

English Language Teaching and Assessment from the Perspective of the New Literacy Studies

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Abstract

This paper is a report on a research regarding English language teaching and assessment from the perspective of the new literacy studies (Duboc, 2007). Gathered data analysis on the conceptions and practices regarding English language assessment in some Brazilian Elementary schools led us to identify three recurring problems. This paper offers a re-interpretation of such problems by outlining language assessment on a critical literacy basis as well as briefly presenting recent initiatives in Brazil towards a more critically-oriented approach to our EFL contexts.

Key words: English language teaching, English language assessment, New Literacy Studies, Multiliteracies, Critical Literacy.

Introduction

Assessment is a central feature of social life. Passing judgment on people, on things, on ideas, on values is part of the process of making sense of reality and where we stand in any given situation. (Broadfoot, 1996: 03)

Along with Broadfoot (op.cit.), we assume evaluation as one of the most relevant aspects in human development, since ‘knowledge, attitudes, norms, prohibitions, strategies, beliefs, ideas, values and myths inevitably surround the various social practices’ (Rosati, 2005). In taking such notion, evaluation constitutes an important aspect in education, whose complexities and peculiarities have instigated research for the last decades.

The high interest in evaluation concerning its purposes and outcomes began mostly in the 70s, when the educational field started to take into account contributions from socio-cultural studies. There was a shift in the paradigm of evaluation much as a result of

qualitative and ethnographic studies, which brought a sociological view to the strict technological dimension of assessment. Since then, several works have been published worldwide acknowledging the limitations of traditional evaluation mainly in respect to its strict emphasis on quantitative aspects.

Although evaluation has been re-conceptualized towards a more socially-oriented view in the last decades, the rising of a digital epistemological basis in the beginning of this century calls for further discussion. This paper thus discusses English language assessment issues in the light of such new basis, by firstly sharing some current Brazilian local conceptions and practices which will then be taken as a starting point for an outline of what language assessment might constitute towards new demands in digital societies.

1. English language assessment in Brazilian schools: three recurring problems...

This reflection is based on an interpretative-qualitative research (Duboc, 2007)¹ regarding English language assessment from the perspective of the new literacy studies. Before sharing our findings, some information concerning the research may be necessary for contextualization. The study was conducted between 2004 and 2007 at the University of São Paulo, Brazil, with CAPES² financial support. Its main guiding questions were: a) How does language assessment evolve in English classes in some of our Elementary schools?; b) What would the conception of language assessment be like from the perspective of the new literacy studies? While the latter referred to a theoretical reflection based on recent language theory, the former intended investigation on current practices through field research. Data was collected in 6th grade³ groups from three different Elementary schools located in the city of São Paulo (being one public and two private schools). Besides class observation, teachers were interviewed and written tests were analyzed in order to characterize an ethnographic study.

Having investigated three different Elementary schools, we came to the conclusion that both conceptions and practices of the research subjects regarding language assessment

¹ The complete work can be found at <http://www.teses.usp.br>

² Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior [Higher Education Research Funding]

³ 6th grade in Brazilian Elementary schools would be equivalent to Grade 6 in Elementary schools in most Canadian provinces.

echoed strong influences of the paradigm of Modernity, whose most recurring problems were: (1) the interpretation of evaluation as synonymous with measurement; (2) the emphasis on objective, clear-cut and stable language contents, and (3) the predominant use of written tests. We shall now present further considerations concerning each of these problems.

1.1 Evaluation as synonymous with measurement

The concept of language evaluation as measurement seems to be the result of the positivist model of education in the late nineteenth century, whose origins are connected to the emerging scientific approach from that time, characterized by an emphasis on experimentation and fact observation on a strictly logical, rational and concrete basis. In practical terms, the highly positivist-oriented educational approaches throughout mostly mid-twentieth century would only legitimate scientific, objective, true and measurable knowledge.

Regarding evaluation specifically, such positivist influence and its strict concern with objectivity and measurement dates from the first decades of the twentieth century, when the “Measurement Movement” aimed at measuring human changes during learning in a very precise, clear-cut way (Thorndike & Gates, 1931), much in response to the very strong influence of biological studies in education at a time when psychological tests were highly used.

