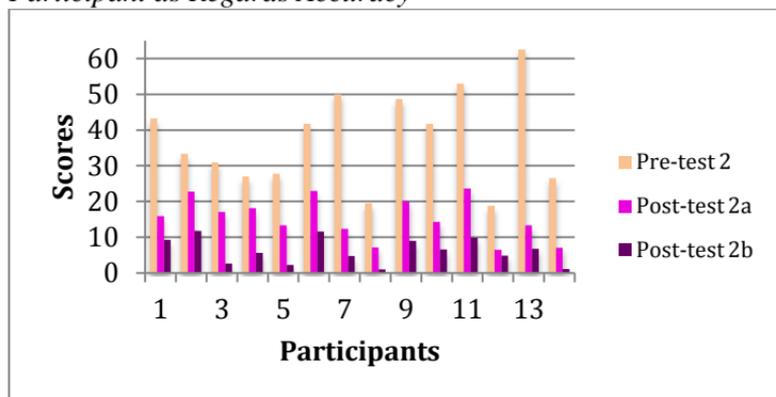
The largest difference among tests was shown in Tinho's (participant 13) performance. 62,50 % of his words were used incorrectly in his pre-test 2 whereas, in his post-test 2a, 13,33% of his choices were considered errors. In his post-test 2b, Tinho production contained only 6,81% of errors. The smallest difference between both tests can be seen in Carlos's (participant 2) texts. His pre-test 2 shows 33,33% of errors in comparison with 22,72% or errors in his post-test 2a and 11,76% of errors in his post-test 2b.

Clearly, then, all participants seem to have improved in terms of accuracy performance, when comparing their pre and post-test 2 productions. Still, in order to have a more complete analysis of students' productions concerning accuracy, the section below considers both pre-tests and post-tests used in this study (that is, the GJT and the narratives).

5.2.4. Signs of Language Development Considering Participants' Performance in Terms of Accuracy: An Analysis of Scores in Pre-test 1 and 2 and Post-test 1 and 2

In order to have an even deeper understanding of participants' improvements in terms of accuracy, participants' scores in both pre-tests and post-tests are here considered. To facilitate this analysis, though, only post-test 2b scores are taken into account in this subsection, that is, post-test 2 scores here refer to the scores obtained in the second and final version of participants' productions. To sum up, hence, the scores that refer to participants' performances in both comparison 1 (pre and post-test 1) and comparison 2 (pre and post-test 2) are here contrasted.

Graph 3 illustrates the relationship between the two comparisons. Before focusing on it, nonetheless, it is important to keep in mind that while in comparison 1 (pre and post-test 1), participants' scores were expected to be higher in the post-test (which would mean that participants were able to make more correct choices when deciding whether a sentence was grammatical or not, after the implementation of the task cycle); in comparison 2 (pre and post-test 2), participants' scores were expected to be lower in the post-test (which would mean they were able to make less mistakes in their written production, after the implementation of the task cycle).

Another important difference between the two comparisons has to do with the fact that while comparison 1 (pre and post-test 1) is of a grammatical nature, comparison 2 (pre and post-test 2) is of a task-based nature. That is, comparison 1 aimed at indicating whether students had developed knowledge about the simple past structure during the task cycle. On the other hand, comparison 2's objective was to investigate if participants were able to tell stories using language for communicative purposes. Having these differences in mind, graph 3

presents some interesting insights about students' performance.

Graph 3
Pre-test 1, Pre-test 2, Post-test 1 and Post-test 2b Scores of Each Participant as Regards Accuracy
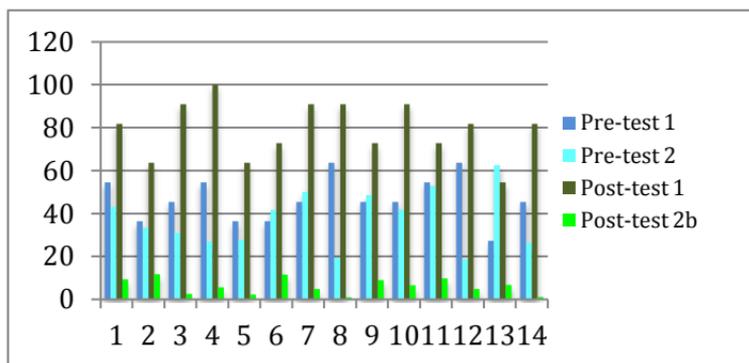
If one considers both comparisons, it is possible to visualize that students who did better in comparison 1 followed a similar pattern in comparison 2. This shows that, after the cycle of task was implemented, participants were not only able to identify grammatically correct sentences concerning the simple past structure but they could also use this knowledge to express their ideas.

Flash's (participant 4) scores, for instance, were coherent considering both test comparisons. Her two pre-tests indicate she was not entirely familiar with the simple past structure, both from a grammatical perspective and from a communicative perspective, before the cycle of tasks was implemented. In her pre-test 1, she scored 54,54% of correct answers (which means she was not able to identify a lot of ungrammatical sentences in the test) and in her pre-test 2, she scored 26,92% of errors (which means her text was not as accurate as desired). However, after the cycle of tasks was implemented, Flash's post-

tests' scores imply not only that she seemed able to point grammatically correct sentences that made use of the simple past structure, but also able to use this structure to communicate her ideas when telling a story. This time, in her post-test 1, she was able to identify 100% of ungrammatical sentences. Also, in her post-test 2, she managed to produce a narrative with only 5,61% of inaccuracies.

This coherence among test scores was a similar tendency for all participants, if one considers the results illustrated in graph 3. Tinho's (participant 13) performance is particularly interesting, however, keeping in mind that he was the student who had the lowest score (54% per cent) in post-test 1, as previously mentioned. When comparing his pre-test scores (both pre-test 1 and 2), results corroborate in showing that, in fact, Tinho seemed not to know how to use of the simple past structure, which indicates he had more space to grow after working on the tasks. The difference between his post-test scores, on the other hand, indicates that although his performance in the GJT (pre-test 2), after the cycle of tasks, was average, he was able to produce much less errors when it came to using language with a communicative focus.

It is possible to conclude, therefore, that the findings shown in comparison 2 (pre and post-test 2) corroborate the results brought in comparison 1 (pre and post-test 1). Hence, after the cycle of tasks, students seem to have improved their linguistic knowledge in terms of the simple past structure. Moreover, they also seemed to be able to use this knowledge to communicate, producing more accurate narratives after the cycle of tasks was implemented. The next section, therefore, discusses the results here presented in the light of the literature that informs this study.

5.2.5. Signs of Language Development Considering Participants' Performance in Terms of Accuracy: Results' Discussion

As aforementioned, findings from the analysis of participants' performance in terms of structural knowledge and accuracy suggest that students were able to produce considerably more accurate texts after working on the task cycle. Some significant assumptions may derive from these results.

First of all, siding with Ellis (1991; 2003; 2017) and Roscioli et al (2015), a case can be made for the positive impact of focused tasks in language learning as tasks that may contribute to functional and semantic knowledge development. As previously stated, a focused task, as Ellis (2003; 2017) explains, is the one designed to elicit the processing of specific, pre-determined linguistic features. If used in combination with other tasks, they may aid students in dealing with specific language structures as they attempt to communicate.

In this study, a consciousness-raising focused task combined with other unfocused and focused tasks were used. The goal was to give students the opportunity to reflect about form departing from authentic input, attempting to construct linguistic knowledge to be used communicatively when telling stories. Students were, therefore, stimulated to actively participate in their own language development and engage in meta-language analysis processes with communicative purposes, that is, meaning was co-constructed by instead of imposed to students.

Ellis (2017) emphasizes how focused tasks "can be used to raise learners' awareness of the functional or semantic meanings of linguistic features" (p. 511), having, therefore, a beneficial effect in language growth, when needed. In this study, as previously mentioned, while working on the consciousness-raising task, students seemed to be able to draw their attention to form and better understand how to use the simple past structure to tell stories. Moreover, as aforementioned in this section,

students' productions were considerably more accurate after the task cycle implementation. Hence, as the results presented seem to show, the linguistic knowledge developed during the focused task phase of the task cycle was put to use by the students later on in their post-test productions, when they wrote narratives telling stories in the past that were considerably more accurate than the stories that were told before the task cycle. Hence, the use of focused tasks seemed to have elicited more accurate performance from students, indicating that they might be beneficial to language development.

Another significant conclusion that can be drawn from the results here presented has to do with the positive role of focusing on form during task completion. It is relevant here to make a distinction between focused tasks and focus on form. As previously mentioned, Ellis (2003/2017) defines focused tasks as tasks that are designed to elicit the processing of specific, pre-determined linguistic features. Focusing on form, on the other hand, are not tasks per se, they are rather episodes that occur while learners are performing a task.

As defined by Long (1991, 2015), focus on form refers to moments in which various pedagogic procedures are utilized to attract learners' attention to linguistic features during task completion. However, their main attention is still directed towards meaning and it only shifts to form because form becomes necessary for meaning-making. One way for focus on form to occur, as posed by Long, is through interaction. In this sense, Long argues for reactive focus on form, that is, when either a student or the teacher draws attention to a particular form because this form was the source of linguistic problem (either meaning was not clear or it contained an error).

Throughout the whole task cycle, students were given the opportunity to think about form in different ways (e.g. during classroom interaction, during preparation phases for various tasks, among others). One particular moment that deserves special attention refers to the feedback given (by teacher and classmates) after

students wrote their first version of post-test 2. These collaborations gave them the opportunity to revisit their choices by focusing on form, that is, by thinking about language as problems arose.

One example that can be brought to illustrate this is in Flash's first version of her post-test 2. While telling her story, Flash wrote "*When Roberta was a child, suffered prejudice*". Probably influenced by her knowledge of the Portuguese language (in which it is possible to use a verb without a precedent subject), Flash did not include the subject 'she' in her second clause, indicating who suffered prejudice. As a reaction, in her feedback, I asked her "who suffered prejudice" and told her to include a subject in her sentence so as to make it clearer. Flash's second version of her post-test 2 indicates she benefited from this moment of reactive feedback as she rewrote her sentence correctly: "*When Roberta was a child, she suffered prejudice*".

Flash's example is also the case of the other students who, most of the time, were able to use the moment of focusing on form while rewriting their post-test 2 to improve their performance. As results indicated, this seems to have helped them to produce even more accurate texts in post-test 2b, reinforcing the positive impacts of reactive focus on form (Long 1991, 2015). In fact, the whole cycle of tasks can be seen as a chance for them to think about form in a meaningful context. As Révész (2011) points out, "tasks have the potential to generate plentiful opportunities for meaningful language use while providing a framework for promoting learner attention to L2 constructions" (p. 162).

Finally, another conclusion that can be drawn from the results aforementioned that refer to language development in relation to accuracy has to do with the opportunities learners had to improve their narratives through output production. During the task cycle, especially when working in Tasks 5 and 6, students were given the chance to both create hypotheses about how language works when it comes to telling stories and to test

these hypotheses (Swain, 1995) when writing the first version of their post-test 2 (that is, post-test 2a). Additionally, while working on both tasks, students could also notice possible gaps in terms of language knowledge and engage in metalinguistic processes during task completion (Swain, 1995). Through output production, therefore, learners were provided with the possibility of learning by doing, that is, by writing and rewriting. These processes also seem to have contributed to more accurate texts after the task cycle implementation.

Clearly, thus, results in terms of accuracy reveal that students produced more accurate narratives after engaging in a cycle of tasks which, in turn, seems to indicate that i) the use of focused tasks in the cycle of tasks contributed to language improvements; ii) the cycle of tasks was an opportunity for students to focus on form and, consequently, improve their performance; and iii) by producing output and rewriting their narrative, learners were able to engage in language development.

One must consider, however, that accuracy is, in fact, a more conservative measure for analyzing language performance, in the sense that it relates error-free sentences to the appropriate use of language. Taking into account that, in this study, a more encompassing perspective of language is taken, one that perceives language development as a complex phenomenon that is related to innumerous aspects deriving from learners' individual differences and learning context, another dimension was used complementary to measure students' linguistic development: the outcome achievement measure, which is described as follows.

5.2.6. Signs of Language Development Considering Participants' Performance in Terms of Outcome Achievement: An Analysis of Scores in Pre-test 2 and Post-test 2

Considering the task-based nature of this study, the outcome achievement measure was used to test linguistic development taking into account how close the

learner was to achieve the goal of the task. Therefore, in order to conduct the analysis of the pre and post-tests 2 regarding outcome, four raters were invited to analyze students' productions, being two of them focused on the texts produced for the pre-test 2 and two on the texts produced for the post-test 2. This researcher also worked as a third rater for each test. Raters were expected to read the texts and, by making use of a descriptive scale that provided criteria for their analysis, decide whether the outcome had been achieved (or not) for each production (for more information on the data analysis, see the method chapter). The scale tackled aspects of a successful narrative such as: the story was told successfully, the story makes use of appropriate language, the story is cohesive and coherent, the story follows a logical sequence of events, the story is interesting and catches the reader's attention.

The outcome scores from each trio of raters were added and divided by three so as to achieve a final score for each student in each test. Because the results were not normally distributed (due to the fact that participants received very similar outcome scores in the post-test 2), a non-parametric dependent t-test was used to compare participants' outcome scores, aiming at checking if students were able to tell the stories successfully (that is, had achieved the expected outcome according to the given scale) before and after the cycle of tasks.

The results from the statistical analysis of the pre and post-test 2 in terms of outcome are presented below. The descriptive statistics, as it can be seen in table 17, show the minimum and maximum scores, and the mean score for both tests, as well as the standard deviation and the standard error for each.

Table 17
Descriptive Statistics: Means, Minimum, Maximum,
Standard Deviation and Standard Error – Outcome
Achievement

Test	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	SD	SE
Pre-test 2	155.86	84	245	53.43	14.28
Post-test 2	220.93	145	250	34.41	9.19

Considering the results brought in table 17, more specifically the mean difference between both tests (M= 155.86 for the pre-test 2, in contrast with M= 220.93 for the post-test 2), it is possible to see that the great majority of participants were more successful when telling their stories in the post-test 2, which may serve as evidence for the positive impact of the cycle of tasks in terms of outcome achievement. The fact that the standard deviation value is smaller for post-test 2 (SD = 34.41) if compared to the value for pre-test 2 (SD = 53.43) reveals that students' performance was more uniform in the post-test, that is, students received similar high scores for outcome achievement in their post-test, which indicates all of them were able to complete the expected outcome successfully, benefiting from the cycle of tasks. The results of the non-parametric dependent t-test indicate a statistically significant difference between both tests ($p \leq .001$ / $z = -3.23$).

In Graph 4, students' individual performances in both tests are presented.

Graph 4
Pre-test 2 and Post-test 2 Scores of Each Participant as regards outcome achievement
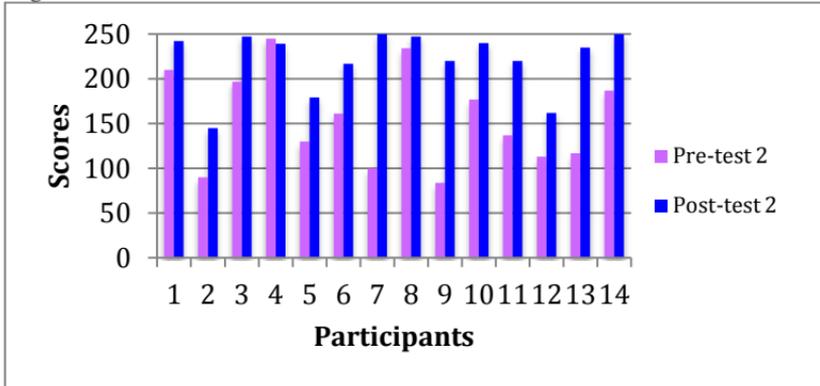
Individual performance analysis reveals that most participants managed to achieve an acceptable outcome in their pre-test 2. Only three participants (2, 7 and 9) achieved less than 125 points (which is half of the maximum possible score) as their score. Eleven participants got at least 125 points in their pre-test 2. Moreover, three participants managed to achieve more than 200 points, which brings them closer to a completely successful outcome achievement (maximum was 250), even though this was still the pre-test 2 phase.

Flash (participant 4), more specifically, was very successful in her pre-test 2, with a score of 245 points. Interestingly, she was also the only participant who decreased her performance in the post-test, in which she scored 239. Even though her score diminished, instead of increasing, because she was so successful in her pre-test 2, there was very little room for improvement. Moreover, her score in the post-test phase was very close to the one in her pre-test phase and both were really close to the highest score, which indicates that she was successful in achieving the outcome of both tests.

In relation to the post-test scores, on the other hand, only three participants (2, 5 and 12) scored below 200. Even so, these three students managed to improve considerably within tests. All the other participants were

very close to the highest score. Panda (participant 7) and Vicente (participant 14) achieved the highest score in their post-test 2.

Clearly, therefore, participants' performance in terms of outcome achievement was more successful in their post-test (with the exception of Flash that had already performed really well in her pre-test 2), which means that participants seem to have improved their story-telling skills, using appropriate language according to the topic and the genre, writing a cohesive and coherent text that followed a logical sequence of events, and writing a story that is interesting and that catches the reader's attention. Panda's post-test 2 narrative is brought below as an example of a successful narrative (to see all the productions, check Appendix 17):

This is the story of Yasmin. She is a student at CA and she is 12 years old. Yasmin told me that she already suffered prejudice for being one girl that fought jiu-jitsu. One day she won the Catarinense Championship which was good because she could overcome this problem. She told me that she never stopped of fight because of this prejudice.

The next section discusses the results in terms of outcome achievement here presented in the light of the literature that informs this study.

5.2.7. Signs of Language Development Considering Participants' Performance in Terms of Outcome Achievement: Results' Discussion

As previously exposed, participants' post-test productions were considered more successful in terms of outcome achievement. That means that when writing their narratives after the task cycle was implemented, students made more appropriate, cohesive and coherent choices, according to the topic and the genre. Their stories also followed a logical sequence of events and were considered interesting narratives. Some conclusions can be drawn from these results.

First of all, achieving the expected outcome in the post-test phase may be an effect of the task-based framework itself. Skehan's (1996) framework for task implementation is thought of as a way to diminish the cognitive load of learners as they move through tasks. That is, starting with a pre-task phase, then moving to the actual task and revisiting difficulties in the post-task phase may guide learner's performance and contribute to successful task completion.

When considering participants' pre-test 2 productions, one must take into account that students did not receive any instruction or guidance to aid them in telling their story during this phase. For their pre-test 2 narratives, participants were asked to watch an episode and then narrate the story they had seen using their previous knowledge in the English language. They were also allowed to use dictionaries and they could ask questions to the teacher if they had any doubts. But no other instruction or scaffolding was provided to them. As a result, learners had to resort to different strategies so as to attempt success in telling their pre-test 2 stories. Table 18, as follows, presents the strategies students reported to have used while writing their pre-test 2 texts.

Table 18
Strategies Used in Pre-test 2

Pre-test 2 Productions	
Stu de nts	**Strategies used to write the narrative in English**
1	tried to follow a chronological order, made use of the dictionary to find unfamiliar words, asked the teacher's help to find unfamiliar words.
2	made use of the dictionary to find unfamiliar words, asked the teacher's help to find unfamiliar words
3	made use of the dictionary to find unfamiliar words, asked the teacher's help to find unfamiliar words, tried to make a summary of the events in

	the story, wanted to make sure the story had a beginning, middle and an end
4	made use of the dictionary to find unfamiliar words
5	made use of the dictionary to find unfamiliar words, tried to make a summary of the events in the story
6	made use of the dictionary to find unfamiliar words, asked the teacher's help to find unfamiliar words, tried to make a summary of the events in the story
7	made use of familiar words
8	made use of the dictionary to find unfamiliar words, asked the teacher's help to find unfamiliar words, made use of familiar words
9	made use of the dictionary to find unfamiliar words, asked the teacher's help to find unfamiliar words
10	made use of familiar words, made use of the dictionary to find unfamiliar words
11	asked the teacher's help to find unfamiliar words, made use of the dictionary to find unfamiliar words, wanted to make sure the story had a beginning, middle and an end
12	tried to make a summary of the events in the story, made use of the dictionary to find unfamiliar words
13	translated the text from Portuguese to English, made use of the dictionary to find unfamiliar words
14	made use of familiar words and rules

The strategies introduced in table 18 show that, when writing their pre-test 2 stories, most participants made use of dictionaries whenever they needed to look up a new word. Another common strategy used was to ask questions to the teacher if doubts came up. Participants also tried to rely mostly on the words that were already

familiar to them, keeping the text as simple and short as possible. A few participants were also interested in including a chronological order of events and making sure the story had a beginning, middle and an end. Tinho (participant 13) was the only one who said to have written the text first in Portuguese and then translated it to English.