The understanding of evaluation as measurement is taken here as a limited one, since we assume evaluation as a process that goes beyond performance measurement procedures, that is to say, assessment. The word “assessment” itself is somehow an interesting outcome of such understanding. The importance of measurement was of such great importance at the beginning of the twentieth century that the word “assessment” soon became to be used as synonym of the broader notion conveyed by the term “evaluation” (Broadfoot, 2006). In this respect, Luckesi (2003) dichotomizes both terms showing that while “assessment”, stemming from the Latin *verum facere*, means ‘the search of the truth’, the notion of “evaluation”, from the Latin *a-valere*, implies a further step in which positioning and appraisal should take place; to put it in another way, “evaluation” implies, in an early stage, measuring one’s performance

through formal assessing, whose results will then be interpreted and judged accordingly. Despite such differences on a semantic basis, “assessment” has been deliberately used in this paper as synonymous with “evaluation”⁴.

When we looked specifically at our investigated schools, such conception became evident through the great predominance of grade reports to the detriment of other feedback alternatives, which would truly aim at improving both teaching and learning processes (Vasconcellos, 2003). The following excerpt (Table 1), which is part of a class in one of the schools, is an example of such conception:

S1 ⁵ : Teacher, have you corrected the tests yet? Aida: Yes, I have... S1: Why didn't you bring them? Ss: Ahhh!!! (showing disappointment) Aida: Those tests will only be handed in to your parents, in our school meeting next Saturday. S2: Tell us the grades! Ss: Yeah... at least tell us the grades!!! (showing excitement) Aida: I can share the grades with you... ⁶
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Table 1: – excerpt taken from an English class in one of the investigated schools (Duboc, 2007)

1.2 The emphasis on objective, clear-cut and stable language contents

Concerning the emphasis on the assessment of objective and fixed language contents, we believe this is an extension of the conception of language assumed by the research teachers. According to our analysis, they see language as a fixed linguistic code since they used to assess only grammatical and lexical contents, neglecting other relevant aspects involved in the foreign language learning-teaching process.

The view of language as a code seems to be a legacy – or a burden depending on the reader’s own view – of structuralist Linguistics. The concept of language as a structure

⁴ A quick search on Google, for instance, shows 18,700.000 results for the entry “English language *assessment*” and 14,700.000 for the entry “English language *evaluation*”. This high frequent use of the term “assessment”, along with Broadfoot’s (op.cit.) theoretical explanation, justifies our deliberate choice of “*assessment*” throughout the paper. It does not mean we assume a notion of evaluation as mere synonym of measurement, though.

⁵ S1= Student 1; S2 = Student 2; Ss = students. Aida is a 6th grade teacher in one of the investigated private schools

⁶ My own translation

has its origins in the beginning of the twentieth century, with Saussure (1999⁷), for whom language is a system of signs whose meanings are determined by social convention, leaving little room for individual interpretation and meaning-making. It is, thus, a concept of language in accordance with the positivist approach since it emphasizes objectivity and the analysis of isolated parts of the language. A more critical approach to language, however, sees the structuralist view as a limited one for it treats language abstractly, neglecting its social and cultural aspects and the fact that meanings are socially constructed and negotiated. In our interpretation, when a teacher chooses to teach and assess only grammatical and lexical aspects, he or she is actually revealing a more structural view of language.

For Baxter (1997), the choice of the content to be assessed in our daily teaching practices seems to be a simple task at a first glance. Yet the author points out the necessity of assessing not only linguistic contents but also those which would refer to the different language uses and the different abilities that one develops when learning a language. Baxter (op.cit) believes this emphasis on stable and clear-cut language contents in many language teaching contexts relies on the fact that they are easier to be measured. Thus, grammatical and lexical aspects, commonly taught in an abstract and de-contextualized way, present such a high level of objectivity that allows teachers to comfortably assess their students' performance by simply following accurate and standardized criteria. The following exercise (Table 2), taken from one of the tests from our database, is a good example of this emphasis on objective and stable contents:

3- Write the prices below: (1,0)
CN\$ 41.20 - _____
US\$ 39,30 - _____
£ 68 - _____
R\$ 51,00 - _____

Table 2: exercise about numbers and currency taken from one of the written tests (Duboc, 2007)

Besides the testing of a linguistic content, which is, in this particular task, the appropriate spelling of numbers, one alternative approach that would go further could be the exploration of the students' understandings of those currencies, mainly whether

⁷ Original work published 1916.

they are able to establish the equivalence among those prices in relation to our Brazilian currency, stimulating them to reflect on the purchasing power of different countries.

1.3 The predominant use of written tests

Finally, regarding evaluation instruments used in the investigated schools, we could identify the predominant use of written tests. Among the reasons of such predominance and the difficulties in legitimating other alternative modes (Fidalgo, 2002), we mention the high influence of objective tests in the first decades of the twentieth century (Vianna, 1995), a fact that is related to the incisive concern with objectivity, refinement and neutrality at those times (Thorndike & Gates, *op.cit.*).

Our main critique regarding testing lies in its usual emphasis on objectivity, being the format issue, therefore, of minor concern. What worries us the most is that quite commonly such tests legitimate scientific, ‘true’ knowledge, that is, rational and objective contents, to the detriment of subjectivity, affection, creativity (Morin, 2005).

In short, the identification of three main problems concerning language assessment in those different investigated schools in Brazil seems to echo all the rationalist epistemological basis which founded the educational assessment view in the twentieth century. This general view of evaluation, mainly based on both contents and forms that focus on objectivity and stability, originates in the notion of ‘knowledge’ adopted by the paradigm of Modernity, which refers to a great emphasis on ‘the’ truth, thus, on strictly scientific knowledge, whose main consequence to our field was what Severino (1986) called a “scientification of education”.

One could have interpreted such outcomes not as ‘problems’, but actually as coherent and adequate conceptions and practices, which would be perfectly acceptable depending on one’s own assumptions regarding language and its teaching. Yet our interpretation of such data as ‘problems’ is justified by our loci of enunciation; during the research, we did identify a conventional view of language teaching and assessment which, in our viewpoint, no longer seems to respond to the new social demands signaled, for instance, by the new literacy studies (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Gee, 2000, 2004; Kress, 2000,2003; Lankshear & Knobel, 2003).

For the purposes of this paper, we phrase some of the challenges regarding language assessment as questions: what would the conception of language assessment be like from the perspective of these new literacy studies? Which contents would be highlighted, which characteristics would be designed and still which evaluation instruments would be more suitable? Prompt answers do not seem to exist specially in respect to the implementation of new literacy studies in EFL/ESL contexts; still, we believe that these recent studies offer us some interesting insights for thinking language assessment, particularly regarding their re-conceptualizations of ‘knowledge’ and ‘language’ in the digital age, which we shall now present.

2. The new literacy studies in the digital age: what’s new?

In our ongoing attempts to reflect on language issues and improve our teaching expertise, we find the new literacy studies very promising for these recent theories seem to better respond to the new demands of digital age when it comes to language learning and teaching.

As historicized by Street (1995, 2003), the term *new literacy studies* dates from late 1980s and early 1990s in response to the need for moving beyond the predominant liberal notion of literacy as a monolithic and standardized set of reading and writing skills to be acquired regardless of cultural and ideological differences.

Lankshear & Knobel (2003) likewise redefines the notion of *literacy* in its singular form by stressing the necessity of thinking *new literacies* in relation to new demands in digital societies. Cope & Kalantzis (2000), in turn, have coined the term *multiliteracies* to emphasize the great multiplicity of language use towards the development of new digital representational modes, advocating a “multiliteracies pedagogy” that views language as a wider meaning-making system to the detriment of a monolithic, stable and homogeneous system. Kress (2000, 2003), along with Cope & Kalantzis (op.cit.), also postulates a wider theory of meaning-making on a more semiotic basis that would comprise multimodality.

Far from simply being a matter of replacing terms, these are efforts that seek to redefine language in accordance with the new notion of knowledge recently emerged in the digital age, whose key elements of stability, objectivity and neutrality from the traditional positivist epistemology are now coexisting with and might soon be replaced by new characteristics such as construction, collaboration, distribution, negotiation, mobility, dynamism, instability (Gee, 2000, 2004; Lankshear & Knobel, op.cit.).

The implications of such changes are of great size. From a conventional notion of text, we start to consume and produce new post-typographical texts, that is to say, texts which have hitherto been predominantly linear and verbal now become multimodal by the juxtaposition and approximation of different representational modes, such as images, sounds, videos, emoticons, hyperlinks (Lankshear & Knobel, op.cit). Such multimodality in different digital media has changed the design of texts; consequently, the way we interpret and produce them can no longer follow the deeply entrenched traditional language teaching (Monte Mór, 2006).

The notion of multiliteracies stated by Cope & Kalantzis (op.cit) emphasizes this new text configuration, whose educational practice would bear in mind much wider representational modes rather than ‘language’ *per se*. To put it another way, whereas traditional literacy teaching is centered on the teaching of a stable and homogeneous language system, a multiliteracies pedagogy would view language as a wider meaning-making system, whose representational modes, verbal and non-verbal, print and digital, are dynamic, flexible, heterogeneous and much more complex than ever.