The strategies used by participants serve as evidence to explain their performance in terms of outcome achievement in pre-test 2. Considering their low proficiency in the English language and the fact that they had very little experience in telling stories in English, participants resorted to common strategies such as focusing on familiar words and keeping the text simple to tell their stories. Whenever they encountered a problem in terms of vocabulary and/or other language structures, participants resorted to either the help of the dictionary or the teacher. It seems, therefore, that their main focus was on meaning-making and conveying the intended message. However, due to language gaps, they were not always able to tell the story as they wanted to. Lauren's (participant 10) pre-test 2 narrative can be brought as an example:

Tom was with Jerry and Tom see one girl cat and fall in love. Tom try to impress to girl and spend all your money. But other cat fall in love with girl and win she.

When writing their post-task 2 text, on the other hand, participants were much better prepared for the activity. The cycle of tasks seemed to not only have served as a means of instruction but also offered students the necessary scaffolding to, step by step, move towards successful narrative production. The framework used in this study, which was based on Skehan's framework for task implementation, offered students the possibility to build their knowledge in terms of the topic being discussed, in terms of the genre narrative and in terms of language. In this sense, task-preparation was used to calibrate the cognitive load of different tasks, making students familiar to the topic, the genre and the language.

Hence, as they moved towards the end of the cycle, students were equipped with the necessary tools, linguistically speaking, to engage in the final task. The whole task cycle, therefore, served as a big plan to prepare students for the final task.

More specifically, during the pre-task phase (Tasks 1 and 2), students had the chance to focus their attention on language input, which in turn provided them with both knowledge on the topic being discussed and "crucial evidence from which learners can form linguistic hypothesis" (Gass and Mackey, 2007, p. 177). The mid-task and the post-task phases, on the other hand, not only exposed students to input, but were also an opportunity to test their linguistic hypothesis, to engage in interactional feedback and to "move from comprehension (semantic use of language) to syntactic use of language" (Gass and Mackey, 2007, p. 179) through production.

Towards the end of the task cycle, when students worked on producing their first version of their post-test 2 narratives, they had already reflected about language, focused on meaning, discussed the topic in different moments and through different perspectives, been exposed to examples of the story telling genre and attempted to write a small text retelling someone's story (Lizzie's story in task 4). Clearly, therefore, students had been prepared to write their post-test 2 texts. Their successful performance in this task, hence, reinforces the importance and value of the task-based framework and instruction. Lauren's post-test 2 narrative can again be used as an example:

This is the story of Emyllyn. She suffered very much because of her skin color and her hair. She is black ad the society is rigid. When she was a child, she wanted become one kid of blue eyes, blonde hair and white skin. But with 11 years old, Emyllyn began to accept her natural beauty and now she is happy. She said "I'm very beautiful. I don't care to people say about my hair".

When we compare Lauren's first narrative to the second, it is clear that her improvements are not only

related to accuracy or vocabulary acquisition. Her pre-test 2 narrative lacks an introduction, does not make use of any cohesive devices, is not much attractive to a reader's eye and does not follow a logical sequence of events. On the other hand, her second narrative presents all these characteristics as she successfully tells the story of her interviewee.

As Farias (2014) pointed out, the outcome achieving measure for language performance "is an encompassing, qualitative measure that seems to be a relevant alternative to be used in a communicative testing situation, as it captures the 'spirit', the main core characteristic of task" (p. 58). It is, therefore, by nature, a very subjective measure but that considers language performance from a more holistic perspective. Being able to achieve the outcome of a task, henceforth, seems to indicate that the learner was capable of using language appropriately in order to communicate the intended message he/she was trying to send.

Considering the results presented in the last sections, which focused on unveiling aspects of participants' performance in two pre-tests and two post-tests, findings indicate that, after the cycle of tasks was implemented, participants produced more accurate narratives and were also better able to achieve the expected task outcome. Skehan's framework for task implementation, which was used in this study to develop the task cycle, seems to have served as a pedagogical guide to help students develop language. The section below discusses the participants' perceptions on their performances.

5.3. ELEMENTS THAT SIGNAL LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT CONSIDERING PARTICIPANTS' PERCEPTION: AN ANALYSIS OF POST-TASK QUESTIONNAIRES AND POST-TASK INTERVIEWS

Taking into account that, in this study, perception is understood as a multifaceted practice which involves intellectual knowledge, background information and

cognitive thinking and evaluation (Silva, M. 2003), students' perceptions of their own learning process were considered as significant data that could inform the investigation of their language development. Hence, this section explores learners' answers to post-task questionnaires and interviews.

5.3.1. Analysis of Questionnaires

Aiming at unveiling students' perceptions of their own learning in terms of language development and critical literacy development, a post-task questionnaire with nine questions (four closed questions and five open questions) was administered after the cycle of tasks was finished. From these nine questions, the first four questions required students to reflect on their language learning process. Considering their answers to these questions, this section is a first attempt to investigate students' perspectives in relation to their language development during the time this study was carried out (see Appendix 22). The analysis that resulted from the questionnaire answers then served as input for the interviews that were later carried out.

Question 1 asked students whether they believed they had learned something in terms of language[24]. Two options were given to the students: (a) yes, my English improved, and (b) no, I did not learn anything. For this question, eleven students chose letter "a" whereas one

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[24] The question asked was: "Você acredita que aprendeu alguma coisa em relação à lingua inglesa nessa unidade? (Consulte seu folder para refrescar sua memoria)"/ "Do you believe you learned something in relation to the English Language during this lesson? (Check your folder to refresh your memory if needed).

student, Ronaldo (participant 12) preferred letter "b"[25].
Graph 5, as follows, illustrates students' choices:

Graph 5
Students' Answers to Question 1
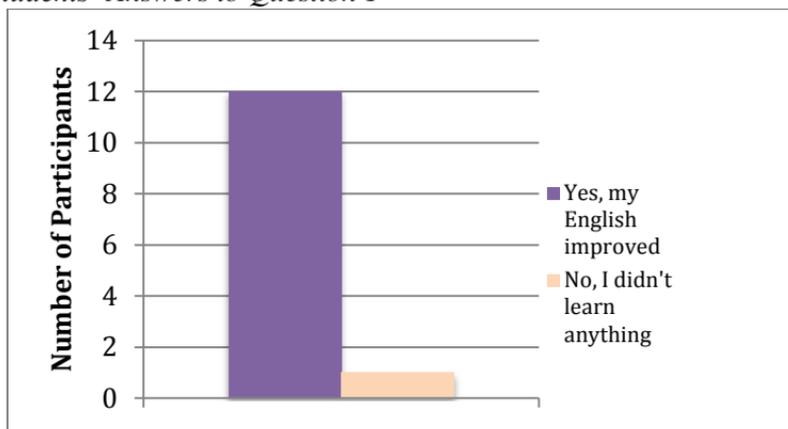
When asked to explain their choices in question
2[26], participants who believed to have learned something
in terms of language brought different examples to
illustrate their answer. Graph 6 portrays students'
responses:

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[25] Participants 6 – Isis and 14 – Vicente – were absent from
class on the day the questionnaire was administered.
Therefore, their answers are not included in this analysis,
which means a total of 12 participants answered the
questionnaire.
[26] The question asked was: "Se a sua resposta foi 'sim' na
questão anterior, dê exemplos. Se sua resposta foi 'não',
explique o porquê"/ "If you answer to the previous question
was 'yes', give examples. If your answers was 'no', explain
why.

Graph 6
Students' Answers to Question 2
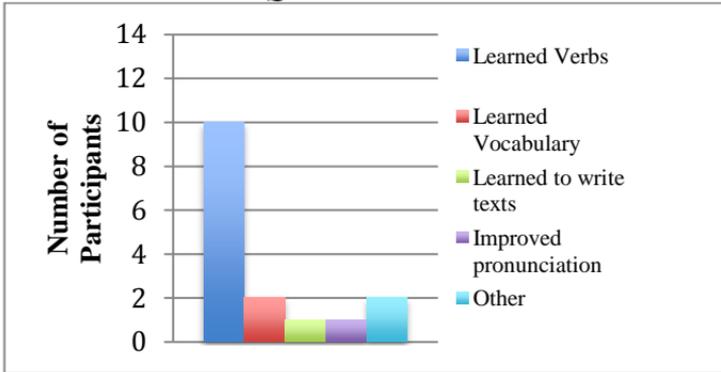
As it is possible to see in Graph 6, most students (10) related their learning process to the learning of verbs. Within this group, eight learners mentioned they had learned "verbs in the past" and/or "the past tense". For instance, Carlos (participant 2) mentioned "*O inglês no passado, verbos*"[27] as examples of what he had learned. Similarly, Denis (participant 3) says "*aprendi verbos no passado*"[28] to exemplify his learning process. Tinho (participant 13) and Thalita (participant 11) are even more specific as they mention the use of "ed" to indicate what they believe to have learned: "*she, ed, entre outras*"[29] (Tinho). In Thalita's (participant 11) case, however, her learning may not be as clear as she believes it to be, since she does not seem able to separate her understanding of the use of the past tense from the task in which they explicitly dealt with this tense during the task cycle. In order to illustrate her learning, Thalita states she learned "*verbos no passado, verbos em negrito que tenho que botar ed*"[30] (Thalita).

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[27] Translation: "The English in the past, verbs"

[28] Translation: "I learned verbs in the past"

[29] Translation: "she, ed, among others"

[30] Translation: "verbs in the past, verbs in bold that I need to add ed"

Participants 1 and 8, Ironman and Leandra respectively, also state to have learned verbs in the present tense besides the ones in the past. Ironman declares: "*Aprendi vários verbos, como são no passado e no presente*"[31]. Likewise, Leandra points out "*Eu aprendi vários verbos novos, tanto no passado e tanto no presente*"[32]. Finally, Panda (participant 7) says she learned verbs she was not familiar with before: "*aprendi vários verbos que eu também não conhecia*"[33].

Besides learning verbs, other language aspects were mentioned by the students as answers to this question. Two students, Panda (participant 7) and Maria (participant 9) stated they believed to have learned vocabulary during the given lesson. In Panda's point of view, she learned many words[34]. Maria (participant 9), on the other hand, explains that before the lesson, she did not know the words in English very well[35].

Additional relevant answers given to this question were brought by Flash (participant 4) and Lauren (participant 10). According to Flash, during the cycle of tasks, she learned a lot about the past, sentence agreement and grammar[36]. It is not clear whether the student is really aware of what sentence agreement means or even why she mentioned "grammar" and "past" as separate aspects of the language. Lauren, on the other hand, refers to improvements in her pronunciation as well as to verbs in

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[31] Translation: "I learned several verbs as well as their past and present forms"

[32] Translation: "I learned several new verbs, both in the past and in the presente form"

[33] Translation: "I learned several verbs I was not familiar with as well"

[34] Original: "Eu aprendi bastante palavras".

[35] Original: "Eu não sabia muito bem as palavras em inglês"

[36] Original: "Aprendi muito sobre o passado, concordância e gramática"

the past tense[37] as examples of what she learned in the given lesson.

Leandra is the only student that, in her questionnaire, offers a more functional perspective to language learning in addition to a more form-oriented one. According to her, besides learning verbs in the present and past tense, she also learned how to write texts[38]. She emphasizes that this text she learned how to write is "relatively big", different from what she was used to write in English classes before.

On the other hand, Ronaldo, the only student who chose letter 'b' as his answer to the first question, affirming he believed he did not learn anything from the classes in terms of language, explained his choice by saying "*eu já sabia dos paranauê*"[39]. However, because his answer was not clear and he did not give any details on what he meant by "paranauê", his perspective is further discussed when his answers to the interview are analyzed.

Taking into account the answers given to the first two questions related to language development, it can be stated, therefore, that most students seem to measure their language learning considering the mastering of language structures (learning the past tense, learning verbs, learning words). This may be seen as evidence of the (rather common-sense) belief that language is formed by grammar structures that, when put together, enable sentence creation. Barcelos (2007) explains that, among other reasons, investigating students' beliefs is important since their beliefs may be related to their actions and behaviors. Hence, more information about their perspective on language and language learning was pursued in the interviews in order to confirm whether this was indeed a belief participants had or not.

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[37] Original: "Aprendi o verbo do passado e melhorei a pronuncia"

[38] Original: "Também aprendi a fazer textos relativamente 'grandes', para mim (diferente do que eu fazia)"

[39] Translation: "I already knew the stuff"

The third question students answered in the questionnaire inquired how they felt in relation to their learning[40]. This time, students were given four options: 'satisfied', 'unsatisfied', 'not sure' and 'could have dedicated more'. Nine students declared to be satisfied with their learning, whereas Ronaldo (participant 12) explained he was unsatisfied. Batman (participant 5) said he was not sure about his opinion and Carlos (participant 2) decided he could have dedicated himself more during classes.

When asked to explain their answers, students' perspectives varied. Denis (participant 3) and Maria (participant 9) focused on language structures to illustrate their feelings. According to Denis, he is satisfied with his learning experience because now he feels like he knows some verbs in the past[41]. In Maria's case, she said she liked learning pronouns[42].

Ironman (participant 1) and Thalita (participant 11) felt content considering the learning process itself. Ironman and Thalita said, respectively: "*por enquanto estou gostando e satisfeita com o que aprendi*"[43] and "*Eu gostei*"[44]. Panda (participant 7) and Leandra (participant 8) gave a little more information emphasizing how important it is for them to learn a new language: "*Eu me sinto satisfeita porque eu gosto de inglês e quero me dedicar mais para ficar fluente*"[45], said Panda; and "*Me senti satisfeita porque é muito gratificante aprender*

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[40] The questions asked was: "Como você se sente em relação aquilo que aprendeu?/ How do you feel in relation to what you have learned?"

[41] Original: "Fiquei satisfeito porque agora sei alguns verbos no passado"

[42] Original: "Eu gostei de aprender os pronomes"

[43] Translation: "I am enjoying it and I feel satisfied with what I have learned".

[44] Translation: "I liked it"

[45] Translation: I feel satisfied because I like English and I want to dedicate myself more to be fluent"

coisas novas, ampliar nosso conhecimento, principalmente em uma língua nova"[46], said Leandra.

Flash (participant 4) and Lauren (participant 10) seemed happy with their learning process because they felt like they had learned new things. Flash stated she learned more than she was expecting to[47] whereas Lauren explained she learned things she did not know yet[48]. Finally, for Tinho (participant 13), his learning process was satisfying because he felt that after the lesson was over he could travel abroad to visit Disneyworld[49].

Considering the diversity of aspects brought up by the participants, a relation can be made between students' answers and their learning experiences in class. Maria, for instance, is a student who presented difficulties since the beginning of classes with very basic language structures such as personal pronouns. Therefore, feeling like she was able to master them and use them to communicate can certainly be satisfying. Similarly, Denis is a student who seemed to value the learning of language structures to help him communicate. In his interview, Denis emphasized learning verbs aided him to form phrases and, due to that, he was able to write a full text which made him very proud of himself. In Leandra's, Panda's and Tinho's cases, their answers also match their behavior in class since the beginning of the semester. They were all eager to learn English and, as they reported in their personal questionnaires in the beginning of the data collection, they wanted to travel abroad in the future (Leandra is very interested in the Korean culture whereas Panda loves American bands. Tinho did not report any preferences for another culture but mentioned travelling too). For them, English was probably a universal language

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[46] Translation: "I felt satisfied because it is gratifying to learn new things, to increase our knowledge, mostly about a new language"

[47] Original: "Aprendi mais do que esperava"

[48] Original: "Porque eu aprendi coisas que eu não sabia"

[49] Original: "Pois agora posso ir para Disney"

and they seemed to believe that if they mastered it, they would be able to communicate with people all over the world.

On the other hand, Carlos (participant 2) justified his opinion that he could have dedicated himself more during his learning process considering that, as posed by him, he would be able to learn even more[50]. His answer may be reflecting his learning experience too. As I report in my class diary, Carlos seemed to be resistant to English as the cycle of tasks started. On day 6, he felt very demotivated to do a video task (the one in which students watched a video that told Malala's story) and reported: "he doesn't know English and couldn't understand anything from the videos" (class diary – day 6). On that day, I set up an appointment with the school counselor and, together, we talked to Carlos about his feelings. He asserted he believed he would never learn English in his life and, as a result of our talk, I could perceive he was not feeling like he had support to improve. Therefore, together with the counselor, we decided I would meet Carlos once a week "after class for us to work on his doubts" (class diary – day 7). Even though in the following classes, Carlos seemed "more interested and cooperative after we had a talk with the counselor" (class diary - day 7), his answer in the post-questionnaire may be reflecting his perception of himself as someone who faces difficulties in learning English and who needs to dedicate himself more towards changing that.

Batman and Ronaldo both felt like they did not learn as much as they expected. In their personal questionnaires, they both said they believed to learn English is important to ensure you can travel abroad. Therefore, Batman's statement that he wasn't sure how he felt about his learning process because he believed he did not learn much[51] may reflect his expectations to learn more in order to be prepared to travel. In his personal

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[50] Original: "Porque eu posso aprender mais"
[51] Original: "Eu só achei que aprendi pouco"

questionnaire, when asked on what he would like to focus during the English classes, he answered: "basically everything". Ronaldo's response is also similar as he explained that, in his opinion, there are other things to be learned that are more important[52]. In Ronaldo's case, when asked about what he would like to focus during the English classes, he talked about situations like calling a taxi or shopping. In his interviews, Ronaldo also talks about learning English for travelling as highly important.

It can be perceived, therefore, that students' perceptions of their own learning in relation to language vary according to their beliefs, expectations and experiences in class during the learning process. Overall, students seem to have had a positive perception towards their language learning development, relating it to mastering language structures and being able to achieve proficiency goals and/or life objectives that require language proficiency. However, it is important to consider that, due to the nature of the questionnaire itself (the fact it was answered individually in written format with no opportunity for follow-up questions), students' answers were short and not always clear. Therefore, interviews were carried out with the purpose of better understanding students' perceptions and clarifying specific responses given in the questionnaires.

5.3.2. Analysis of Interviews

After responding the post-task questionnaire, students were interviewed. The aim of the interviews was twofold: a) to clarify some aspects of students' answers given in the questionnaire; and b) to make second attempt at investigating and understanding their perception about their own learning process. In order to achieve the first goal, specific questions were asked to each student according to issues that arose from their post-task questionnaire responses. Moreover, so as to accomplish the second goal, all students answered the same two

[52] Original: "Acho que tem coisas mais importantes"

questions last: if they considered the topic discussed important and why (or why not); and how they might (or not) have changed during data collection.

Students interview responses (see Appendix 23) were then transcribed and coded. The list of codes was organized into a list of emerging themes that organize students' voices according to similar perceptions brought by them (see Appendix 22). Twenty different codes were identified under the umbrella of ten themes. This section presents, describes and discusses the themes that emerged from the students' voices, which are related to their perception on their language development.

From the ten emerging themes identified, five of them were related to language development and, within them, six codes emerged. Code 2 – Learning Awareness of Language appeared four times in the voices of four different students. In this code, students' ideas seem to express awareness of their language learning process. Denis (participant 3), for instance, was asked to clarify his point of view presented in the post-task questionnaire when he said: "*Aprendi verbos no passado*"[53]. In his interview, he explained that, after the cycle of tasks, he felt like he could form sentences in the past tense[54]. Leandra (participant 8), when asked if any of the tasks was meaningful to her, said she liked task 4 very much and one of the reasons was because she learned verbs[55]. For Carlos (participant 2) and Ronaldo (participant 12), their learning experience was different. After being asked why, in his post-task questionnaire, he had said he could have dedicated himself more during the classes, Carlos emphasized, right at the beginning of his interview, that he felt like he did not know English at all and that he

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[53] Original: "I learned verbs in the past".

[54] Original: "Depende dos verbos mas eu acho que consigo formar uma frase. Eu entendi como fazer a frase no passado".

[55] Original: "Eu gostei porque a gente aprendeu os verbos".

considered it a difficult language to learn [56]. When questioned why he did not dedicate as much as he thought he should have, Carlos stated he did not like English[57]. In Ronaldo's case, in his post-task questionnaire, he had said he had not learned anything in relation to language during our classes and the reason he used to explain his perspective was: "*eu já sabia dos paranauê*" [58]. Considering that his post-questionnaire answer was not clear, during the interview, I asked Ronaldo what he meant by 'paranauê'. He started explaining that he felt like he had already mastered before all we had discussed during the last six months of classes [59]. However, he continued by saying that, in fact, he had learned some new expressions. He ended stating that he felt like he still needed to learn more about the past tense[60].

Even though the four described experiences were not all the same, code 2 serves as evidence that some students seemed to be aware of aspects that were part of their language learning process. This claim is in fact confirmed by the analysis of the instances in another code: Code 20 – Impact 4: the student believes he/she improved in terms of language, which belongs to Theme 10 – Impacts on Students. The testimonials that fit Code 20 are statements in which eight students attempted to describe how they might (or not) have changed during the data collection. In these eight students' opinions, they had changed significantly because they had improved in terms of language proficiency.

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[56] Original: "Eu não sei nada de inglês, dai é difícil".

[57] Original: "Eu não gosto de inglês. Não sei explicar"

[58] Translation: "I already knew about the stuff"

[59] Ronaldo was referring to both the period before data collection, when I was their regular English teacher, and during the moment of data collection.

[60] Original: "Tudo que a gente aprendeu nesses seis meses de aula era tudo coisa que eu já sabia. Mas algumas expressões novas eu aprendi. Eu ainda tenho que aprender mais do passado.

Ironman (participant 1) and Maria stated they felt like their English was better[61]. Denis (participant 3) said he had learned more words[62]. Panda talked about learning verbs when she explained: "*eu sabia o básico do inglês, procurava a tradução. Mas agora eu sei mais verbos, que eu não sabia e isso é muito legal*"[63]. Ronaldo (participant 12) also talked about learning verbs. He mentioned he learned how to use the past tense[64]. For Vicente (participant 14), who also brought up his learning of the past tense, the process was not an easy one. Vicente went even further and made reference to the approach used in class to teach the verbs. He said: "*aprendi os verbos do passado mas ainda acho difícil. Tipo, você foi falando toda aula e dai a gente viu no texto e usou. Mas não teve as atividades de praticar mesmo. É porque a gente praticou escrevendo o texto. Mas aquelas atividades de completar com o verbo também é bom pra lembrar mais*"[65]. In Thalita's (participant 11) case, she perceives her changes because she feels able now to watch TV series in English[66]. Tinho (participant 13) talked about his improvements in relation to being able to write a complete text[67].

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[61] Original: "Eu acho que sei mais inglês agora" – Ironman, "Eu sei mais inglês hoje do que antes"- Maria

[62] Original: "Aprendi mais palavras"

[63] Translation: "I knew basic English, used to look up the translation of words. But now, I know more verbs, verbs that I did not know before, and that is pretty cool".

[64] Original: "Eu aprendi o passado, que eu não sabia"

[65] Translation: "I learned the verbs in the past but I still find it difficult. I mean, you talked about them every class and then we saw it in the text and used them. But, there were not activities to really practice it. That is because we practiced writing the text. But those activities to complete with the verb are also good to memorize".

[66] Original: "Eu consigo ver mais série legendada"

[67] Original: "Eu escrevi o texto final em inglês e tudo. Quando mostrei pra minha irmã ela não acreditou que era meu porque o inglês dela é bem bom".

Considering the students' voices previously presented, it is possible to conclude that most students seem aware of aspects of their language learning process and perceive impacts and changes in their language proficiency. Moreover, it is possible to observe that the belief that language learning is related to the mastering of language structures, which was formerly identified in the post-task questionnaires, seems to be confirmed among some of the students. This assumption is, in fact, very interesting if we consider that language structures were handled in the cycle of tasks from a communicative perspective, following a focus on form approach (Long, 1991; Ellis, 2003). Still, considering this is indeed a common-sense belief among foreign language learners and, taking into account that a more traditional approach to language teaching is commonly used in different contexts around Brazil, it is not surprising that students would focus on the mastering of structures to illustrate their language learning process. In fact, Vicente's words, previously mentioned, reinforce this idea when he pointed out the positive effect he believes that activities in which one has to complete blanks with the right verb have.

Besides talking about language improvements, some students also referred to feelings they had during data collection as well as personal evaluations and interests they have. In relation to Theme 5 – Feelings, students' words, it fits Codes 6 – Confident/Not Confident and 7 – Proud of Him/Herself. Panda (participant 7) affirmed she feels more confident now that she perceives her language improvements[68]. On the other hand, Maria (participant 9) said that although she feels like her English is better, she is still afraid of speaking because she feels

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[68] Original: "Eu mudei muito, muito mesmo. Eu sabia o básico do inglês, procurava a tradução. Mas agora eu sei mais verbos, que eu não sabia e isso é muito legal. Me sinto mais confiante".

shy[69]. Denis (participant 3) talked about how proud of himself he felt for being able to write his final text. He says: "*fiz o texto e achei bem legal que consegui terminar. Porque a gente escreveu e tudo. Até mostrei pra minha mãe pra ela ver que eu que fiz. Ela achou bem comprido*"[70].

In relation to Theme 6, Code 10 – Personal Interests, Carlos's voice saying he does not like English contrasts with Panda's words who said she really liked the classes. Theme 8, Code 12 – Evaluations, also includes assessments. Batman (participant 5), for instance, assessed himself. He said he did not dedicate much to the classes because he was a bit lazy[71]. Carlos once again claimed he did not dedicate as much as he should to the classes.

It appears, therefore, that students' interviews confirm the opinions they had expressed in their post-task questionnaires. As previously mentioned, some students not only seem to measure their language learning considering the mastering of language structures, but the interviews also showed that overall students seem to have had a positive perception towards their language learning development, relating it to being able to achieve proficiency goals and feel more confident or proud of themselves. Additionally, similar to the findings in the post-task questionnaire, students' perceptions of their own learning in relation to language seemed to vary according to their beliefs, expectations and experiences in class during the learning process. The next section discusses the results presented according to participants' perception in the light of the literature that informs this study.

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[69] Original: "Eu sei mais inglês hoje do que antes. Mas ainda tenho bastante medo de falar. Eu tenho vergonha"

[70] Translation: "I wrote the text and thought it was really cool that I could finish it. Because I wrote and all. I even showed it tom y mom for her to see I had done it. She thought it was really long".

[71] Original: "Eu acho que eu não me esforcei muito. Tinha um pouco de preguiça"

5.3.3. Signs of Language Development Considering Participants' Perceptions: Results' Discussion

As the previous section has shown, participants' reported perceptions concerning their language development experience seem to reveal that students had a positive perspective towards their language learning development. Some motives brought by them to justify their views are related to the mastering of language structures and to feeling more confident and proud of themselves as the classes went by.

Some of participants' voices seem to echo aspects proposed by TBLT such as the idea of learning by doing, as reproduced in Vicente's words: "*a gente praticou escrevendo o texto*"[72]. On the other hand, participants seem to highlight the mastering of language structures as changes they perceive in themselves after the implementation of the task cycle, which was not necessarily its primary intention. Still, various participants mention other moments in which learning took place, revealing how important it was for them to feel like they were improving and moving forward: *"Eu consigo ver mais série legendada (Thalita)*, *"Eu escrevi o texto final em inglês e tudo" (Tinho).* Moreover, the fact that some participants reported to feel more confident and/or proud of themselves shows how relevant the impacts caused by the cycle of tasks may be.

It is imperative to recognize, in this sense, the importance of having moments of reflection in class, as a means of getting to know the students and how they perceive their own process. Furthermore, investigating these reflections empirically can also be seen as pivotal if one attempts to unveil the several layers that compose pedagogical interventions on daily basis. Even though students' views can be seen as unsophisticated or even naive, in the sense that sometimes they did not even have the skills or words to express themselves, these moments of reflection seem to have served as opportunities for

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[72] Translation: "we practiced as we wrote the text"

them to grow as they engage in processes of self-assessment and self-discovery. Moreover, considering that metacognition, that is, reflecting about your own learning process, is an important and essential element in TBLT (Ellis, 2005), developing this ability in class can be seen as beneficial to participants' advance. Hence, moments such as the ones provided during the questionnaires and interviews can be seen as crucial in language classrooms, especially when it comes to young learners.

Together, the results brought by the various analyses in this chapter, considering my own perception as the participants' teacher and as a researcher; considering participants' performances in pre and post tasks; and considering participants' own perceptions; it seems possible to affirm that the implementation of the cycle of tasks was crucial in contributing to language improvements and development. Hence, the next section aims at answering the research questions posed at the beginning of this chapter.

5.4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS ANSWERED

In this chapter, with the purpose of scrutinizing language development, within a task-based and critical perspective, data from the teacher/researcher's perception, from participants' performance in two pre-tests and two post-tests, and from participants' questionnaires and interviews were described and analyzed. In this sense, after having exposed and discussed the presented findings, the aim is now to answer the research questions that motivated this study.

It is necessary to acknowledge, however, that this small-scale study of fourteen Brazilian learners of English in a public school makes any interpretations tentative. As Foster (2009) emphasizes, "it is not easy for research to show a simple link between L2 development and what happened in a task. This is largely due to the unpredictable nature of what learners focus upon when using the L2" (p. 250). Still, in this research, I attempted

to understand some processes that unveil language learning in this very specific context.

In this study, language acquisition is seen from a critical perspective as a complex process that involves many cognitive and social aspects. Considering the context in which data was collected, the task-based approach was chosen as a methodological framework that seemed to fit learners' needs. After implementing the cycle of tasks, therefore, participants' language development was analyzed with the purpose of answering the following research question: (1) does a critical cycle of tasks promote language development and critical literacy development? If so, how does it take place?

As an attempt to respond this question, six other research questions were posed, five of which are to be answered in this chapter. The questions together with their answers are listed below, this time, only focusing on participants' language development:

1a) are there elements, perceived during the implementation of the task cycle, that signal language and critical literacy development, considering the teacher/researcher's perception? If so, which are they?
Yes. As results from my diary notes and my analysis of participants' performances in tasks during the task cycle implementation revealed, the cycle of tasks provided students with opportunities for input-processing and restructuring as well as output production. As each task prepared students to perform the next one, diminishing the cognitive load in each activity, students' performance was guided through the cycle providing opportunities for meaning-making as well as form-focusing. Hence, these findings reinforce the key role of the task-based framework and the task-based teacher in the implementation of TBLT fostering language development.

1b) are participants better able to identify the correct use of the simple past structure, when comparing their performance in a grammaticality judgment test after the

implementation of the task cycle, in a pre-test and a post-test condition?

Yes. Results show that participants were better able to identify the correct use of the simple past after the cycle of tasks was implemented, which may indicate improvements in terms of knowledge about this structure.

1c) do participants perform more accurately after the implementation of the task cycle, when writing a narrative, in a pre-test and a post-test condition?

Yes. Pre and post-test 2 (a and b) comparison indicate that participants were able to produce, in their post-test 2b, narratives that were more accurate, after the implementation of the cycle of tasks. These findings not only suggest language development and improvements, but also reinforce the importance of having a framework for teaching language and the value of teaching grammar through a form focused approach.

1d) do participants achieve the expected outcome after the implementation of the task cycle, when writing a narrative, in a pre-test and a post-test condition?

Yes. According to the results presented, participants' narratives in post-test 2 closer to the expected outcome, considering what was estimated within the genre story-telling, mostly being more successful in conveying the message intended after the implementation of the cycle of tasks than in the pre-test. Therefore, outcome in the post-test phase was achieved more successfully than in the pre-test phase. These findings reinforce the relevance of a task-based framework as a way to offer students' sufficient and appropriate support for outcome achievement.

1f) are there elements that signal language and critical literacy development, considering participants' perceptions of their own experience? If so, which are they?

Yes. Learners' perceptions were mostly positive towards their own language development. Perceptions seemed to vary according to their beliefs, expectations and experiences in class during the learning process. Providing students with opportunities to engage in a reflection about their own learning also seems to be a valid and necessary approach in language classrooms, encouraging metacognition and self-discovery, both of which may result in future growth.

The next chapter presents the results as regards critical literacy development.

CHAPTER 6

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

AS REGARDS CRITICAL LITERACY DEVELOPMENT

For Freire (1970), developing students' critical consciousness is urgent and mandatory since, by doing so, reflection on and action upon their own reality allows for true liberation, as they become permanent and active re-creators of their world. Although there are many different ways to achieve this purpose, many authors (Freire & Macedo, D., 1987; McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004a/2004b; Behrman, 2006; Janks, 2014; to name but a few) agree that working on critical literacy helps students and teachers "expand their reasoning, seek out multiple perspectives and become active thinkers" (McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004a, p. 52).

This chapter, therefore, focuses on understanding how participants' critical literacy (and by extension critical consciousness) development happened in this study, taking into account different sets of data: the teacher/researcher's perception, considering classroom discussions, participants' task responses during the implementation of the task cycle, and class diary notes, as the implementation of the cycle took place; students' performances in pre and post-test 2; and students' perceptions of their own experiences, considering questionnaires and interviews.

Hence, the following research question guided this study: (1) does a critical cycle of tasks promote language development and critical literacy development? If so, how does it take place? In order to answer this question, the previously presented research question originated six other questions, as follows:

1a) are there elements, perceived during the implementation of the task cycle, that signal language and

critical literacy development, considering the teacher/researcher's perception? If so, which are they?;

1b) are participants better able to identify the correct use of the simple past structure, when comparing their performance in a grammaticality judgment test after the implementation of the task cycle, in a pre-test and a post-test condition?;

1c) do participants perform more accurately after the implementation of the task cycle, when writing a narrative, in a pre-test and a post-test condition?;

1d) do participants achieve the expected outcome after the implementation of the task cycle, when writing a narrative, in a pre-test and a post-test condition?;

1e) do participants' texts show critical perspectives after the implementation of the task cycle, when writing a narrative, in a pre-test and a post-test condition?;

1f) are there elements that signal language and critical literacy development, considering participants' perceptions of their own experience? If so, which are they?.

Aiming at answering research questions 1a, 1e and 1f, this chapter presents and discusses the results found in this study regarding participants' critical literacy development. The findings here described and examined will be further explored in the following chapter, together with the results previously presented in terms of language development, in order to achieve a complete understanding of the processes and outcomes that implementing a critical task cycle may entail.

This chapter is divided into four sections and nine subsections. Section one focuses on discussing students' critical literacy regarding the teacher/researcher's perception of five different classroom moments that were considered episodes where students engaged in critical awareness. Section two discusses students' critical literacy development concerning the presence or absence of a critical perspective in their productions in two tests. Section three presents and discusses the results of students' critical literacy when it comes to their own

perception. Finally, section four answers the research questions related to critical literacy, summarizing the main findings here presented.

6.1. ELEMENTS THAT SIGNAL CRITICAL LITERACY DEVELOPMENT CONSIDERING THE TEACHER/RESEARCHER'S PERCEPTION: AN ANALYSIS OF DIARY NOTES, CLASSROOM DISCUSSIONS AND PARTICIPANTS' PERFORMANCE IN TASKS DURING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TASK-CYCLE

In this study, language and critical literacy development are looked at not only from a product perspective, but also from a process perspective. As Pessoa and Urzêda-Freitas (2012) explain, learning a language is more than learning how to codify and transmit messages since language is "a politics of representation" (p. 756), that is, our choices in terms of language are represented by and represent, as well as transformed by and transform, the position we occupy in the world, our perspectives and beliefs. Language is embedded in power relations and as such constitutes and is constituted by the world and its implications. Therefore, learning a foreign language critically is not something you can measure or evaluate just by testing students after a lesson. It involves developing awareness, engaging in reflections, confronting one's own beliefs about the world and about learning; it is, therefore, a complex process of transformation over time, of which the classroom is only one of many possible settings.

With that in mind, contemplating moments that seem to indicate critical reflections students have engaged in during the implementation of the cycle of tasks developed for this study is seen as a key part of this analysis that attempts to investigate students' critical literacy and language development. Hence, instances taken from the task cycle implementation will be further described and scrutinized in light of the theoretical background informing this study. More specifically, this

section will focus on three main sources of data combined: 1) students' written responses in some of the tasks they engaged in during the cycle of tasks implementation, 2) transcribed instances of classroom discussions, mostly derived from teacher initiation and 3) reflections that I engaged in as a teacher/ researcher (which were documented through my notes that were written after each class). Considering these three sources, some moments[73] were selected and will be here further explored, since they represent significant occurrences of students engaging in critical literacy.

6.1.1. Reflection after Task 1

The first moment that was chosen to be analyzed considers students' answers produced during Task 1 – *Brainstorming Game* and teacher-students discussions during and after task correction. The aim of this task was to prepare students to reflect on how gender is usually associated with identity, sometimes in a stereotypical way. Therefore, students were asked to answer questions about their habits, opinions and tastes and a score was kept considering how many boys and how many girls have answered each question affirmatively or negatively. Once students were done playing the game, the final score table was written on the board and I initiated a discussion. Table 19 presents the results of students' responses.

Table 19
Score table Brainstorming Game - Task 1

	Yes	No
Watch soccer games sometimes	5 girls 3 boys	3 girls 3 boys
Have pink as their favorite color	2 girls 0 boys	6 girls 6 boys
Are good at math	3 girls 0 boys	5 girls 6 boys

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[73] The audio transcriptions of each moment here discussed is provided in Appendix 21

Like to dance	8 girls	0 girls
	5 boys	1 boy
Are afraid of spiders	5 girls	3 girls
	2 boys	4 boys
Like to skateboard	5 girls	3 girls
	4 boys	2 boys
Gossip sometimes	8 girls	3 girls
	6 boys	2 boys
Fix their hair before school	6 girls	2 girls
	4 boys	2 boys
Cry sometimes	7 girls	1 girl
	6 boys	0 boys
Swear sometimes	7 girls	1 girl
	6 boys	0 boys

In order to start the discussion, for each question, I asked the students "*how many girls answered 'yes'? And how many boys? How about 'no'?*". I then inquired them if they were surprised by any of those answers. None of them said they were. All students answered 'no' to the four questions in activity 1 (see appendix 16), which indicated they all agreed opinions, fears, tastes, habits and sport abilities are not necessarily based on gender. During the review of the last letter, though, the class engaged in a short debate.

After we checked letter 'd', Carlos (participant 2) said that although he understood sport abilities are not a result of our gender, he knew that boys know about soccer more than girls do[74]. Some of the girls seemed to be really offended by that and replied that was not true. I then inquired him about why he had such an opinion. Carlos replied he knew that based on his own life and based on his friends' experiences[75]. I asked the whole class if they could tell me why, usually, boys seemed to know more

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[74] Original: "a gente sabe muito mais sobre futebol do que as meninas"

[75] Original: "da vida, ué. Todo mundo que eu conheço é assim".

about soccer than girls. Many answers were given but most girls complained that adults in their lives usually do not talk about soccer with them, only with boys. Flash (participant 4), for instance, said: "*os meninos aprendem sobre futebol desde cedo, teacher. As meninas nem sempre*"[76]. This part of the discussion was important because not only the girls in the classroom decided to step up and empower themselves in a reaction to a stereotypical comment, but mostly because during our discussion, the students engaged in a critical reflection about how, depending on our context, the way we are brought up, where we were born, among other elements, we may (or not) be exposed to different aspects of the culture. Therefore, aspects we usually connect to gender are mostly influenced by other parts of our lives instead. Pavlenko (2004) points out that "what is important in critical feminist pedagogies is the types of issues raised and the types of engagement offered in the classroom" (p. 63). The author explains that "the multiple forms of engagement should aim at offering a safe place in which students could learn to recognize and acknowledge existing gender discourses and explore alternative discourses, identities, and futures" (p. 63).