This new concept of language lies in the emergence of a new concept of knowledge in the digital age, whose key elements are no longer the stability, objectivity and neutrality from the traditional positivist epistemology; on the contrary, the notion of ‘knowledge’ on this new digital basis implies new key words, like construction, collaboration, distribution, negotiation, mobility, dynamism, instability.

Since the new digital epistemology understands knowledge construction as flexible, dynamic and collaborative, we see critical literacy as a fruitful pedagogical orientation for it seeks the development of critical views in a way that students could not only identify positionings, power relations and ideological stances in the different kinds of

media they encounter on their digital daily basis, but also claim their own assumptions and viewpoints, negotiating and transforming meaning whenever they find it necessary. Such critical literacy practices can be developed in any class, including ESL/EFL contexts, in a way that would crack their “appendix” status in curricular models as it was (has been?) the case in Brazil.

Before sharing our views of assessment on a new literacy basis, it might be relevant to deepen the discussion regarding the meaning of the term “critical” in the new literacy studies, for a critical pedagogical orientation is not a privilege of the digital times. Such conceptual clarification would equally be justified for the term “critical” seems to be overused by the Brazilian educational field as we can interpret from the spread in the last decades of terms such as ‘critical thinking’, ‘critical reading’, ‘critical literacy’, ‘critical citizens’ in both official curricular guidelines and academic research. We cannot do justice to the complexities of such discussion in this short paper, which leads us to focus on the difference of two important concepts: critical reading and critical literacy.

Cervetti, Pardales & Damico (2001) argue that the concept of critical reading lies in the liberal-humanist tradition. This philosophical thought mainly developed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries poses great emphasis on rational and universal knowledge as a way to pursue liberty, placing the individual, formerly servant of feudal and church control, at the center of history. Putting this in more practical terms, a liberal-humanist approach to reading focuses on neutral and rational discernment between facts, opinions and personal appraisals. In such perspective, being critical means to stick to the textual features and unravel its ‘true’ meaning by applying rational thinking. Typical reading questions based on such approach would be “To whom is the text addressed?” or “What is the author’s intention?”

Critical literacy, on the other hand, has its basis on Critical Social theory and brings out wider social issues (Burbules & Berk, 1999). From this perspective, knowledge is situated, rather than universal; ideological, rather than neutral. Therefore, being critical implies a wider notion of text, whose interpretation lies not only in textual features but also and mainly on the surroundings, that is to say, the underlying ideologies and relations of power. This way, critical literacy approach presupposes multiple meanings,

since it views text as cultural and historically situated, thus, deprived from neutrality. In our viewpoint, both approaches are quite interesting and useful to be applied during classes; yet it is important to bear in mind their different educational goals, since they are founded on different epistemological basis.

Having presented our understandings of what constitutes to be ‘critical’, we shall now share some of our outlines on English language assessment on a new literacy basis, with emphasis on the concept of critical literacy.

3. Assessing English language on a critical literacy basis

In order to discuss assessment in accordance with new literacies, we selected some tasks that were used in the investigated schools during formal testing. We do not mean to establish any categorization as a way to standardize assessment practices from the perspective of critical literacy; on the contrary, the activities shared below constitute interesting starting points for us to outline alternative assessment regarding its characteristics, contents and modes.

3.1 Redefining the concept of assessment...

Concerning its characteristics, our research has come to the conclusion that from the perspective of the new literacy studies assessment is expected to be collaborative, situated and negotiated than never before, in conformity with the emergent notion of knowledge in the digital age. A more ‘distributed and collaborative’ evaluation process would refer to the sharing of personal appraisals among teacher and students in a much more open atmosphere, more public and less vertical in opposition to the highly hierarchical assessment that takes place in conventional teaching contexts. As for its situated and negotiated nature, evaluation would no longer be taken as ‘right versus wrong’, ‘true versus false’ and other fixed binary pairs; rather, it would be founded on the notion of ‘provisional truths’ or ‘mobile validity’, a new notion that sees validity as emerging from the context of use.

We find it prudent to clarify that this notion of ‘mobile validity’ is not a matter of “anything goes”, in which all evaluative criteria would be suspended. On the contrary,

taking the premises of Critical Theory, we understand that validity in students' work comes from their own context of use and the way they negotiate meanings. It is all about the concept of 'multimodal truth' presented by Lankshear & Knobel (op.cit), in which fixed binary pairs such as 'correct' versus 'incorrect' take a situated and flexible meaning.