Here, I want to call attention to Thalita's reaction to Carlos' comment. Thalita (participant 11) plays soccer constantly with friends and, after Carlos' observation, she was one of the girls who felt bothered by it. She said she knew as much about soccer as Carlos did. Thalita was usually a very quiet student who seemed to feel really shy to participate, especially if the activity required them to speak English. Even so, during this discussion, she voluntarily spoke up, which may show how strong she felt about Carlos' remark. She said: "*Nada a ver! Você me conhece e eu sei tanto de futebol quanto você. Só porque você não sabe disso não quer dizer que não existe. Isso é*

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[76] Translation: "boys learn about soccer early on in their lives. That is usually not the case for girls"

preconceito" [77]. By raising her voice and questioning Carlos' point of view, Thalita not only empowered herself as a girl who plays soccer and knows about it, but she also challenged a very common discourse related to women and sports, aiming at problematizing such representation. After she spoke, all girls clapped and she seemed to be really proud of herself.

Crookes (2003) highlights the power of dialogue in critical classrooms as a tool for students to name the world in such a way that others (classmates, teacher, etc.) may review their own perspectives of the reality, initiating possible changes and transformations. Thalita's commitment in the discussion after Carlos' statement and the impact of her self-assurance in front of the whole class can be seen as an example of students engaging in dialogue towards critical awareness. It seems, therefore, that Task 1 played an important role in engaging students in critical reflection concerning gender representation as a first step towards critical literacy development. As McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2004b) explain, problematizing and asking questions about common sense views in the classroom may give learners a chance to acknowledge and better understand the complexity of a situation and, therefore, be better equipped to change it.

6.1.2. Reflection after Task 2

The second moment that will be described here corresponds to the discussions that learners and the teacher engaged in about possible purposes advertisement videos may have and the strategies they may make use of in order to achieve those purposes. The discussion happened during the moment Task 2 was being reviewed. After watching the video (the ad for *Always* company) and completing activity 1, I started to check it, eliciting students' responses. All students agreed the video

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[77] Translation: "That is not true. You know me and I know as much about soccer as you do. Just because you are not aware of that, it doesn't mean it isn't real. That is prejudice".

corresponded to an ad that could be found either on TV or on the internet. In relation to the possible intended audience of the video, five students responded the video was probably made for the female audience since it is trying to sell a product normally used by women. The other nine students responded the video was made for all ages and types of people since its message should be heard by everyone and since you can find the video in many different places where various people would be exposed to it. For letter 'e', all students agreed the message was related to gender equality. As an example, Thalita explained "*todas as meninas podem fazer o que quiserem, não é apenas os garotos. Por exemplo: futsal, meninas também podem praticar*"[78].

Considering students' answers for the first five questions, I asked them what would be some possible purposes of this video, that is, possible reasons why the producers decided to make this ad the way they did. All students mentioned the main purpose of the video was to ensure gender equality through its message. For instance, Lauren (participant 10) said the purpose of the video was "*mostrar ao público que as mulheres não são pessoas inferiores na sociedade*"[79].

Only two students, Leandra (participant 8) and Ronaldo (participant 12), mentioned that a second purpose of the video could be to sell the product advertised by the brand *Always*. Considering their answers, I asked the two students to explain their point of view to the class. Ronaldo said that selling the product had to be a purpose since it is a commercial and that is what commercials are for[80]. Leandra pointed the name of the brand that appears in the video which made it clear for her that the producers

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[78] Translation: "all girls can do what they want, not only boys. For instance: soccer, girls can also play it"

[79] Translation: "to show the audience women are not inferior in society"

[80] Original: "é meio obvio, você não acha? Um comercial tem o propósito de vender alguma coisa".

want us to think of the brand too, not only the message[81]. I then asked the students why, in their opinion, a company such as *P&G* would include such a message in their advertisement, instead of including girls making use of the product as we normally see in commercials for menstrual pads. Flash (participant 4) said that it is probably because they want girls and women to like the company. I asked her to elaborate on her answer. She said "*quando eu gosto de um comercial que eu achei bem legal ou engraçado, eu depois vou lá e compro a coisa que eles tão vendendo*"[82]. The class agreed with Flash. She then made a joke about how usually menstrual pad commercials are unreal since they show girls feeling "*happy*" during their menstrual period. Using Flash's appointment, we then engaged in a discussion about the strategies an advertisement company may use to gain audience's attention, aiming at selling more products.

I used Flash's comment as an example to discuss how normally the girls and women's voices are excluded from pad commercials that hardly tackle their real feelings, needs and issues during their period. McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2004b) state that a common follow-up response to questions such as "whose voice is missing in this text?" or "what does the author want the reader to think?" is for students to start telling stories about how they are not like the character in the story. Although none of the girls shared stories about their periods, Flash's observations indicate she does not feel represented in most pad commercials.

Finally, another interesting aspect of this discussion was my observation of boys' reactions during the debate. After this class, I wrote in my diary *it was interesting to see how boys did not say anything after Flash made her comment. They were very attentive though, I wonder why.* It is my belief that one possible

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[81] Original: "porque o autor quer divulgar a marca Always. Tá lá no fim do vídeo"

[82] Translation: "when I like a commercial I buy the product".

reason for boys not to say anything at this time could be related to their lack of knowledge on the topic. Because menstruation and women's sexuality is not discussed in Brazilian media and, one may dare to guess, even in households and classrooms, specially with boys, they do not get the chance to understand how their friends, mothers, girlfriends, etc. may feel and act during this phase. Pavlenko (2004) explains how a feminist poststructuralist perspective calls into question "the privilege given to talk versus silence and to the public use of language versus private reflection" (p. 55), raising attention to how certain experiences shared by females are silenced and not explored publicly, from various perspectives. By discussing the hidden purposes of commercials and reflecting on the missing voices in them, students had a chance to "challenge the text" (McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004b) and problematize the common portrayals of a topic that is part of the female world, but seen as a taboo no one is supposed to talk about it. The implementation of task 2, therefore, serves the purpose of continuing engaging students in the process of reflecting critically about the input.

6.1.3. Reflection after Task 3

The completion of a summary table as the final activity for Task 3 is the third moment here chosen to be described and analyzed. After engaging in reading texts that talked about projects in which girls and women challenged stereotypes, students and I initiated the review of their answers on the board. As one group gave answers corresponding to their reading of one text (students were divided into three groups and each group read a different text), the other groups filled in the information on the table in relation to their understanding of their classmates' responses. After they were all finished and the three texts had been corrected, we focused on the table completion, which summarized information about the three texts students read in Task 3. A sample of the complete table is provided in Appendix 14.

I then asked students to tell me some characteristics of the genre News, based on the three examples they had read. Their answers included: authorship, informing about a fact, the date when the article was published, use of images to illustrate the article. We briefly discussed how the journalist's point of view has to be considered when we read a text and how information can be included and/or excluded from a piece of news, depending on the interests of the author. McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2004b) explain that all texts are biased to some degree and "it is the job of the reader to understand the bias and decide how to balance it with their own knowledge" (p. 120).

Afterwards, I then asked students to focus their attention on the title of each text. Together, we identified the subject of each sentence and the main verb. Focusing on text 2, whose title is 'Two high school girls created a game that literally breaks down stereotypes', I asked students if there were any other ways for the same sentence to be rewritten. Denis (participant 3) suggested inverting the sentence and starting with 'a game'. He did not know how to finish the sentence since they have not studied passive voice yet. Because no one else in the class knew how to finish the sentence, I rewrote it myself, following Denis' suggestion, as 'A game that literally breaks down stereotypes was created by two high school girls'. I then asked the class what difference this choice makes when we, as readers, read the title of a piece of news. Lauren (participant 10) answered "*assim fica mais forte o game, chama mais atenção*"[83]. Ronaldo said whatever comes first is normally the most important information[84]. I agreed with him and then asked "*who decides what is important?*". He said "*não sei se está certo mas acho que é aqueles que mandam no jornal*"[85].

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[83] Translation: "the modified sentence puts more emphasis on the game part, it calls attention to it"

[84] Original: "é porque vem antes. Dai é mais importante"

[85] Translation: "Those who run the newspaper"

Behrman (2006) defends that one of the aims of critical literacy is "to have students examine the power relationships inherent in language use, recognize that language is not neutral, and confront their own values in the production and reception of language (p. 480). The use of the verb "*mandar*" by Ronaldo shows how he recognizes the power relations in a newspaper and how that determines what and how information will be printed. When he claims the ones who run newspapers get to decide what information is or is not important (or more important than others), he points out that the decisions are made by whoever owns the power. At this point, I reminded them about our previous discussion on information that is included or excluded, depending on the interests of the authors or, as Ronaldo said, the interests of the people responsible for the newspaper. I also called their attention to how empowering the titles of text 2 and 3 can be, if we focus on the fact the girls in both stories become the actors, the subjects, or the most important information, as Ronaldo had put. We agreed that these decisions are not made by chance and that we should always think about them when reading a text. I then asked them to help me rewrite the title in text 1, considering we wanted to empower the women who made use of the hashtag for the story. McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2004b) suggest that one way to critically evaluate author bias when reading an informational text is to "examine the alternative perspectives" (p. 120) and even rewrite ourselves different versions of it. As the authors indicate, when students perceive the text from different viewpoints, "they disrupt the commonplace routine of reading and responding or reading and replicating the same information" (p. 135) and start seeing the text from a more critical perspective.

Pessoa and Urzêda-Freitas (2012) state that "through the use of words and sentences, it is possible to problematize and subvert hegemonic ideologies and practices" (p. 757). Being aware of how powerful linguistic choices are when it comes to discourse,

therefore, empowers learners to unveil hidden messages that come with words and texts. Additionally, it aids learners to position themselves in relation to these choices, transforming their own discourse towards their agendas. As the authors put, "when people read, write or speak, they are taking part in a social discourse through their identities of class, race, gender, sexuality, age, and other factors" (Pessoa & Freitas, 2012, p. 757). Santos and Fabricio (2006) explain how powerful critical literacy can be in defamiliarizing naturalized views of social identities. The authors emphasize that "it is through language that deconstruction can be accomplished" (Santos & Fabricio, 2006, p. 16).

Another important result of Task 3 has to do with the myth that in order to engage students in critical literacy discussions, they need to be fully proficient in the language being used. Lau (2012) points out that "the assumption that the development of CL [critical literacy] skills can be postponed until students have achieved higher levels of language proficiency reflects a belief that literacy is a purely psychological or developmental phenomenon" (p. 329). Students' engagement in Task 3 shows that complex content can be explored in the foreign language classrooms even with beginner learners. In the case of the participants of this study, by making use of reading strategies, translation tools (dictionaries) and the help of their peers, students were able to comprehend the gist of the texts and answer the activities as expected. During the discussion, students made use of Portuguese to communicate most of their ideas. English was used when they already knew some of the words or when they wanted to refer to specific words that were part of the text.

In talking about multilingual contexts, Canagarajah and Wurr (2011) warn us that "the way we have been studying language is heavily influenced by monolingual orientations that are not relevant to any communicative situation anywhere" (p. 9). According to the author, language should be seen from a more holistic perspective in which competence is perceived "as an

adaptive response of finding equilibrium between one's resources and the factors in the context (participants, objectives, situational details), rather than a cognitive mastery of rational control"; cognition, in turn, should be seen "as working in context, in situ, distributed across diverse participants and social actors"; and proficiency should be understood "as not applying mental rules to situations, but aligning one's resources to situational demands, and shaping the environment to match the language resources one brings" (Canagarajah & Wurr, 2011, p. 11).

Task 3, therefore, seems to have functioned as an important step towards critical literacy development. Students were exposed to long and authentic texts and presented with alternative forms of gender representation so they were given the chance to read and analyze this input critically, even though they are considered beginner learners. By making use of reading strategies and by using their mother tongue as an aid that served for different purposes whenever necessary, students were able to understand the texts both in terms of its core message (a more traditional understanding of literacy) and in terms of its hidden purposes and bias (a more critical understanding of literacy). The final part of Task 3, when students were asked to summarize the three texts into a table, also served as a moment of reflection and problematization, when students were encouraged to rewrite the title of the texts, making use of critical literacy strategies to create alternative versions of the input, developing awareness of hidden meanings and intentions behind authorship.

6.1.4. Reflection after Task 4

The importance of critical dialogue when it comes to engaging students in critical literacy can be seen in Task 4. After working on the activities that explored movie trailers that told the story of Lizzie Velasquez and Malala Yousafzai, students worked on activity 7, which discussed a speech given by Chimamanda Adiche about

the dangers of knowing only one version of a story and not considering multiple perspectives. In her speech, Chimamanda talks about how she was used to reading only British and American books when she was younger and how she used to reproduce them in her own writings. However, when she started reading Nigerian books, she realized her own context and experiences could also be told and she started writing about them.

One of the aims of this task was for students to reflect on their own reality, making connections to Chimamanda's speech. Therefore, during the review of this activity, one question students had to answer was about the books they usually read and if they are used to reading Brazilian authors. I wanted them to reflect about their choices not only in terms of taste or preferences but also thinking about what "single stories" we are normally exposed to when it comes to our culture. Only two students reported they sometimes read Brazilian authors. All the others said they do not. Reasons for that were because they prefer reading other genres such as mangás, fanfics or cartoons (three students), they do not find them interesting (three students), they prefer foreign authors (one student), they want to learn about other cultures (one student), they do not believe Brazilian stories are good (one student). Flash even pointed out she hates Brazilian books. Using Flash's comment, we discussed about single stories about the Brazilian culture and how it is usually portrayed as having poor quality, and not bring interesting. Siding with Shor (1992), Crookes (2013) states that, "because various important issues or perspectives are underrepresented in mainstream syllabuses or the media, 'it is the critical teacher's special responsibility to present them'" (p. 180). Shor explains, however, that students may accept or reject discussing a topic, exercising their agency and personal positions. Benesch (1999) elucidates that "teaching critical thinking is neither an unguided free-for-all nor a didactic lecture but a balance between extended student contributions and gentle challenges by the teacher" (p. 578).

To continue the discussion, I then asked the students if they were to tell stories, what stories they would tell. Some said they would tell their own story. Others mentioned they would tell their friends and family's stories. Flash said she would like to tell the story of the community she lives at. When I asked her why, she said it is because people usually know it as a poor and dangerous community and she believes it is much more than that[86]. McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2004b) clarify that identity formation is a social process that is influenced by our everyday experiences, the conversations we have with others, what we read, etc. The authors highlight that, as critical readers, it is our task to uncover the stereotyping roles we are exposed to so we do not "passively accept those stereotypes for ourselves or others" (p. 90). After Flash's comment, Leandra attempted to agree with her classmate and said her mom works in a school in the same neighborhood and people there *are in fact nice*[87]. It is interesting to observe the use of the "in fact", by Leandra, as if people being nice in that place needed to be proven and her mom's testimonial does so.

Shin and Crookes (2005) advocate for critical dialogue in classrooms where "the life experiences of students are emphasized, through which the students begin to recognize each other as sources of knowledge" (p. 115) and start reevaluating their own thinking about their realities, which may result in agency towards transformation. Although Flash did not respond to Leandra's comment neither seemed to see it with a negative connotation, the fact Flash felt the need to act upon transforming the discourse about her neighborhood and Leandra attempted to agree with her and reevaluated her own perception of that place emphasizes the complex results of critical dialogue in the classroom as an

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[86] Original: "porque todo mundo pensa que lá é tudo pobre e criminoso. É um preconceito só. E eu iria falar de tudo de bom que tem lá também".

[87] Original: "as pessoas são mesmo muito legais"

emancipatory strategy. As Lankshear and McLaren (1993) advise, "learning should always be linked as closely and directly as possible to the lived experience and immediate reality of learners. Praxis, after all, implies transformative action on the learners' world" (p. 46).

Before the class was finished, I told them we would be telling stories about our school community as a final project for this unit and they seemed curious and excited about it. Also, on the last day of the task cycle, I raffled two books among the students as an attempt to encourage them to read and be familiar with Brazilian authors who tell local stories. The books had been written by a local Brazilian author who discusses issues related to the teen ages such as fat-shaming, self-esteem and relationships. Task 4, therefore, was an opportunity for students to examine their own realities and perceptions of it, attempting to unveil stereotypical representations of this reality and, maybe, act upon them so as to change them.

6.1.5. Reflections after Task 5

The final moment I would like to discuss here refers to the last activity, when after posting their stories in the page Humans of CA, students were invited to visit the page, read their classmates' stories and comment on them, explaining why they liked it. After doing so, we engaged in a discussion about the cycle as a whole and, more specifically, about Task 5. Mclaughlin and DeVoogd (2004b) talk about the importance of reflecting on the task after it is finished so that students will have a chance to strengthen their understanding of the critical literacy strategies learnt and the teacher will have an opportunity to evaluate her/his own decisions in class.

In order to engage in the reflection and evaluation of the task cycle, students answered Task 7 in paper, in which they had to summarize two stories told by classmates and decide if the stories were examples of empowerment narratives. When talking to the whole class, we discussed why sharing those stories is (or not) a good

idea. Ironman (participant 1) said she believes sharing them is a way for people to get to know stories and think about them[88]. Lauren mentioned she feels it is really important to talk to people about homophobia because there is still much prejudice against homosexuals [89] (Lauren was also interviewed by a classmate and, while telling her story, she talked about prejudice she had suffered for being a homosexual). Tinho (participant 13) mentioned he felt represented in one of the stories told in the page as people also pick on him because of his longer hair[90].

Shin and Crookes (2005) stress the impacts of critical dialogue in students by saying that "through the awareness of the link between their life issues and the macro sociopolitical, cultural context, they learn to make decisions in and outside the classroom and can eventually take actions outside the classrooms" (pp. 114-115). By exploring their own reality and investigating stories in their own school community, students had the chance to learn about different experiences and express multiple voices, contributing to transform stereotypical representations of gender. They were also empowered to celebrate their own identities and embrace their own versions of gender stories. Giroux (1987) identifies two main roles of a critical literacy approach: a narrative for agency as well as a referent for critique. According to the author,

> As a narrative for agency,
> literacy (…) means developing
> the theoretical and practical

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[88] Original: "porque assim as pessoas ficam sabendo e dai elas refletem sobre esse assunto pra vida delas".

[89] Original: "e também porque é bem necessário. Ainda tem muito preconceito e homofobia. É meio que uma forma de evitar".

[90] Original: "e representar. Eu gostei, por exemplo, da história do Guilherme porque eu também tenho cabelo comprido".

conditions through which human beings can locate themselves in their own histories and in doing so make themselves present as agents in the struggle to expand the possibilities of human life and freedom (…) to be literate is not to be free, it is to be present and active in the struggle for reclaiming one's voice, history, and future. (…) As a referent for critique, literacy provides an essential precondition for organizing and understanding the socially constructed nature of subjectivity and experience and for assessing how knowledge, power, and social practice can be collectively forged in the service of making decisions instrumental to a democratic society rather than merely consenting to the wishes of the rich and the powerful (pp. 10-11)

As a final discussion, I asked students about broader actions they could take to promote social justice towards gender equality. They mentioned both small actions, such as avoid making stereotypical jokes and talking to their friends when they do so, as well as bigger actions, such as taking part in social movements, discussion groups, and require the government to do its part. As Giroux (1993) highlights, "educating for difference, democracy, and ethical responsibility is not about creating passive citizens. It is about providing students with the knowledge, capacities, and opportunities to be noisy, irreverent and vibrant" (p. 374). I proudly

believe my students are on the way to be so.

It is my belief, therefore, that the cycle of tasks implemented in this classroom offered students opportunities to engage in critical literacy, empowering them through discourse and text analysis as a means for promoting transformation in gender representation. After all, being meaning-centered and learner-centered, tasks themselves may open room for tackling various issues that are part of students' lives.

Considering that, as posed by Lankshear and McLaren (1993), "one becomes a critical thinker in the *act* of practicing critical thought" (p. 42), it seems that the task cycle created possibilities for developing students' critical consciousness towards their own identity and other's and hopefully towards social change. In this sense, elements within classroom dynamics seemed to reflect critical literacy development taking place such as: a) students' engagement in critical reading of media texts (news, advertisements, movie trailers), which in turn resulted in critical reflections about authorship, ideologies, writing purposes, among others); b) students' commitment to critical writing and rewriting, which offered them the possibility to give alternative meanings to presented ideas and ideologies while also 're-writing' representations of their own reality and their own communities (inside and outside the school); and finally, students' active participation on critical dialogue, which resulted in moments of reflection among peers that may have contributed to critical awareness of their own context and their classmates' contexts.

One must recognize, however, that a cycle of tasks per se does not trigger critical consciousness alone. As Ellis (2003) highlights, task-as-a-process does not always match task-as-a-workplan and when it comes to critical reflection, much of what takes place in a classroom happens spontaneously and depends not only on students themselves but also very much on the critical teacher. In this sense, it is the critical teacher's job to

create a friendly space in the classroom that welcomes diverse perspectives, and that lowers students' affective filter making them feel like they can trust that environment to be heard and seen. A space in which students are respected and learn to respect their peers, in which critical dialogue takes place freely and in which there is room for everyone to learn and to teach. Moreover, it is also the critical teacher's job to be concerned with issues that may permeate students' immediate and global reality, providing moments for raising awareness on such issues. In this sense, the critical teacher becomes a mediator who provides students with enough support, both emotionally and linguistically, in order to understand, critically analyze, and act upon their context.

The following section looks at participants' performance before and after the cycle of tasks, as a way to continue the investigation of students' critical literacy development.

6.2. ELEMENTS THAT SIGNAL CRITICAL LITERACY DEVELOPMENT CONSIDERING PARTICIPANTS' PERFORMANCE IN TERMS OF PRESENTING A CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE: AN ANALYSIS OF THE SCORES IN PRE-TEST 2 AND POST-TEST 2

In order to understand aspects that permeate students' critical literacy development, this section attempts to investigate students' written productions considering the results achieved in the pre and post-test 2. For these two tests, participants were asked to write a narrative.

For the pre-test 2, they wrote a text based on an episode they watched with the objective of retelling the story they had been exposed to. Moreover, as a follow up activity for pre-test 2, participants were asked to detail the strategies they used to write the text as well as their main concerns during task completion. After that, they answered four questions that attempted to unveil

information about their comprehension of the episode and possible critical reactions towards gender representation in it.

For post-test 2, students wrote a story based on an interview they had carried out previously with a member of their school community. By making use of an outline provided by the teacher, they wrote narratives that were later posted in a page called Humans of CA. Both narratives were then evaluated by raters who answered, using a likert scale that goes from 0 to 5, where 0 corresponds to strongly disagree and 5 corresponds to strongly agree, the following question: "the story told by the student discusses issues of gender representation from a critical perspective?". Additionally, raters explained their choice in a follow up question. After checking for interrater reliability, a final score was given to each student by adding raters' responses and dividing the result by three. Therefore, students' productions as well as raters' responses were considered in this analysis, both quantitatively and qualitatively.

In this section, therefore, the objective is to report results from the analysis of the aforementioned tests, attempting to investigate possible changes and/or progress in students' productions looking for instances of critical perspectives towards gender representation. This is justified since, as Christensen (1999) explains, "critical literacy creates spaces for students to tackle larger social issues that have urgent meaning in their lives" (p. 220). By reflecting upon gender representations in a popular cartoon episode and by telling stories of people they met, in this sense, students have the chance to challenge biased representations they have been exposed to, becoming social agents in shaping how gender is portrayed in their world.

The following paragraphs, hence, present the findings from the statistical analysis used to compare students' critical perspectives considering pre and post-test 2 scores. It is important to clarify beforehand, however, that the results here presented do not suggest

students did not have a critical perspective before the cycle of tasks was implemented, because, as Freire (1970) explains, critical consciousness is not something you either "have" or "not". On the contrary, the statistical results further described simply show there is a difference in students' productions when it comes to expressing critical perspectives concerning gender representation through texts. The difference then reflects the expectations of each task, as it is going to be explained later in this chapter.

The descriptive statistics, presented in table 20, show the minimum and maximum scores, the mean score for each of the tests, as well as their standard deviation and the standard error.

Table 20
Descriptive Statistics: Means, Minimum, Maximum, Standard Deviation and Standard Error – Critical Perspective

Statistic	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	SD	SE
Pre-test 2	14.93	14	25	2.94	.78
Post-test 2	44.57	27	50	7.00	1.87

As it can be seen, students' productions presented a more critical perspective towards gender representation in post-test 2, with a mean of 44.57 if compared to their productions in the pre-test 2, with a mean of 14.93. The minimum score in pre-test 2 is very close to the mean score in this test, which shows that most students had a similar low score when pre assessed, that is, did not present a very critical perspective when telling their story in their pre-test 2. Another significant aspect revealed in the descriptive statistics is that the standard deviation of post-test 2 is much higher (SD = 7.00) when compared to the one in pre-test 2 (SD = 2.94), which indicates a larger variance in post-test 2.

Because the normality assumption was not met, since the great majority of students had a similar score in their pre-test 2, a Wilcoxon t-test was used as a non-parametric alternative to compare means of both pre and post conditions. The results for the repeated measures t-test indicate a statistically significant difference between the two productions ($p < .001$, $z = -3.03$). The following graph illustrates students' individual performance in both pre and post tests 2.

Graph 7
Pre-test 2 and Post-test 2 Scores of Each Participant as Regards Critical Perspective
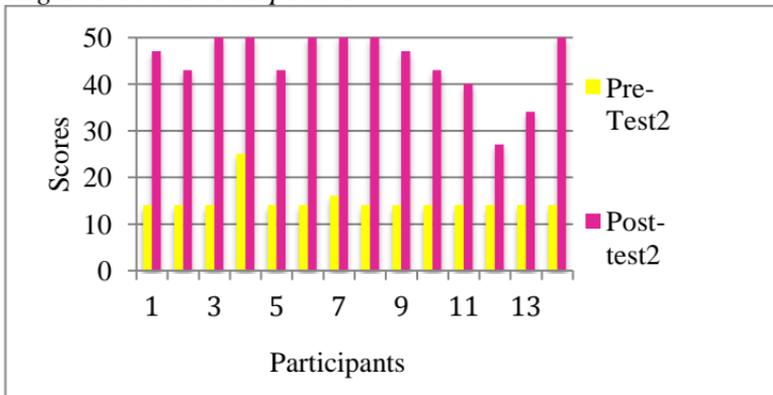
Based on graph 7, it becomes clear that the great majority of students (12 participants) got the lowest score (14) in the pre-test 2, whereas participant 4 achieved the highest score in her pre-test 2 (25) and participant 7, the score of 16. For the post-test 2, on the other hand, six students achieved the maximum score (50). The scores of the other six students fluctuated between 40 and 50. Only two students, participants 12 and 13, had a score lower than 40. A more detailed discussion of students' productions in each test is presented below.

6.2.1. Discussion of pre-test 2 results
In pre-test 2, students were asked to retell a story based on an episode they watched in the cartoon series

Tom and Jerry. In the episode, Tom is in love with a female cat and competes for her attention against a richer cat. Tom seems to believe that the best way to woo the female cat is to give her gifts. However, while Tom spends all his money to buy her these gifts, the richer cat is able to offer her much more expensive presents and, by doing so, he is chosen by her to be her boyfriend. The episode, therefore, reproduces stereotypical gender representations reinforcing the idea that women's (or female's) love can be bought with gifts and women always choose the men who are wealthier.

Raters' evaluations indicate that students did not show a very critical perspective in their production for pre-test 2. When talking about Ironman's (participant 1) text, for instance, rater 1 says "*P1 retells the story without making any judgments*". Rater 2 seems to agree when she states that, in Ironman's story, she doesn't "*see any critical point being made. It is solely a summary*". A similar opinion is given by rater 3 who says that "*the student does not demonstrate any critical perspective in the* text".

Akin reasons are given by the raters to explain the low score given to the other participants. In Flash's (participant 4) case, the one who had the highest score, however, rater 2 explains that for her, "*there is a critical point being made when the writer mentions that the female cat does not acknowledge Tom's efforts, all she cares about is the other cat's richness*". The rater explains that even though "*the writer does not develop this idea in the text, there is definitely room for questioning here*". Rater 3 seems to share a similar perception since, according to her, "*the student calls attention to the female attitude but does not position him/herself towards that*". Rater 1, on the other hand, did not perceive the same characteristics in Flash's text, as she puts "*the story is descriptive of the cats and we only know one is a female because P4 uses 'she'*". It seems clear, therefore, that raters agree students did not present a critical perspective towards gender representation in their pre-test 2. Even

considering the student who scored the highest grade, raters acknowledge that she could have positioned herself more clearly in order to present a stronger critical perspective towards gender representation in the episode.

It is important to emphasize, however, that, in this task, students were not expected to be critical, that is, they were not instructed to do so. Therefore, the almost lack of critical perspectives in their texts produced for pre-test 2 may be due to the fact that they were probably focused on what the task itself required: retelling the story. Moreover, students' basic knowledge of English could have hampered them in communicating some more complex ideas. They may have avoided including too many details or information, focusing mostly on sending the intended message. In fact, when asked about what strategies they used in order to make their choices in telling the story in pre-test 2, all students mentioned they focused in language issues, as well as, genre issues[91].

The pre and post-test 2 comparison, therefore, seems to reveal students did not question the stereotypical gender representations presented in the episode. On the other hand, another opportunity was given to the students to reflect critically about the episode. After having written their texts for pre-test 2, students answered four questions about the episode. The first two were comprehension questions. Question 'a' inquired them about who were the characters in the story while question 'b' asked them about the relationship between those characters. The main goal of these two questions was to check whether students had understood the core of the story since a misunderstanding could have hampered their performance in retelling the episode. For question 'a', thirteen students were able to identify the main characters of the story (Tom, Jerry, the female cat and Tom's rival). Isa (participant 6) was the only one who just mentioned Tom and Jerry as main characters. For question 'b', thirteen

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[91] A more detailed analysis of participants' strategies to write their pre-test 2 was given in chapter 5.

students were able to indicate the friendship relationship between Tom and Jerry and the love triangle among Tom, the female cat and Tom's rival. Only Carlos (participant 2) seemed to have a different understanding of the question, since his answer to letter 'b' was "*bad, between rich and poor*"[92]. What he seems to be saying is that the relationship between the characters was not a good one. He also indicates that he is aware of the uneven (and therefore, negative, as he puts) relationship rich and poor people may have, which is somehow portrayed in the episode. Over all, therefore, participants seemed to have understood the episode's core idea.

Then, question 'c' asked students about their perceptions on the characterization of the male and female characters. The question aimed at checking whether students could identify stereotypes in the representation of the male and female characters. Most students (9 participants) identified physical traits that are normally associated with females and males. Carlos (participant 2), for instance, said that "*A feminina é arrumada, rica, bonita. Um personagem masculino é bonito e o outro é feio*" [93]. Some students (8 participants) mentioned accessories that are normally worn by women and/or men. Ironman (participant 1), for instance, explains that "*A personagem feminina usa laços e joias e os gatos não*"[94]. Four students mentioned, as features of the characters, the way males and females relate. Isis (participant 6), for instance, states that "*Os masculinos brigam muito.*"[95] and Panda (participant 7) mentions "*Pela maneira como andam, se vestem e se relacionam*"[96]. Clearly, then, most

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[92] Original: "Mal, entre rico e pobre".

[93] Translation: "the female cat is neat, rich and beautiful. One of the male cats is handsome whereas the other is ugly".

[94] Translation: "the female character wears a bow and jewelry and the male cats don't"

[95] Translation: "the male cats fight a lot"

[96] Translation: "the way they walk, dress and relate to each other"

students went as far as identifying aspects about the characters that are usually connected to gender. Still, no critical reaction was expressed towards these aspects.

It is interesting to notice, however, that three students made use adjectives and/or expressions that indicate they have engaged in a critical reflection about the representations of the characters in the story. Isis (participant 6) said that "*os masculinos são muito machistas.*"[97]. Maria (participant 9) stated that the female cat is portrayed as a gold digger[98]. Vicente (participant 14) said that even though beautiful women are attractive, "*Só os ricos ficam com elas.*"[99]. It seems, hence, that these three participants went a step further into their reflection, somehow expressing a deeper understanding of the episode and the characters representations.

Question 'd', finally, asked students "considering your experiences and the video, to what conclusions can one get about relationships?". Six students answered that, based on the episode, they could conclude that relationships are complicated and/or difficult, since they may not happen as one was expecting. That is the case of Isis (participant 6) who said "*relacionamentos são difíceis porque quem você gosta pode não gostar de você.*"[100]. Two students said relationships depend on the people and context, such as Leandra (participant 8) who stated that "*Neste vídeo, o relacionamento de um não dá certo mas o outro dá. Então, eu acho que depende de cada um.*"[101]. Additionally, participants 1 and 14 focused on friendship, stating that enemies can become friends[102] (participant 1)

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[97] Translation: "the male cats are really sexist"

[98] Original: "Ela está sendo interesseira".

[99] Translation: "only the rich gets to be with them".

[100] Translation: "Relationships are difficult because the one you like may not like you back".

[101] Translation: "in that video, one cat's relationship doesn't work out but the other cat's relationship does. So, I guess it depend on each person to make it work".

[102] Original: "Os inimigos podem ficar amigos".

and we should always listen to our friends[103] (participant 14). Carlos (participant 2), once again, pointed out that "*O rico sempre pode mais que o pobre.*"[104], which shows a critical perspective towards class struggles and power relations. Tinho (participant 13) made an interesting comment when he said the lazy guy never gets a girlfriend[105]. It is not clear, though, what he meant by "lazy guy" (*vagabundo*, in Portuguese) neither if he intended to indicate that the reason why the lazy guy does not have a girlfriend is related (or not) to money. Only two students mentioned gender in their conclusions. Flash (participant 4) said that the female cat is only interested in the rich cat[106] and Lauren (participant 10) stated that many times, the girl chooses the boy because of money, not because of love[107]. However, neither participant expressed critical comments about these conclusions.

Considering the scores given by raters as well as their comments on participants' performances in pre-test 2, and taking into account students' answers to the follow up questions of the pre-test 2, it is clear that only very few critical reflections towards gender representations were expressed in this first test. However, having in mind some students' answers that may indicate some level of critical awareness (not only related to gender, by the way), students may not have reacted critically to the episode due to the task itself.

McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2004a; 2004b) emphasize the role of the teacher in nurturing and encouraging students to engage in critical reading and writing in the classroom. The authors explain that if we want our students to choose to be actively engaged and to

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[103] Original: "Que devemos ouvir os amigos".
[104] Translation: "Richer people always have more advantage than poorer people"
[105] Original: "O vagabundo nunca consegue uma namorada"
[106] Original: A gata só se interessa pelo gato rico.
[107] Original: Que muitas vezes a garota escolhe o garoto pelo dinheiro e não pelo verdadeiro amor.

construct personal meaning to their reality that results from critical awareness of it, teachers need to be explicit about how to engage in the critical literacy processes. The authors state that before teaching lessons that implement critical literacy in their classes, the teachers should make use of instructional frameworks that teach critical literacy strategies to students, so then they can learn how to be autonomous in the process. The framework they propose is based on McLaughlin and Allen's (2002a, as cited in McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004a) "strategy instructional framework". According to it, the "process involves explaining, demonstrating, guiding, practicing and reflecting" (McLaughlin and DeVoogd, 2004, p. 38). Therefore, a direct and explicit instructional process is provided to students who learn critical literacy strategies through explanation and demonstration, and then, after applying the strategies through guided discussion conducted by the teacher, reflect about how these strategies may have helped them and what difference they might have made in their understanding of their own reality.

A possible conclusion we can get to here is related to the importance of encouraging and teaching students to engage in critical literacy, by asking explicit questions, guiding their reflections, offering them opportunities to practice and improve their criticality. In this sense, pre-test 2 does not do that and this may be one reason why students did not engage critically when writing their text. Another consideration we need to make has to do with the fact that, as McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2004b) explain, "we cannot just 'become' critically literate. It is a process that involves learning, understanding, and changing over time" (p. 33). In this sense, the cycle of tasks created for this study had as its aim to help students in learning critical literacy skills towards texts, developing critical consciousness of their reality and fostering transformation of it. Task 5, the post-test 2 activity, therefore, can be seen as a final task in this process of instruction, one in which students were given

the opportunity to, after reflecting about gender representations, power relations, stereotypes and so on throughout the unit, act towards transforming their world, by creating alternative portrayals of gender that open spaces to multiple voices and diverse experiences. A detailed discussion of post-test 2 results is presented as follows.

6.2.2. Discussion of post-test 2 results

In the post-test 2, students were asked to tell a story based on an interview. They were asked to interview someone that had overcome prejudice/stereotypes in their school, and/or fought for gender equality, and/or aimed at gender empowerment. In order to choose the story they were going to tell, they needed to have understood the discussions they had previously engaged in and reflected critically about these stereotypical representations that are commonly part of their world. After choosing their story, students wrote their text using an outline that focused on the structure of the genre narrative. Still, it was their choice of words, ideas, information that was used to tell their stories, which, therefore, embody their perspective on gender representation. The final version of their texts was analyzed by raters who, similar to the pre-test 2, decided if students' narratives had instances of critical perspectives towards gender representation. As the statistical results demonstrated, raters gave a high score to students' post text, since they agreed the texts seemed to indicate students had engaged in critical reflections and chosen to reproduce stories that offer alternative views on the theme.

For the six students who received the highest score (50) in their post-test 2, raters' observations indicate that the story itself was the most common reason for them to feel the student presented a critical perspective towards gender representation. Denis's (participant 3) text, for instance, discusses struggles boys may go through because of gender normativity that is usually imposed on them by society expectations. Rater 1 recognizes how

important this issue is and sees this as a motive for considering this story one that discusses issues of gender representation from a critical perspective: "*By being mocked because of his long hair, Guilherme was a victim of gender prejudice. Having long hair is seen by many people as a female's characteristic. So, for many people, men shouldn't have long hair and the ones who have long hair are bullied and discouraged to keep their hair. It can also be interpreted as misogyny (why can't men look like or do something usually women do?), which not only affects women, but also men themselves. Because of that and more, this story seems to discuss the issues of gender representation from a critical perspective*". Similar remarks are made by the raters about Isa's (participant 6) text, Panda's (participant 7) text and Vicente's (participant 14) text.

In case of Flash's (participant 4) narrative, however, rater 1 emphasizes not only the story itself but mostly her way of telling the story as a reason for considering this text one that tackles gender representation from a critical point of view. Rater 1 says "*the first line in this story together with the way the writer finished the story are already sufficient and explicit evidence to support the argument being defended here* [the story told by the student discusses issues of gender representation from a critical perspective]". In fact, Flash chose to tell her story in a very particular way, slightly diverging from the examples presented by the teacher in the activity outline. Instead of saying simply "This is the story of Roberta", Flash includes important information in her first sentence "*and many other girls around the world*". By pointing out the story she was about to tell is common to girls all over the world, Flash puts emphasis on gender issues and calls attention to the statement that gender issues are part of every girls' reality. Moreover, Flash chooses not to end her text with a quote from the interview, as the outline suggested. Instead, she includes a reflection of her own when she states "*I think that if all people don't care with stereotypes of society, the world*

will be better". By doing so, Flash is proposing an alternative for transformation. Her text, like the other students', offers a different perspective on gender portrayals, challenging the stereotypical representations we are normally exposed to. However, her text goes further by offering a choice to girls "all over the world": Flash calls for action, she claims for change, she suggests that others should ignore the stereotypes as much as possible and, like the character in her story, resist empowered by their true identity.