3.2 Redefining the contents of assessment...

Regarding the content which is being assessed, we share with the readers the possibility of assessing not only fixed and stable linguistic aspects, such as grammar rules and lexical acquisition, but also and mostly the students' ability to make and transform meaning critically. During our research, we were able to collect several written tests that were planned by the teachers and kindly shared with us for our further data analysis. In one of those tests, we found a very interesting exercise (Table 3) that could be worked on from the perspective of critical literacy:

Write the name of a food that you eat for each of the meals below (1.0)
BREAKFAST _____
MID-MORNING SNACK _____
LUNCH _____
MID-AFTERNOON SNACK _____
DINNER _____

Table 3: exercise about meals taken from one of the written tests (Duboc, 2007)

It is an interesting exercise whose approach will depend on the teacher's own language assumption. In that specific case, since the teacher had a structuralist view of language, we could identify the assessing of very stable and objective contents, that is vocabulary related to food and drink, each of them strictly categorized in their right 'labels' (as it was taught in previous classes), as if for each meal students would have a limited range of options from which to choose and write their answers.

What we question, however, is this categorizing process commonly found in language textbooks and classes specially when teaching lexical aspects, such as food and drink, family members, clothes, occupations and so on. Taken from a critical literacy perspective, such notion of language as a fixed system would be replaced by a notion of

language whose meanings are situated, that is contextualized in accordance with the student's own loci (Gee, 2004). Let us say that one of those students had written the word 'rice' referring to the meal 'breakfast'. How would we have evaluated such answer? Which evaluative criteria would we have adopted in order to give our personal appraisal of what constituted 'right' and 'wrong' in that specific answer? Eating rice for breakfast may not be a typical habit in Brazil, but it may be in other cultures, such as Japanese. Wouldn't this simple background information concerning cultural differences have been sufficient to blur the boundaries of 'rights' and 'wrongs' established in that exercise the way it was designed?

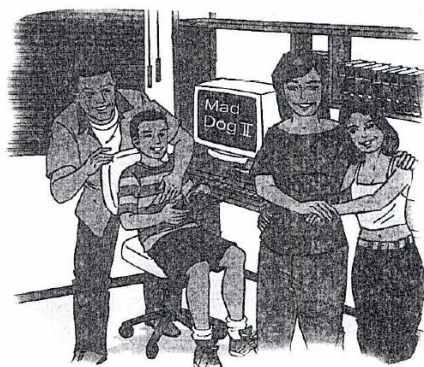
The notion of 'breakfast' itself as well as the other meals presented in the task and in many foreign language teaching materials is a European concept which was transferred to colonized peoples. That explains the standardization of local language and local meaning-making process, despite its validity in that context of use.

We claim, along with Giroux (1993), that fixed and stable meanings constitute one of the influences from the paradigm of Modernity, whose search for totality and true knowledge result in standardizing cultural and linguistic varieties. Post-modern studies, on the other hand, privilege issues such as diversity, locality, specificity and the contingencies (Giroux, op.cit), inviting us to rethink the way we present language contents to our students, considering global and local differences to the detriment of fixed and standardized language meanings.

From this perspective, the same task could be a starting point for discussing with students their own notion of 'breakfast' based on their own community contexts as well as the meaning of 'breakfast' in the different regions of Brazil and in different countries. We believe that such pedagogical activity may offer them the possibility of making meanings in a more flexible way, in which 'right' versus 'wrong' answers would no longer be fixed, but contextualized and negotiated towards cultural differences.

Another interesting task taken from one of the written tests refers to the use of an image as part of a blank-filling exercise. The task (Table 4) brings a text about a fictitious family in which students have to fill in with the appropriate words:

Read the text and complete the spaces. Use *my, she, her, he, his, they, their* or *our*:



This is a picture of my aunt and her family. ____ is Clara and ____ is a dentist. The man on the right is ____ husband. ____ name is Paulo. ____ is an engineer. ____ are both forty years old. ____ 've got two children. ____ daughter's name is Cristina and ____ son's name's Marcos. Cristina is 14. ____'s tall and ____'s got long black hair and green eyes. Marcos is 12 and ____ is quite tall for ____ age. ____ cousins and I are good friends. ____ are crazy about computers games. ____ favorite game is Mad Dog II.