Leandra's (participant 8) text also starts and ends differently. When introducing her character, she makes clear that the narrative she was telling is only "*a part of the story of Mariah*", acknowledging the complexity of her character's story. In her conclusion, Leandra also includes a comment of her own after the quote from her interview. By saying "if that [prejudice] don't stop, the world can have a sad ending", Leandra is alerting us to the consequences of stereotypical representations of gender. That was not the reason why raters considered Leandra's text different from others though. Rater 2, more specifically, called attention to Leandra's discussion of gender and race, perceiving it as important when it comes to having a critical perspective. Rater 2 states "*gender and race. It seems the student is aware of those topics and has a critical view on them together*". hooks (2010) explains that the critique of race and racism brought by women of color to the feminist movement "altered the nature of feminist theory" (p. 174). Discussing the work of Kenway and Modra (1992, as cited in Crookes, 2013), Crookes explains that an essentialist conception of women, found in initial attempts to put the woman at the center of the feminist curriculum, has been challenged so then students' identities are not reduced to a particular structural factor. Leandra's choice of bringing both race and gender as important aspects of her character's story seems to suggest a deeper and intersectional critical understanding of gender representation.

Lauren's (participant 10) narrative also focuses on race and gender. Lauren tells the story of Emyllyn, a black girl who, when a child, "*wanted become one kid of blue eyes, blonde hair and white skin*". In her short text, Lauren describes Emyllyn's realization of her real beauty and acceptance of her physical traits as part of her identity and happiness, mostly focusing on her skin and hair. Even though Lauren did not receive the highest score (50) from the raters, her score was still pretty high (43) since, as explained by rater 1, Lauren's narrative "*not only discusses issues of gender representation by telling the story of a girl, but a black girl in a racist world*".

Of the two students who got the lowest scores, Ronaldo (participant 12) and Tinho (participant 13), Ronaldo's text seems not to explore gender issues clearly and/or explicitly. As rater 1 points out, one would have to infer a critical perspective in the text, based on the story being told. Indeed, Ronaldo does not successfully challenge the stereotypical representations that are normally associated to gender. His text tells the story of Wayne, a male student who likes cooking but never had to deal with prejudice because of that. What seems to be lacking in Ronaldo's narrative is acknowledging the fact that men may suffer prejudice because of their tastes, even though, luckily for his character, he did not. When answering the post questionnaire and interview after the cycle of tasks had been implemented, however, Ronaldo acknowledged his narrative did not challenge gender stereotypes and explained that it does not "*because it was not as hard as it was for the other characters*[108]". It seems, therefore, that Ronaldo is aware that going through gender struggles is not easy and that, even though this was not part of his character's reality, it is what many other people face. Even then, his text does not present this reflection explicitly.

Tinho's (participant 13) narrative was also not explicit when it comes to discussing gender

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[108] Original: Porque não foi tão difícil quanto pros outros

representation. Rater 1 understood that Tinho focused too much on his character's struggle because of her height and not on how this affected her experience as a girl (Tinho told the story of Gabi, a girl who suffered bullying for being short). For rater 2 and 3, however, the issue of appearance is part of a girl's struggle since women are commonly overwhelmed by expectations concerning the way they look. Still, raters agree that Tinho could have tackled these issues more explicitly in his narrative.

Overall, considering the statistical results derived from raters' analysis, students' texts produced in post-test 2 portray alternative representations of gender, promoting a less stereotypical view of it. Different from pre-test 2, when students were not encouraged and taught how to engage as critical viewers and writers, the cycle of tasks, which has as its main activity Task 5 (also used as the post-test 2), seems to have helped students to challenge stereotypical representations of gender in texts, since it offered them the possibility to create their own representations, focusing on their own reality (their school environment), aiming at transforming it. As Giroux (1993) explains

> "a politics of literacy and difference not only offers students the opportunity for raising questions about how the categories of race, class, and gender are shaped within the margins and center of power; it also provides a new way of reading history as a way of reclaiming power and identity" (p. 375)

Considering the results from the comparison between pre-test 2 and post-test 2 in terms of critical literacy and consciousness development, therefore, the implementation of the cycle of tasks seems to fulfill the twofold central roles of critical literacy: assisting students

in reading resistantly and writing critically, as they develop "insights into the ways in which ideologies, identities, and power relations work in society and the ways in which language works to entrench and challenge those relations" and as they "resist or challenge the status quo if they so choose" (Hammond & Macken-Horarik,1999, p. 529).

It is important to acknowledge, however, that students' critical consciousness is perceived here by analyzing their discourse only, that is, no further movement was made as a way to investigate if, in fact, students engaged with effective action and transformation of their reality. Even so, the results presented in this study are to be seen as a first step towards liberation, since this path may never be fully completed as we are always in progress.   In the following section, participants' perceptions are discussed, with the purpose of unveiling their perspective on their own learning.

6.3. SIGNS OF CRITICAL LITERACY DEVELOPMENT CONSIDERING PARTICIPANTS' PERCEPTIONS: AN ANALYSIS OF POST-TASK QUESTIONNAIRES AND POST-TASK INTERVIEWS

Participants' perceptions of their own development was also seen as an important source of data in order to understand the processes in which they engaged in while developing critical literacy skills. Therefore, learners answered as post-task questionnaire and participated in a post-task interview. Students' voices in each of them are provided and discussed as follows.

6.3.1. Analysis of Questionnaires

As previously stated, with the intention of understanding students' perceptions of their own learning in terms of language development and critical literacy

development, a questionnaire with nine questions[109] (four closed questions and five open questions) was administered after the cycle of tasks was finished. Out of these nine questions, four required students to reflect on their critical literacy development process. Bearing in mind participants' answers to these four questions, this section aims at examining students' perceptions in relation to their critical literacy development during the time this study was carried out (see Appendix 22). Once again, the analysis that resulted from the questionnaire answers was used as input for the analysis of the interviews that were later carried out.

Considering the development of critical literacy was directly connected to the theme chosen to be discussed in the task cycle, the first question asked students to reflect and decide if they believed to have learned anything related to gender representation during the lesson[110]. Students were given two options: a) "yes, I believe I learned something" and b) "no, I did not learn

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[109] The last question in the questionnaire asked students to talk about their favorite moments in class. However, except for one student, all the other participants mentioned class moments and/or activities that were not related to the data collection of this study. That is probably because this researcher had been their teacher for 2 years before the data collection happened and students, therefore, considered my classes as a whole, not only the data collection phase. The only student who mentioned the cycle of tasks was Maria, who said she liked to learn about Malala and her story. Because she mentioned that in the interviews and considering the other answers are not relevant to this study, this section will not describe and discuss the responses to this question.

[110] Original: "você acredita que aprendeu alguma coisa em relação à representatividade de gênero nessa unidade? (Consulte seu folder para refrescar sua memoria)".

anything about gender representation". Nine students chose letter 'a' and three students chose letter 'b'[111].

For the next question, participants were instructed to either give examples of what they learned, in case their answer to the previous question had been 'yes'; or to justify their choice, in case their answer to the previous question had been 'no'. Students' answers are here presented. Ironman (participant 1) explained that she learned about gender equality [112]. Similarly, Flash (participant 4) talked about life lessons about equality and adds she also learned new words on the topic that she did not know previously[113]. Denis (participant 3) and Batman (participant 5) mentioned the importance of respecting people for what they are. Denis made reference to the interview he carried out during the task cycle, in which the interviewee talked about bullying he suffered for being a boy with long hair. Denis said: "*Nós aprendemos a respeitar os outros por ter cabelo grande ou outras coisas*"[114]. Batman reflected on how people may be bullied because of their gender and how these people fight against stereotypes[115].

In a similar direction, Panda (participant 7) and Leandra (participant 8) talked about the normativity imposed by society. In Panda's perspective, she learned in class that society may force people to follow certain patterns but she believes people do not have to accept

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[111] Participants 6 and 14 were not present in class on the day the post-task questionnaire was administered. Therefore, only 12 students responded to the questionnaire.

[112] Original: "a igualdade de gêneros"

[113] Original: "palavras que eu não conhecia do assunto eu aprendi, além de levarmos tudo que falamos sobre igualdade para a vida"

[114] Translation: "we learned to respect the others for having long hair or something else"

[115] Original: "aprendi sobre os gêneros em relação ao bullying que algumas pessoas sofrem por ser menino(a) e sobre essas pessoas quebrarem estereótipos"

them[116]. For Leandra, everyone has the same rights and stereotypes do not contribute to that[117].

Maria (participant 9) and Thalita (participant 11) made personal connections to the topic. In Maria's case, she mentioned Chimamanda's and Malala's stories as narratives that taught her a lot[118]. Thalita went even deeper and discussed how she learned people are all the same and can have the right to do the same activities which, in her perspective, is related to her desire to play soccer that is not always possible because she is a girl[119].

Bearing in mind students' answers, it is possible to perceive the topic chosen opened room for them to feel more comfortable with their own identities, to reflect on other people's identities and construct perspectives on social justice and diversity awareness. During the task cycle, students were exposed to stories of people who normally do not fit the norms and who challenged social patterns in order to be seen for who they are.

The same seems to apply to students who stated they did not learn anything about gender representation during the task cycle. Carlos (participant 2) explained he did not believe to have learned anything because that was already the way he felt before[120]. Interestingly, Carlos was the one who, on day 2, made a comment about boys knowing more about soccer than girls, which generated a hot discussion among the students. Maybe, for Carlos, this was a moment to "redeem" himself. Later on the

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[116] Original: "nós aprendemos sobre como a sociedade impõe padrões e que nós não somos obrigados à segui-los"
[117] Original: "acredito porque pode "relembrar" que todos nós temos direitos iguais, que os estereótipos são ruins"
[118] Original: "aprendi muito com a história da Chimamanda, Malala"
[119] Original: "eu aprendi que somos todos iguais, não tem esse de só homem fazer uma coisa e mulher não. Exemplo: os meninos podem jogar futebol, já que eu sou menina não. Mas não é bem assim, todos nós podemos fazer o que quiser"
[120] Original: "porque eu já pensava assim que menina pode fazer coisa de menino e vice-versa"

interview, he explains he believes his words were misinterpreted. Lauren (participant 10) claimed she already knew about gender representation[121]. Later on her interviews, she explains she was aware of the discussions due to her family background. In fact, Lauren herself was interviewed by a classmate and talked about her own experience as a bisexual. For Tinho (participant 13), the classes were an opportunity to reinforce his knowledge about sexism[122]. In his perspective, he was already familiar with the topic so the classes did not offer him new ideas but helped to strengthen the ones he already had. Finally, in Ronaldo's case, the same answer given to describe his language development was used to talk about his knowledge of the topic. According to Ronaldo, he already knew "the stuff"[123]. Because his words were not clear, the interview moment was used to clarify his view.

The next question inquired students whether they felt satisfied or not with their learning in relation to the topic discussed in class[124]. Once again, students were given four options: 'satisfied', 'unsatisfied', 'not sure' and 'could have dedicated more'. Nine students (Ironman, Denis, Flash, Panda, Leandra, Lauren, Maria, Thalita and Ronaldo) expressed to feel satisfied, while two students (Batman and Tinho) said they were not sure and one student (Carlos) claimed he could have dedicated himself more. No student stated to be unsatisfied.

The following question required students to explain their previous answer. For Ironman (participant 1), she felt satisfied because, as she puts, she "*já sabia um pouco*

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[121] Original: "porque eu já sabia sobre a representatividade de gênero"

[122] Original: "eu já sabia sobre o machismo e outros mas reforcei isso agora"

[123] Original: "eu já sabia dos paranauê"

[124] The question asked was: "Como você se sente em relação àquilo que aprendeu?/How do you feel in relation to what you have learned?"

sobre, mas deu uma incrementada"[125]. Flash (participant 4), Thalita (participant 11) and Ronaldo (participant 12) felt happy with how much they learned. Flash said "*me sinto satisfeita*"[126], Thalita said "*satisfeita*" whereas Ronaldo declared "*acho que foi o suficiente*"[127]. For Panda (participant 7), her satisfaction was related to the language. As her justification, Panda declared to love English[128]. On the other hand, in Leandra's (participant 8), Maria's (participant 9) and Lauren's (participant 10) point of view, their satisfaction was due to personal improvement. Leandra explained that she believes to be a better person after discussing the topic of gender representation in class. She said "*porque sou uma pessoa melhor, respeitando cada um, independente da escolha que fez ou qualquer coisa*"[129]. Maria said the classes showed her how the world is for girls[130]. For Lauren, her satisfaction was related to her interest in the topic itself. She posed "*gostei de estudar e discutir sobre os gêneros e os estereótipos*"[131]. Finally, Denis felt satisfied because, for him, this was an opportunity to discuss a subject that is not approached in other classes[132].

For the students who had other feelings in relation to what they had learned, the justifications varied. Batman (participant 5), who affirmed not to be sure about how he felt, explained he thought he had not learned much on the

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[125] Translation: "I already knew a little about the topic, but my knowledge has increased a bit"

[126] Translation: "I fell satisfied"

[127] Translation: "I believe it was enough"

[128] Original: "eu me sinto satisfeita pois eu amo inglês"

[129] Translation: "because I am a better person, respecting every one, no matter their choice or anything else".

[130] Original: "bem, porque isso me mostrou como é o mundo para as garotas".

[131] Translation: "I liked studying and discussing gender and stereotypes".

[132] Original: "eu gostei porque nós aprendemos coisas que em outras matérias nós não entramos em assunto assim".

topic [133]. Tinho (participant 13), who shared the same opinion with Batman, presented a different explanation. According to him, during the cycle of tasks, he learned to write texts better[134]. Carlos, on the other hand, declared he could have dedicated himself more. Once again, he explained his point of view by pointing out that he could still learn much more[135].

After reflecting on the answers given by the students in their questionnaires, it is possible to perceive that, similar to their questionnaire answers in relation to their language development, students' perceptions of their own learning in relation to critical literacy varied according to their beliefs, expectations and experiences in class during the learning process. Still, more information was seen as necessary to be able to deeply grasp learners' views. Therefore, the interviews, which were carried out after the questionnaires, had the purpose of better understanding students' perceptions and clarifying specific responses given in the questionnaires.

6.3.2. Analysis of Interviews

Students were interviewed after answering the post-task questionnaires. The interviews had two main purposes: a) to clarify some aspects of students' answers given in the questionnaire; and b) to have a second attempt at investigating and understanding their perception about their own learning process. Therefore, two types of questions were asked during the interviews: a) specific questions according to issues that arose from their post-task questionnaire responses (different for every student) and b) the same two last questions of every interview: if they considered the topic discussed important and why (or why not); and how they might (or not) have changed during the data collection.

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[133] Original: "como antes, achei que não aprendi muito".

[134] Original: "pois aprendi a escrever textos melhor".

[135] Original: "eu posso aprender ainda muito mais".

Students interview responses were then transcribed and coded (see Appendix 23). The list of codes originated a list of emerging themes according to similar perceptions brought by participants. Twenty different codes were identified under the umbrella of ten themes. This section presents, describes and discusses the themes that emerged from the students' voices, which are related to their perception on their critical literacy development. The ten emerging themes identified in the study were related to critical literacy development. Inside these themes, sixteen codes emerged. The following paragraphs discuss each theme and its corresponding codes, examining their meanings and presenting examples from students' voices to illustrate each theme/code (see Appendix 22).

The first theme that was identified is "Learning Awareness". Within it, code 1 "learning awareness of the topic" brings the voice of students who seem to be aware they have learned different aspects of the topic which was discussed during the cycle of tasks: gender representation. Two participants state they saw the classes as an opportunity for better reflecting on gender representation better. Ironman (participant 1) explained that she did not know the word stereotype before and was not aware of the existence of groups that challenge stereotypes[136]. Ironman is referring to the texts in Task 3, when students read about different people that aimed at breaking stereotypes normally associated to them for different reasons. Ironman goes on saying that she believes the classes taught her more about this topic [137]. For Batman (participant 5), the classes were an opportunity to learn about how to treat girls better[138]. In his questionnaire, Batman had said he did not learn very much in class and

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[136] Original: "eu não conhecia a palavra estereótipo e eu não conhecia os grupos que desafiam estereótipos que a gente viu nas atividades

[137] Original: Eu acho que eu aprendi mais sobre o assunto

[138] Original: Aprendi umas coisas. A tratar melhor as meninas.

then explained in his interview that in fact he did not dedicate himself to the classes very much for being lazy sometimes. Still, when I asked him if he there were any changes in him he mentioned the way he used to treat girls and how that was somehow different now. Lauren (participant 10) talked about how she did not see much learning from her side in relation to the topic because she was already aware about how important it is to respect people for who they are. She explained that because her family understands the importance of diversity, the topic was neither new nor weird to her[139]. What is interesting about Lauren's ideas is that she talks about the topic and the learning process as something finite. Because she feels familiar with the discussion, then learning is not happening. It is also curious that she uses words such as "new" and "weird" to describe her familiarity with the topic as if we only learn about things when they are novel or different from what we are used to.

Theme 1 and code 1 – learning awareness of the topic are very much related to theme 3 and code 4 – evidence of awareness of matters related to the topic. Both theme 3 and code 4 refer to moments in which students seem to be aware of matters related to the topic of gender representation. The difference between theme 1 and 3 (and consequently between code 1 and 4) is that, while in theme1/code 1 students seem to be aware of their own learning process in relation to the topic, in theme 3/code 4 students seem to be aware of issues related to the topic in a broader sense.

Theme 3/code 4 is represented in the voices of eight students talking about issues they perceive in society when it comes to gender representation. Ironman (participant 1), Panda (participant 7) and Tinho (participant 12) talk about sexism. According to Ironman,

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[139] Original: Eu já sabia sobre respeitar pessoas diferentes, aprendi isso com a minha família. Até porque eu tenho um tio que é gay, então é normal pra mim. Não foi uma coisa muito diferente ou estranho pra mim

sexism happens when men believe to be better than women[140]. She brings one of the texts discussed in Task 3 as an example of an action that confronts sexism. As Ironman defends, the girls can also play and create their own video games because they are capable of doing so and they meet the criteria necessary to do so[141]. Panda also seems to understand what sexism can be when she says "*Tinha um menino na sala que fazia brincadeiras machistas com a gente*"[142]. She later on gives examples of these jokes such as calling them names and talks about how much that affected her negatively. In Tinho's opinion, sexism is something that men do against women. He emphasizes that one possible consequence of it is that women get hurt which is not fair. In Tinho's point of view, women deserve respect[143].

Carlos (participant 2) reflects on how common it is for girls to be ashamed of playing soccer even though they want to due to the fact that many times they are picked on for choosing a sport that is normally associated with boys[144]. Carlos' point is very curious since he was also the one who pointed out it is normally weird to see girls playing soccer, as previously mentioned. Denis

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[140] Original: De machismo, de homens achar que é melhor que mulher, essas coisas todas que a gente estudou

[141] Original: Elas [as meninas em um dos textos da Task 3] criaram o jogo [jogo de RPG] pra lutar contra. (...) Contra o machismo. Elas estavam mostrando como as meninas também podem fazer um jogo porque elas entendem dessas coisas também e também que podem jogar jogos, não só os meninos

[142] Translation: "There was a boy in my class that used to make sexista jokes about us"

[143] Original: Eu sabia que era uma coisa feita por homens contra as mulheres [aluno está se referindo ao machismo]. É uma coisa que magoa muito as mulheres e a gente tem que respeitar as mulheres. É ruim. Porque faz mal pras mulheres. Não é justo.

[144] Original: Sim, porque tem muita menina que se sente envergonhada em jogar futebol porque podem xingar

(participant 3) clarifies that there is no such a thing as one single way of being a boy or a girl. He says: "*Não tem só um tipo de menina e um tipo de menino. Cada pessoa tem seu jeito e tem que respeitar*"[145]. Flash (participant 4) seems to agree with Denis when she highlights that making associations based on gender is an absurd. She goes on explaining that these stereotypical associations are everywhere: on TV, on the internet, in songs. She ends by saying that this is a problem because people use these stereotypes to bring others down and make them feel bad about themselves[146]. Maria (participant 9) presents a similar perspective when she classifies the world as a dangerous place for women. According to Maria, violence and bullying are some of the confrontations women have to face every day[147].

In Leandra's (participant 8) point of view, stereotypes are not enough to explain who we are. She mentions the activity in which we discussed Chimamanda Adiche's speech on the possible dangers of knowing a single story about someone or something. According to Leandra, depending on who tells the story, everything changes. She says that discussing that in school is a good alternative to bring awareness about sexism, prejudice,

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[145] Translation: "There isn't only one way to be a girl or a boy. Every person is their own person and they need to be respected"

[146] Original: Essa coisa de ter uma coisa pra menina e pra menino que a sociedade diz é ridículo. Porque é um absurdo! Eu gosto de rosa mas não é porque sou menina. É porque eu gosto. Eu gosto de muitas outras coisas também. (...) Ah, prof, tem por tudo né. Na TV, na internet, nas músicas. E as pessoas falam também. Se nasce menino as roupinhas são tudo azul e rosa pras meninas. É sempre igual. (...) As pessoas ás vezes te colocam pra baixo porque você gosta de uma coisa.

[147] Original: Eu acho perigoso [o mundo para as mulheres]. Tem um monte de notícias assim que falam das mulheres e violência, bullying.

and other forms of oppression[148]. On the other hand, Lauren (participant 10) points out that raising awareness at school is not sufficient and more needs to be done. She says that changes need to happen outside the classroom since the classroom is a small place and only a few people have access to that kind of knowledge[149].

Clearly, therefore, most students seem to have a critical perception of their reality and the reality of people around them. This is so because they seem to be able to identify problems that arise from gender (mis)representation and possible impacts of these stereotypes in people's lives. Considering that one of the aims of this study was to aid students in developing critical awareness through critical literacy, these excerpts from participants' interviews serve as evidence that show critical reflections of the world in relation to the discussed topic.

Nonetheless, it is possible to say that more than just attentive about issues concerning gender representation, some participants also seemed to have embraced critical consciousness as Freire (1970) defines it since they talk about transformative actions that seem to be urgent from their perspective. These interview moments were codified as theme 7/code 11 – suggestions of transformative actions and theme 2/code 3 – agency. The difference between these themes/codes is that while in theme7/code 11 students make suggestions on ways to transform their reality, in theme 2/code 3 students report actual actions

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[148] Original: Eu achei muito interessante as histórias dela lá na Africa, e de quando a gente falou de quem conta a história e como muda se muda o narrador. Porque é bem assim que acontece. Que dependendo de quem conta a história, muda tudo. (...) Porque agora tem muita essas coisas de machismo, preconceito e em sala é uma hora boa pra conscientizar.

[149] Original: Mas ainda tem que mudar bastante. A nossa turma é pequena, tem os outros também. E na aula é uma coisa mas fora é diferente.

they have engaged themselves in with the purpose of impacting their world.

In theme 7/code 11 – suggestions of transformative actions, Flash (participant 4) pointed out that a complete change needs to happen. She said people need to think different and, in order to do so, there needs to be discussions on the topic of gender representation everywhere such as at home or on the internet[150]. In Panda's (participant 7) opinion, the school is also a place for these discussions and that needs to be done in every class by all teachers, because, as she stated it is something we learn and will use it forever in our lives[151]. In Lauren's (participant 10) point of view, other schools should be involved too. She highlighted the importance of discussions like these to help people who need to accept themselves for who they are. Lauren used the word "example" asserting that good examples may influence people to feel better about themselves[152]. For Maria (participant 9), social projects, such as the ones she was presented to in class, or lectures in TED Talk fashion, also as the ones she was presented to in class, would have a positive impact in society towards breaking down stereotypes[153].

All the abovementioned suggestions brought by students seem to be in sync with the ideas of Freire's process of *conscientização*. While discussing the various steps towards individual critical consciousness, Freire (1970) explains that as we become aware of injustices in

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[150] Original: Tem que mudar tudo. Pensar diferente. Discutir em casa, na internet.

[151] Original: Eu acharia que seria bom todos os profes falarem disso porque a gente vai usar pra vida.

[152] Original: Se a gente divulgasse mais, até pra outras escolas assim. Eu não tenho medo da minha história estar lá porque todo mundo sabe, minha familia, tudo. E dai pode até ajudar quem tem medo de se assumir. Uma forma de exemplo. Se enxergar.

[153] Original: Dá pra fazer projetos. Igual o das meninas nos textos. Ou dar palestras, igual a Lizzie.

our context, we "acquire the ability to *intervene* in reality as it is unveiled" (p. 109). Hence, acting upon our reality aiming at transformation "represents a step forward from *emergence,* and results from the *conscientização* of the situation". In Freire's point of view, therefore, reflection and action come together as we develop critical consciousness. Participants' interview excerpts previously presented seem to be walking towards developing their critical consciousness as they appear to be not only aware of marks of oppression in their own reality but engage in suggesting transformative actions with the purpose of changing this reality. Still, however, it is not clear whether all of them actually engaged in real action.

From the group of fourteen students, Panda and Tinho are the only ones who explicitly describe acting upon their own world. During her interview, Panda talks about how she decided to confront a classmate who, in recess, would bother her friends and her, making what she called "sexist jokes". She states that after the classes she felt empowered to defend herself and ask him to stop. The excerpt from her interview is presented as follows:

> *Panda: Tinha um menino na sala que fazia brincadeiras machistas com a gente. (...)*
> **Prof.: Que tipo de brincadeiras?**
> *Panda: De chamar de nomes e ficar rindo da gente. (...)*
> *Mas a gente responde agora. Se ele vem incomodar no recreio, a gente não fica mais quieta.*
> **Prof.- Quando vocês respondem, como ele reage?**
> *Panda: Ah, não sei, assim, ás vezes ele para, ás vezes não.*
> **Prof.- E como você se sente depois de responder?**

> *Panda: Poderosa {risos}.*
> *Antes eu chorava mas agora*
> *nem ligo mais[154].*

Tinho also mentions a classmate that acted in a sexist way. He describes a situation in which he told his classmate to stop because what he was doing was wrong, in Tinho's point of view. The excerpt from his interview is presented as follows:

> *Tinho: Tem um colega de outra*
> *sala que pensava assim e eu*
> *falei pra ele parar e ele parou.*
> **Prof.- Por que você decidiu**
> **falar com ele?**
> *Tinho: Porque ele estava*
> *agindo errado.[155]*

Both Panda and Tinho attempt to transform their reality by intervening on an act of oppression. While Panda is defending herself and challenging a moment of oppression against her friends and her, Tinho decides to interfere on a classmate's oppressing action even though he was not necessarily offending him. The resolutions presented by the two of them are also similar. According

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[154] Translation: *Panda: there is a boy in my class that would make sexist jokes at us.* **Teacher: What kind of jokes?** *Panda: like calling us names and laugh at us. But now we respond. If he bothers us during recess, we are not quiet anymore.* **Teacher: And, when you answer, what does he do?** *Panda: I don't know. I guess he stops sometimes and sometimes he doesn't.* **Teacher: And, how does that make you feel?** *Panda: Powerful {laughing}. I used to cry before. Now, I don't care anymore.*

[155] Translation: *Tinho: there is a classmate that used to think like that and I told him to stop and he did.* **Teacher: Why did you decide to talk to him?** *Tinho: Because he was acting wrong.*

to them, the "oppressor"[156] stopped. Even though these resolutions do not seem realistic, considering the complex relations that arise from oppression (especially considering we are taking about children in the school environment), the focus lies on the "oppressed", who acted upon their world, not only naming it (that is, being aware of injustice) but also attempting to alter it towards justice.

Both Panda's and Tinho's abovementioned excerpts were included as part of theme 2/code 3 – agency. However, the same theme/code was used to describe other types of action that are not necessarily related to transformative actions against oppression but that suggest that the students exercised their autonomy and went forward on acting upon a situation. One example comes from Ironman's interview. She says that when she learned about girls who invented an RPG game that challenged gender stereotypes in class, she decided she wanted to know more about the game. So, as she explained, Ironman researched about the girls and the game and even tried to play it[157]. In his book, *Pedagogy of the Autonomy*, Freire (1996) highlights the importance of encouraging students' curiosity and autonomy in class. According to the author, being curious for knowledge, going beyond the activity or the classroom, is an extremely important source of learning and if that is not stimulated, we "drown the learner's freedom, making

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[156] I am here using the words oppressor and oppressed, following Freire's terms, but it is important to clarify that I am not in any way reducing the subject to the characteristic of being an oppressor and/or an oppressed. Especially considering that we are here talking about children, I am just using this terminology as a way to refer to the roles each one played in a specific moment of their interaction.

[157] Original: Eu pesquisei sobre eles. Porque eu gostei bastante dos assuntos. Eu tentei até jogar o jogo de RPG mas não consegui porque não abriu.

irrelevant his/her right to be curious and restless" (p. 35 – my translation).

Students' voices in terms of autonomy and agency were also expressed through theme 5 – feelings. Two codes are part of this theme: code 8 – validated and code 9 – powerful. Validated was the code used to describe Flash's feelings when talking about how she felt after giving an interview to a classmate. Flash was interviewed by another student who wrote her story in post-test 2. Flash said "everyone" came to talk to her after the text was published in Humans of CA because people thought it was a nice story. She said she felt good about that and then she explains why: "*minha história tá ali*"[158]. In her interview to her classmate, Flash talked about being a black girl and, from her perspective with her own words, makes interesting connections between gender and race. It seems that for Flash, becoming "popular" among her peers because of her story was more than just being suddenly known, it was a way to be seen, to feel validated as a black girl. Panda's feelings of being powerful (code 9) also call attention. As already mentioned, she uses the word powerful to define her feelings after confronting her classmate who used to make sexist jokes and bully her. For Panda, being able to stand for herself made her realize how much power she has upon her reality. Both students in a way exercise their agency and describe empowering feelings after doing so.

Besides the fact that participants seemed to develop positive feelings inspired by the cycle of tasks, in their interviews, they expressed themselves towards the classes and/or the tasks optimistically. Theme 6/code 10 – personal interests describes participants likes and dislikes. By analyzing the excerpts from their interviews, it is possible to see that they all reflect either aspects of the topic itself and/or moments in the class and/or tasks specifically. Ironman (participant 1) uses the verb "like" twice to talk about how she liked the topic being

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[158] Translation: My story is there.

discussed and the fact that girls created an RPG game to break down stereotypes. Flash (participant 4) says she loved giving an interview to her classmate about her story as a black girl. Leandra (participant 8) mentions she thought the stories of Chimamanda in Africa were really interesting. Thalita (participant 11) states that she enjoyed talking about female soccer during classes. Tinho's (participant 13) perspective was the most interesting one as he poses he liked the discussions in class because "people said what they think". Tinho seems to be talking about the classroom as a safe environment for people to talk about their perspectives.

Another significant theme that arose from the interviews and can be seen as indication of critical consciousness development is theme 4/code 5 – Critical Reflection During the Interview. This theme/code was originated from the voice of one student who seemed to have engaged in a moment of critical reflection through critical dialogue during the interview. Freire (1970) defines critical dialogue as a way of learning and knowing about the other person. He explains that dialogue serves as a means to better comprehend the perspective of someone and, mostly, to walk with this person into the path of comprehending his/her own reality (and possible oppressions). As stated by Freire,

> "critical and liberating dialogue, which presupposes action, must be carried on with the oppressed at whatever the stage of their struggle for liberation. The content of that dialogue can and should vary in accordance with historical conditions and the level at which the oppressed perceive reality. (…) Attempting to liberate the oppressed without their reflective participation in the act of liberation is to treat

> them as objects which must be saved from a burning building; it is to lead them into the populist pitfall and transform them into masses which can be manipulated (p. 66)

Not only the classes themselves were an opportunity to exercise critical dialogue for me and for the students, but during the interview, I attempted to ask questions to students that would motivate them to engage in critical reflection. Carlos' interview is interesting in this sense because, during it, he seemed to have taken part into an important step towards his development of critical consciousness. As mentioned in previous chapters, Carlos was the one who, in one of the first classes, said that "girls playing soccer is weird", which caused a commotion among the girls. Although that seemed to be resolved later in the same class, because I agree with Freire who said that, through dialogue, "the teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach" (p. 80), I felt the need to discuss Carlos' perspective even deeper. The excerpt from this part of his interview is presented as follows:

> **Prof.: Eu lembro de você dizer em uma aula que *meninas jogando futebol é estranho*. Você ainda acha isso estranho?**
> *Carlos: porque não é normal ver menina jogando futebol. Mas eu não acho errado. (...) É meio estranho porque não é normal.*
> **Prof.: Por que será que isso acontece? Você tem alguma ideia?**

Carlos: Sei lá (...) Talvez elas não gostem tanto.

Prof.: É comum a gente ver futebol feminino na TV?

Carlos: Quase nem mostra. Mostra bastante o jogo dos homens. Mas tem a seleção das mulheres também. Só que elas não são popular igual o masculino.

Prof.: Você acha que se a TV mostrasse mais jogos femininos ia mudar alguma coisa?

Carlos: Ah, ia né. Ia ser mais normal pra todo mundo.

Prof.: Você acha que a TV deveria mostrar mais jogos femininos?

Carlos: É...eu acho que sim. Eu assistia.

Prof.: Por que?

Carlos: Pra ajudar as mulheres que jogam futebol.

Prof.: Ajudar?

Carlos: Elas iam até ganhar melhor se todo mundo soubesse que elas jogam e assistissem os jogos.

Prof.: Hum, ganhar melhor. Então você acha que elas ganham pouco. O que você acha disso?

Carlos: Errado, né? Tipo, tem umas mulheres que jogam mal, dai acho certo. Mas tem homens que jogam mal também. E, tipo, as mulheres

> *que jogam bem não ganham*
> *muito igual o Neymar, o Pato.*
> **Prof.- Você acha isso justo?**
> *Carlos: Não.*

As his interview portrays, Carlos started with an uneasy position of not necessarily understanding why girls playing soccer is such a weird idea to him, even though he made clear before that he does not see it as a problem. When I asked him why this reality that he perceives may happen his first response was to reproduce a stereotype as he said that probably soccer is not in the list of women's preferences. Then, I decided to take a different approach and I asked him if female soccer games are commonly broadcasted on TV. Because I know Carlos and am aware that he watches soccer on TV a lot, I chose to mention TV as a way to help him open up about the topic and engage in reflection. Then, as we agreed that the answer is no and went on reflecting on why that would be the case, Carlos became more and more aware of gender inequalities in sports and even mentioned how female players are usually worse paid than male players. The moment he said that showing female soccer games on TV more often would help to break down the stereotype that women do not play soccer (or do not like soccer, or do not understand soccer, and so on), since it would become a "normal" thing to see, may be the moment in which a more critical perspective on the topic started to form. By the end of this part of the interview, he seemed to understand that this inequality in sports is not related to talent but instead to gender, which, as he poses himself, is unfair.

Bearing in mind the themes and codes presented and discussed above, it seems evident that students engaged in critical reflections towards the development of a critical consciousness during classes. As previously stated, the topic Gender Representation was chosen considering students' context and conflicts that had

happened in their reality before. Therefore, developing critical consciousness towards this topic seemed to be something students would profit from and be interested in. In fact, when asked if they believed the topic was an important one to be discussed in the classroom, all students, except for Ronaldo, said they did.

Ronaldo (participant 12) was also the student who, in his questionnaire, said he did not believe he had learned much on the topic during classes. The reason used by him was because he already knew about the "*Paranauê*". In his interview, when expressing his opinion, Ronaldo says he agreed the topic was important but he believe other things such as preparing for a trip were more important topics to be discussed in English classes[159]. Ronaldo's perspective is curious because, as his interview continued, he seemed to acknowledge that this topic is important for people who are not aware of it. He also said that his story[160], told and posted in Humans of CA by a classmate, did not challenge stereotypes strongly as the other stories did. When I asked him why he believed that was the case his answer was: "Porque os outros foi mais difícil. Homem cozinhar não é tão estranho assim dai as pessoas não desrespeitam tanto"[161]. It seems, hence, that Ronaldo is aware of how impacting gender stereotypes can be and of how important it is to discuss it among people so then they are not reproduced. However, he appears not to be sensitive enough about the need for discussing the topic since it does not (according to him) affect his life as

[159] Original: "Viagens. Porque é quando a gente usa mesmo o inglês. Não é que é mais importante. É que é mais necessário pra vida".

[160] Ronaldo gave an interview to a classmate for the text in post-test 2. In his interview, he talked about how he likes to cook even though he is a boy, which may be seen as a contradiction considering the stereotype that girls are the ones who cook

[161] Translation: Because it was harder for the others. Guys who cook is not so unusual so people respect it more"

much.

Differently from Ronaldo, all the other participants stated that discussing gender representation in school is an important matter. Four different reasons, which comprise theme 9, were given to explain their views: Code 13 - it's important because people may not know or be aware of the topic, Code 14 - it's important because it may change our reality, Code 15 - it's important because we need to learn this for life, and Code 16 - it's important because it can help people who need/want to talk about it. According to Carlos (participant 2), Denis (participant 3), Batman (participant 5), Panda (participant 7), Leandra (participant 8), Lauren (participant 10), Thalita (participant 11) and Tinho (participant 13), discussing gender representation in school is relevant since there are many people who may not be familiar with the topic and therefore, either promote or suffer from injustices related to it. As Thalita, for instance, explains "*pra todo mundo saber, respeitar (...) porque as vezes as pessoas não sabem que as palavras machucam e que nem todo mundo é igual*"[162].

Ironman (participant 1), Batman (participant 5), Isis (participant 6) and Vicente (participant 14) reflect on the impacts of the issue on society, claiming that when we talk about we may actually be transforming our world. As Vicente, for example, puts "na rua tem muito preconceito, estereótipos de menina brincar de boneca e menino de carrinho. Dai, se falar na aula, mostra que não é certo pensar assim" [163] . Flash (participant 4) clarifies that

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[162] Translation: For people to know and respect, because sometimes people don't know that words hurt and that not everyone is the same.

[163] Translation: "On the streets there is too much prejudice, stereotypes such as girls play doll and boys play with cars. Then, if we talk in class, we show that is not always the case".

knowledge on this topic is important for life [164] . In Leandra's (participant 8) opinion, this discussion may help people that need to talk about it and/or need help: "agora tem muita essas coisas de machismo, preconceito e em sala é uma hora boa pra conscientizar. Tem muita gente que tem dúvida sobre isso e não tem com quem falar. Dai esse assunto na escola pode ajudar"[165].

The last question addressed at the students[166] was whether they perceived any changes in themselves before and after the cycle of tasks was implemented. All students reported they believed they had changed, except for Vicente who answered "not much". Besides relating their changes to linguistic aspects and improvements, three different kinds of explanations, related to critical awareness, were brought by participants to reason the transformations they believed to have engaged in: 1) code 17 - the student believes he/she is more aware of the topic now, 2) code 18 - the student believes he/she is now more confident, 3) code 19 - the student believes the classes had an impact in his/her actions.

For Carlos (participant 2) and Batman (participant 5), the changes happened because they felt more aware of gender representation issues after working in the cycle of tasks. Carlos says "não sei (...) mudou, tipo, eu perceber que é injusto pras meninas" [167] which is interesting considering that Carlos was the one that, as previously reported, engaged in a critical reflection moment during

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[164] Original: "a gente vai levar isso pra vida toda"

[165] Translation: "now, sexism, prejudice are up-to-date topics and the classroom is a good place to gain awareness on these topics. There are a lot of people that have questions about it but do not have anyone to talk with. Then, the school can help by discussing it in class".

[166] Lauren (participant 10) did not answer this question because I forgot to ask it for her.

[167] Translation: "I don't know (...) I changed, like, I realize now that it is unfair to the girls".

the interview, better understanding some of the reasons why female soccer teams are not commonly seen/appreciated/encouraged playing as male soccer teams. By bringing this issue back again into the conversation as an answer to the question of what changed about him, Carlos may be realizing his own perceptions of the world and even some of his own privileges as a male, therefore, stepping forward towards a critical consciousness. Similarly, Batman may also be moving in this direction when he points out that what changed in him was the fact that, after the cycle of tasks, he learned how to treat girls better[168]. I then asked him if learning that changed anything in his behavior and his response was: "*Ah, (...), parar de chamar de coisas, essas paradas assim*"[169]. He also said that the classes helped him with that because, as he himself stated, "*abre mais a cabeça da gente*"[170].

In Flash's (participant 4) and Leandra's (participant 8) case, the task cycle seems to have had an impact on their confidence. When asked what changed about her after the classes, Flash said "*É bom sentir que eu posso escolher minhas coisas sem pensar que sou menina*"[171]. Her answer was a bit surprising considering Flash seemed to have a critical position towards stereotypes since the beginning of the classes. I asked her if she did not use to make choices like that before and she explained that although she did, the classes helped her to see she was not the only one fighting stereotypes and that was important because, as she puts, "people put you down depending on

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[168] Original: "Aprendi umas coisas. A tratar melhor as meninas".