Table 4: blank-filling exercise with a picture taken from one of the written tests (Duboc, 2007)

As we can see, the task aims at testing students' knowledge regarding subject pronouns and possessive adjectives in English. This means again the assessing of objective, clear-cut language contents which are easily measured. If taken from a critical literacy perspective, the same exercise is very fruitful, for it could assess the students' ability to 'read' not only the verbal text, but also the non-verbal one, that is, the image of the family, by making meaning, positioning themselves, negotiating and transforming their own assumptions.

This way, the picture of a 'happy family', used as mere illustration of the verbal text, would be taken here as a text as well, whose implicit ideologies could be interpreted as we commonly do with any verbal text in our classes. Interesting questions, then, could be shared with students as a way of stimulating them to position themselves towards their surroundings and critically reflect on certain issues: "What is the notion of 'family' suggested in such image?"; "Does this image picture the families you know? Why? Why not? Justify your answer"; and so on.

Our concern with the visual is related to a wider and more complex context. The recent changes in the field of communications and information technology have increased the number of visual representational modes in different media (Kress, 2000; 2003). In

other words, we now live and work in much more visual spaces, especially in the digital sphere and its varieties of modes (websites, cellular phones, digital cameras to name a few). Among the implications, we find it relevant to investigate how our students view such images, that is, whether they see them as meaning-making modes or simply representations of linear verbal texts. When navigating the web, for instance, do students ‘read’ the different available visual modes as culturally produced texts (such as emoticons, hyperlinks, icons and others)? Are they able to identify the ideological positioning carried out by such modes? Do they critically manage their navigation towards those several texts? Those are issues that deserve further research.

3.3 Redefining the ways of assessing...

Finally, with respect to evaluation instruments which would be more suitable to the premises of the new literacies, we invite our readers to rethink pre-existing ones. Any mode, including the traditional written tests predominantly used in many schools, can be quite useful for critical literacy practices. In this sense, we point out it is not a matter of simply replacing one old instrument by another newer one, but mainly reflecting the concept of language and knowledge that underlies such assessment format, from its design until its correction and feedback processes.

Naturally, some recent instruments seem to be more adequate to the new epistemological basis since it favors its notion of language and knowledge, as it seems to be the case of the electronic portfolio (Barret, 2001) or the *edublogs*, the educational blogs (González, 2005), whose main features and implications to education still need to be investigated. Either from the print or the digital world, we believe assessment from the perspective of the new literacy theories must optimize the notion of “agency” among teachers and students, emphasizing social construction rather than individual and concentrated knowledge, in a much more open and democratic atmosphere.

Conclusions

Planning language assessment from a structuralist view of language has been a fairly easy task, since it aims at testing the correct use of grammar and lexical structures. This has been a very comfortable way to evaluate students’ performance in many Brazilian

regular schools due to the stability of standardized answers. From the perspective of the new literacy studies, the comfort of teaching and assessing objective and homogeneous linguistic contents is replaced by a wider spectrum of language teaching and assessing possibilities, whose key elements turn to be collaboration, negotiation, situatedness, diversity and critique. Typical activities based on this new orientation would enable students to make and negotiate meanings in a much more flexible and critical way, corroborating the new notion of unstable, dynamic, and distributed knowledge.

The inclusion of contents of such nature in language assessments may be, at a first glance, a very laborious process due to the fact we are simply not accustomed to that. Actually, teachers sometimes find themselves deprived from the teaching skills necessary to perform a critically-oriented approach in their local EFL/ESL contexts, much as a result of our positivist educational background – a fact which must be of higher priority in Language Teacher Education programs.

There has been an increasing number of publications on case studies from a new literacies basis worldwide sharing the outcomes of implementation (Comber and Simpson, 2001; Larson and Marsh, 2005); however, along with Cummins and Davison (2007), we state that the field of EFL/ESL still lacks studies that would take into account their specificities in an attempt to successfully implement a critically-oriented approach. A recent initiative in Brazil that aims at implementing such theoretical orientation in public schools refers to a National Project entitled “Teacher Education and The New Literacies / Multiliteracies studies: Critical Teaching of Foreign Languages in Brazilian schools”⁸. Such collaborative, long-term Project has several university partners all over the country and aims at redesigning English language curricula locally on a new literacy basis. Albeit in its initial stage, the Project gives room for its partner-researchers and participant-teachers to locally bring theory into practice whose outcomes might soon be published hopefully as successful endeavors.

By sharing some of our local findings, we attempt to corroborate the very collaborative and distributed knowledge discussed by the new literacies theory itself and hope to be

⁸ <http://www.projetonovosletramentos.blogspot.com/>

contributing to the recent studies in the field of EFL/ESL in response to the new social demands in digital times.

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