[169] Translation: "hum, to stop calling them names, stuff like that"

[170] Translation: "They open our mind"

[171] Translation: "It feels good to be able to choose my stuff without thinking that I am a girl".

what you like"[172]. Leandra, likewise, appeared to have felt a positive impact of the classes. Her answer to the question of how she had changed was "*Estou mais confiante*"[173].

Finally, Batman (participant 5), Isis (participant 6) and Tinho (participant 12) discussed how the classes seemed to have had an impact in their actions. They all reported they now avoid reinforcing stereotypes and bullying classmates for who they are. As previously mentioned, Batman declared he tries not to call his classmates names anymore and Tinho talked to a friend so that he would not do the same. Isis said that after the classes, she realized she should not bully her peers and, instead, she should respect them[174].

Considering the discussion aforementioned, therefore, it is possible to conclude that students' interviews seem to confirm the results shown in the post-task questionnaires. Again, students' voices reveal that the cycle of tasks served as an opportunity to learn and reflect about the topic in different ways, which seems to have impacted participants' identities, awareness and even action towards transformation, all of which point towards critical consciousness.

Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge, once again, that students' critical consciousness is perceived here by analyzing their discourse only, since no further investigation or observation outside the classroom took place to determine whether students engaged with effective action and transformation of their reality. Even

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[172] Original: "As pessoas te colocam pra baixo porque você gosta de uma coisa".

[173] Translation: "I am more confident now".

[174] Original: "Vou pensar antes de fazer bullying. Pra respeitar, assim, respeitar os outros".

so, the results presented in this study are to be seen as a first step towards liberation and critical consciousness.

6.4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS ANSWERED

The goal of this chapter was to investigate participants' critical literacy development, considering the implementation of a critical cycle of tasks that discussed gender representation. With this purpose in mind, three sets of data were analyzed: 1) the teacher/researcher's perspective, considering diary notes, classroom moments and task answers; 2) participants' performance in pre-test 2 and post-test 2 in terms of presenting a critical perspective; and 3) participants' perceptions of their own development considering their answers in questionnaires and interviews.

Taking into account the findings here discussed, students seems to have engaged in processes of critical consciousness development, learning/ practicing and appropriating critical literacy skills throughout the cycle of tasks. Results in terms of critical literacy development, henceforth, may serve as evidence that illustrates students' critical literacy growth by engaging in the process of *conscientização*. That is, students not only seem to have reflected upon issues concerning gender representations in their society, both globally and locally, but they were also given the opportunity to, during the cycle of tasks, act upon discourse, taking an active part in transforming the single stories that are spread around about gender normativity into empowering stories.

Even though there is no evidence that students went further on their actions, promoting bigger and more impacting changes, it is my belief that the whole process served as a first step towards students' critical consciousness. Moreover, the critical literacy skills learned and developed during the cycle of tasks reinforce the value of teaching a foreign language from a critical perspective, giving students a chance to, instead of just understanding words/sentences/ideas and de-codifying/sending messages, reflect about what is being

said/written and the impacts these ideas may have, moving on to transform and act upon society towards social justice.

Within this scenario, three main research questions guided this analysis, all of which are answered below.

1a) are there elements, perceived during the implementation of the task cycle, that signal language and critical literacy development, considering the teacher/researcher's perception? If so, which are they?

Yes. As a detailed analysis of five moments, that were chosen because they represent significant occurrences of students engaging in critical literacy, showed the cycle of tasks implemented in this classroom seemed to have offered students opportunities to engage in critical literacy. Within this scenario, the elements that seemed to reflect critical literacy development taking place were: a) students' engagement in critical reading of media texts; b) students' commitment to critical writing and rewriting, and, therefore, alternative representations of texts, their own reality and their own communities (inside and outside the school); and c) students' active participation on critical dialogue, which seemed to have triggered moments of reflection and contributed to critical awareness. Moreover, the critical teacher's job as a mediator who provides students with enough support, both emotionally and linguistically, in order to understand, critically analyze, and act upon their context was highlighted.

1e) do participants' texts show critical perspectives after the implementation of the task cycle, when writing a narrative, in a pre-test and a post-test condition?

Yes. The statistical results derived from raters' analysis revealed that students' post-test narratives depict alternative representations of gender, which in turn present defy stereotypes that are normally reproduced in society.

1f) are there elements that signal language and critical literacy development, considering participants' perceptions of their own experience? If so, which are they?

Yes. The discussion presented in the questionnaires and interviews mirror participants' perceptions on their own development. In their questionnaires, most students seemed to believe that the topic chosen to be discussed reflected positively in their critical literacy/consciousness development since it aided them in feeling more comfortable with their own identities while also offering a broader understanding on other people's identities, social justice issues and diversity awareness. The interviews reinforced these findings as, while being interviewed, students' voices show that the cycle of tasks contributed for learning and reflecting about the topic in different ways, impacting participants' identities, social awareness and even action towards transformation.

CHAPTER 7

FINAL REMARKS

As Lankshear and McLaren (1993) highlight, "research undertaken in a critical mode requires recognizing the complexity of social relations and the researcher's own socially determined position within the reality he or she is attempting to describe" (p. 382). This is because research does not happen in a vacuum and is never neutral. In research, contexts matter, people matter, choices matter and those do not take place by chance.

The same goes for teaching. Schools, as Giroux (1993) points out, "are not neutral institutions designed for providing students with work skills or with the privileged tools of culture. Instead, they are deeply implicated in forms of inclusion and exclusion that produce particular moral truths and values" (p. 373). The responsibility of a critical teacher-researcher, in this sense, is manifold. It involves more than pedagogical/theoretical decisions and procedures. It is about more than achieving certain educational/empirical results. When teaching and/or investigating, critical teachers/researchers must always ask themselves: whose interests are being served by this research and by this way of teaching? What discourses are being (re)produced in the process? How are the research and teaching design themselves implicated in social and institutional structures of power and domination? (Lankshear & McLaren, 1993).

Motivated by the reflections provoked by these questions, this chapter attempts to review the main findings brought in the present study, with the purpose of informing both theory and pedagogy. Moreover, this chapter discusses research limitations and suggestions for future research the study may have as well as its pedagogical implications, as a way to understand critically possible repercussions brought by the results of this piece of research. Still, it must be made clear that it is not my

intention to perceive this study as an end on its own. Because I believe there are multiple ways of/reasons why (or why not) becoming critically literate and learning a foreign language, I side with Lankshear and McLaren (1993) in not pursuing a universal truth. Rather, as the authors put, the results brought by this study seek to produce partial, contingent truths, which are recognized for their historicity and for the social practices they legitimate.

7.1. SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS

As previously stated, the present study aimed at implementing a cycle of thematic tasks for a middle school group of learners, in South Brazil, so as to engage students in critical literacy while fostering language growth. In order to do so, a thematic cycle of tasks, which focused on gender representation, was designed and implemented during the students' classes. The data collected during and after implementation attempted to unveil the processes students engaged in when learning English and developing critical literacy by: observing and taking notes of students' participation in the classes and in tasks, comparing performance before and after the cycle of tasks, and investigating students' perception through questionnaires and interviews. In this sense, the main findings, obtained in the present study, are the following:

- During the implementation of the cycle of tasks, language growth seems to have happened throughout the entire task cycle, as each task contributed to and prepared students to engage in the next, through processes of input-processing, schemata activation, new knowledge incorporation, output production, form-meaning connections, linguistic knowledge restructuring. These findings, based on my own perception of learners' language development, highlight the positive role of the task-based cycle as a tool that, through its framework, provide students with necessary scaffolding and support, which in turn may enhance performance. Additionally, these results reinforce the pivotal role of the task-based

teacher in planning, designing and mediating lessons that may foster language learning.

- During the implementation of the cycle of tasks, critical literacy development seemed to take place as students engaged in processes of critical reading of media texts, critical writing and rewriting of alternative representations, critical dialogue among peers, all possibly leading to critical consciousness. These results, based on my own perception of learners' critical literacy development, reinforce both the beneficial role of the task-cycle itself, in offering a meaning-centered and learner-centered environment for tackling various issues that are part of students' lives; and the vital role of the critical teacher in planning and mediating critical analysis while offering emotional and critical support for it to happen.

- After the implementation of the cycle of tasks, students seemed to improve their knowledge of the simple past structure, which may indicate students have benefited from the task cycle, considering a structural perspective of language. A statistically significant difference between participants' performance in pre-test 1 and post-test 1 indicate that participants were better able to identify correct and incorrect uses of the simple past after engaging in task cycle.

- After the implementation of the cycle of tasks, participants produced less errors in both post-test 2 phases when comparing to their pre-test 2 productions, being the final version the most accurate narrative. Statistical analysis revealed a significant difference between conditions (pre-test 2, post-test 2a, post-test 2b) in terms of accuracy favoring post-test 2b, which may be due to 1) the task-cycle, as it directed leaners' output production through a form-focused approach; and 2) the teacher's role in engaging in focus-on-form episodes during task completion. In this sense, a case can be made for the positive impact of a) focused tasks in language learning, as tasks that may contribute to functional and semantic knowledge development; b) reactive focus-on-form, as

students were given the opportunity to think about form within a meaningful context and hence improve their written performance; c) producing output itself, as a way of testing hypothesis about language, noticing linguistic gaps and engaging in metalinguistic processes that benefit performance.

- After the implementation of the cycle of tasks, participants were considered more successful in achieving the expected outcome of the task in which they wrote a narrative. The results of the non-parametric dependent t-test indicate a statistically significant difference between both pre and post-test conditions, which means the great majority of participants were more successful when telling their stories in the post-test 2. These findings may be due to the task-cycle itself, as students were offered the possibility to build their knowledge both in terms of the topic being discussed, in terms of the genre narrative and in terms of language, calibrating the cognitive load of each task. Hence, as they moved towards the end of the cycle, students were equipped with the necessary tools to engage in the final task.

- After the implementation of the cycle of tasks, students' post-test 2 productions depict alternative representations of gender, promoting unconventional views of it in their narratives as they challenge more stereotypical portrayals usually presented in the media. The statistical analysis of participants' performance, in this sense, reveal a significant difference between the pre and post-test conditions. These findings may be a result of the fact students were not encouraged and taught how to engage as critical viewers and writers in the pre-test phase but were so during the implementation of the task cycle, which makes a case for the positive impact of the cycle of tasks and of the critical teacher as tools in offering learners the possibility to perceive and challenge normative representations and create their own alternative representations, aiming at transforming their context.

- After the implementation of the cycle of tasks, students' perceptions indicate a positive perspective towards their

language learning development. The results from the questionnaires and interviews reveal that participants recognized the task cycle implementation experience as an opportunity to 1) produce language in a meaningful way, conveying the intended message and, hence, being able to communicate their in a foreign language; 2) master language structures as a way to achieve proficiency goals and/or life objectives that require language proficiency; 3) develop positive feelings (confidence and pride were mentioned) towards their performance. These findings highlight how investigating learners' perception within the task-based approach may provide them with opportunities for self-assessment, self-discovery and metacognition.

- After the implementation of the cycle of tasks, students' perceptions indicate a positive perspective towards their critical literacy development. Students' voices echoed in the questionnaires and interviews reveal that the cycle of tasks served as an opportunity to learn and reflect about the topic in different ways which seemed to have impacted participants' identities, contributed to develop critical awareness and even action towards transformation, all signaling the first steps towards critical consciousness.

The findings previously summarized, therefore, all serve to answer the research question that guided the present study: "does a critical cycle of tasks promote language development and critical literacy development? If so, how does it take place?". As the answer to this question takes a positive direction, the results presented and discussed in this study seem to signal that together, Task-Based Language Teaching, Critical Pedagogy and Critical Literacy appeared to have contributed to developing critical language and literacy, favoring learners to become agents in their own reality through critical discourse. These findings also reinforce the vital role of the critical language teacher as a mediator who balances language and critical literacy development, fostering critical knowledge and use of the foreign language and critical consciousness.

Even though this study does not attempt to provide a recipe for critical language teaching, its results seem to make a case for a critical applied linguistics' perspective in foreign language classrooms, not as a way of providing any easy solution to the complex relations that exist among contexts inside and outside classrooms, language and language approaches, and power and its ideological representations; but as Pennycook (2016) reinforces, as a way to acknowledge that when addressing such questions, "power is always to the fore" (p. 34) and awareness of that must permeate decision making in foreign language classrooms.

7.2. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The present study should be seen as a tentative and a preliminary effort to unveil the implications of implementing a cycle of tasks aiming at critical literacy and language development. Because it was a study carried out in an intact classroom and due to the fact there are only a small number of studies that have tried to achieve similar objectives, some limitations have to be acknowledged in this piece of research. Thus, the results here presented should be treated with a great deal of caution and a number of limitations should be accounted for, which are listed below. Moreover, suggestions for future research are also put forward in this section, as follows.

- Lack of Control group: this study does not make use of a control group so claims in terms of specific effects of the cycle of tasks must be seen with caution. However, as shown, the comparisons presented in this study revealed gains in terms of critical literacy development and language development, after the implementation of the task cycle.

- Sample size: fourteen participants contributed to the present study, which is considered very small from a statistical analysis point of view. Therefore, the findings here presented cannot be generalized. For future research,

efforts to increase the number of participants should be made. On the other hand, one must also consider the fact that this study was carried out in an authentic classroom, with a previously determined number of learners, which makes it harder to control for how many participants one may have. In this sense, the small number of participants should not be seen as an obstacle for research conducted in intact classes. Moreover, considering the other dimensions that guided this piece of research (qualitative perspective and investigation of critical literacy development), a less generalizing perspective may be the best fit.

- Participants: the learners who participated in this study were young learners, at the age of 12 and 13 years old, and considered false beginners in terms of proficiency. Other populations as well as levels of proficiency may also be investigated. Moreover, the group of participants in this study seemed to be open to the discussions that were brought during the classes. Hence, groups that present resistance to either language development or critical literacy development or even the topic being discussed should also be considered for future research.

- Context of investigation: this study was carried out in a public school that is also part of the university in which it is inserted in. Due to that, this context, in special, is open and largely used for research purposes. Future research should make efforts to investigate other contexts as well.

- The cycle of tasks: the main instrument for language and critical literacy development used in this research was a cycle of tasks, which was designed specifically for the context of investigation and participants of this study. Three main fields of study served as basis for this instrument: Task-Based Approach, Critical Pedagogy and Critical Literacy. Other critical theories of education as well as other approaches for language learning could guide similar studies. Moreover, the design of a new approach specifically for critical language and literacy development could be done.

- Topic for the cycle of tasks: the cycle of tasks designed for this study discussed issues concerning gender representation in the media. This decision was made within the needs analysis process as well as taking into consideration other aspects such as the schools' textbook and syllabus and the government educational documents. Still, a number of other topics could have been chosen to be explored with the students. Future research should consider the learners' needs and context before deciding on the task topic.

- Measures and methodological procedures used for investigating language and critical literacy development: in this study, language development and critical literacy development were both scrutinized from multiple perspectives, both of a process-oriented nature and a product-oriented nature. Still, a number of other measures and methodological procedures could have been used. In case of language development, besides complexity and lexical density which are a trend in the task-based area, other process-oriented measures such as observing students' language growth during the classes could be considered. In case of critical literacy development, ethnographic procedures could be employed, among other approaches.

- Elicitation of written performance: in this study, participants' performance was measured considering written narrative tasks. Other genres could be investigated as well as other abilities, such as students' speech production.

- Lack of long-term assessment of both language and critical literacy development: This study dealt with, mostly[175], the immediate impact of a cycle of tasks, which yielded positive results. However, in order to bring more substantial evidence, participants could have been tested and observed in a longer run.

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[175] Post-test 1 was administered within a month after the implementation of the cycle of tasks.

7.3. PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

According to Van den Branden (2016), "research needs to document the interaction and the real life in classrooms that tasks give rise to, in an attempt to link them to the instructed language learning that results" (p. 179). In a similar direction, East (2017) highlights the vital role that teachers have in mediating, investigating, and improving TBLT in light of practice. As a teacher and a researcher, I side with both authors since, for me, it is impossible to dissociate my practice from my theoretical background, which, in turn, explains my personal motivation in investigating these specific issues and attempting to implement critical task-based foreign language teaching.

On the other hand, Pessoa and Urzêda-Freitas (2012) argue that "critical language teaching is not a finite amount of fixed theories or techniques, but a way of thinking, living and doing" (p. 774). In this sense, one important claim that I believe needs to be acknowledged is related to the difficulty of conducting research in authentic classrooms, since the nature of research itself requires the researcher to control every aspect of the research as much as possible as a way to achieve reliable results. If one takes a classroom into account, however, control does not necessarily take place easily and, many times, should not to anyways. This difficulty, in my point of view, becomes even greater if one considers the double role of teaching and researching at the same time. In case of an unpredicted situation, for instance, how to balance when the teacher or the researcher takes over, that is, how to balance the decisions that need to be made, taking into account the pedagogical planning/needs and the research design/needs? Even though I recognize the necessity and relevance of ecological validity in research, and even though this study itself was an attempt to find this balance, answers to this question are still blurred to me.

More than two decades ago, Giroux (1993) pointed out that

> "public schools and institutions of higher learning cannot be viewed simply as instructional sites; they must be more broadly defined as contradictory agencies engaged in specific forms of moral and political regulation. That is, they produce knowledge and they provide students with a sense of place, worth and identity. In doing so, they offer students selected representations, skills, social relations, and values that presuppose particular histories and ways of being in the world" (pp. 372-373).

If one considers that research is also conducted in these institutions, the aforementioned aspects are reinforced. In this sense, pedagogical implications that derive from research inform much more than future practices and, for that, they must be looked at with responsibility and care, as they impact not just teaching, but also learning. After all, as Lankshear and McLaren (1993) emphasize, "learning should always be linked as closely and directly as possible to the lived experience and immediate reality of learners. Praxis, after all, implies transformative action on the learners' world" (p. 46).

With these concerns in mind, I believe this study may have significant pedagogical implications for foreign language teaching practices. The results here presented in chapters five and six, as well as the material designed for foreign language teaching, which was carefully described in chapter four, may possibly enlighten pedagogical practices that attempt to offer students knowledge, skills, and values they might need to critically understand and

transform their context and reality through discourse.

It is relevant to remember that, as previously mentioned, the findings of this study are not to be seen as formulas for successful critical foreign language teaching. As reinforced beforehand, learners' needs and teaching/researching contexts must always be considered as intrinsic aspects of theoretical and pedagogical decision-making. Still, it is my belief that this study can be seen as one that makes a case for critical foreign language education, offering opportunities for language teachers to engage in the process of reflecting about material design, topics to be taught, how to go about teaching for critical language and critical literacy development and for social justice. Moreover, this study seems to highlight the importance of making informed decisions in the classroom, which may be grounded in theoretical accounts and also experience.

7.4. LAST WORDS

One of my favorite writers since I was a child, Rubem Alves (2002), wrote about schools that resemble cages and schools that resemble wings. In his essay, he explains that the first kind exists so then learning, and more importantly, action derived from learning, can be controlled. On the other hand, different from cage schools were students unlearn how to fly by themselves, the second kind, wing schools, serve the purpose of helping learners to develop courage to fly, by making use of tools that enable their flight. Learners, then, can fly as they see fit, in their own time, to wherever they need to.

This study is an attempt to put into practice the second kind of school Rubem Alves (2002) talks about. As a teacher and a researcher, I believe that a critical perspective to EFL and critical literacy may work as wings. I also believe in the positive impact of tasks for

that purpose. Finally, I believe in teaching for social justice and in contributing to learners' growth by preparing them linguistically, discursively and critically to understand and act upon their reality.

Therefore, the results presented in this dissertation, and mostly, the process of personal, academic and citizenship development through which learners and I went during data collection, make me feel hopeful of a better future to my country. May students of today be well equipped to fly into skies of tomorrow, being critically and linguistically prepared to challenge cages and free themselves and others from oppression. As an educator, that is what I fight for.

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APPENDICES

All appendixes are available in the drop box file below

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