

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

## Workshops as an avenue of teacher development in a Language without Borders community in Southern Brazil

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### ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the use of “workshops” at a community generated by the program Languages without Borders as an avenue for the development of teachers of English as an Additional Language. Part of a larger research project aimed at elucidating the practices of teacher development in the community, this paper discusses field notes as well as transcriptions of a workshop held at the community, by two of its more experienced members. This paper corroborates evidence that workshops, despite often disputed by teacher development literature, is a good opportunity for teachers to share the results of their own reflections, as well as for the emergence of critical teacher development (Pennycook, 2001; Pessoa, 2014).

**KEYWORDS:** English as an Additional Language; teacher development; Languages without Borders.

### *Workshops como um caminho para a formação de professores em uma comunidade do Idioma Sem Fronteiras no sul do Brasil*

### RESUMO

Este artigo discute o uso de “workshops” em uma comunidade emergente do programa Idiomas sem Fronteiras em uma grande universidade do sul do Brasil como um mecanismo para formação de professores de Inglês como Língua Adicional. Parte de um projeto de pesquisa mais extenso, focado em elucidar as práticas de formação de professores na referida comunidade, este artigo discute notas de campo bem como transcrições de um workshop realizado na comunidade por duas de suas participantes mais experientes. Este texto apresenta evidências que corroboram que os workshops, ainda que muitas vezes desacreditados na bibliografia sobre formação de professores, podem oferecer oportunidades para professores compartilhar suas próprias reflexões, assim como para a emergência de formação crítica de professores (Pennycook, 2001; Pessoa, 2014).

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Inglês como Língua Adicional; formação de professores; Idiomas sem Fronteiras; Inglês como Língua Estrangeira.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The term ‘workshop’ has three main definitions: (1) a small establishment where manufacturing or handicrafts are carried on; (2) a workroom; and, the definition that truly matters here, (3) a usually brief intensive educational program for a relatively small group of people that focuses especially on techniques and skills in a particular field<sup>1</sup>. If you google the word ‘workshop’, you get a little over 883 million entries, as compared to ‘lecture’, slightly under 540 million, and, the ‘seminar’, a little more than 276 million<sup>2</sup>. This helps make the case for the popularity of the term ‘workshop’, and, thus, of the different types of practices/activity types it names. Interestingly, with a quick look at the Google entries, one finds workshops on topics that hail from “brain surgery” to “breathing” – yes, breathing.

Things are not different in the field of teacher education. Although literature only refers to the use of workshop in teacher initial education programs timidly, many teacher preparation programs have workshops in their curricula (Palmer, 2006). On the other hand, there is much reference to the use of workshops for teacher continued development (Glazer & Hannafin, 2006; Musset, 2010), although it has been the target of a great deal of criticism for being a delivery model that adds little to teacher development (Knight, 2002) and focuses on transferring knowledge. Nevertheless, workshops can be interpreted optimistically, as the “venue in which teachers share and swap anecdotes and the practices born of their anecdotal knowledge” and “the forum in which reflective practitioners typically publish the teacher research they conduct” (Lambert & Stock, 2016, p. 106).

This paper is part of a large research project named “Teacher Development in a Community of Practice in Southern Brazil”, in which we investigated the professional development of undergraduate student teachers of English as an Additional Language in a community of practice<sup>3</sup> (CoPs) generated by the Languages without Borders Program (LwB) at a large university in the south of Brazil. The purpose of this project was to observe, describe, analyze and elucidate the practices that cultivate professional development for the student teachers engaged in the community (Kirsch, 2017)<sup>4</sup>. In this research, we identified that there are a number of formal practices of teacher development – planned and executed by the coordination of the program at the university – and informal practices – that emerge from student teachers’ practice, chiefly in the teachers’ lounge. In this article, we focus on one such formal practice: the workshops with peers.

<sup>1</sup> <<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/workshop>>

<sup>2</sup> Searches carried out on 2<sup>nd</sup> September, 2018.

<sup>3</sup> The idea of communities of practice as places of learning comes from the work of Lave and Wenger (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). CoPs could be summarized as “groups of people who share a concern or passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly” (Wenger, n.d.). Three elements are key to this definition: (1) a shared domain of interest; (2) a defined community; (3) a shared repertory of practices and styles. We will use the term community to refer to this the group of participants in the community investigated, suggesting it has all it takes to be considered a CoP (Kirsch, 2017), despite the fact we will not make this point here.

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## 2. CONTEXTUALIZING THE STUDY

It is impossible to conceptualize the LwB without, first, describing the internationalization program named Science without Borders (SwB). SwB was an effort to promote the consolidation, expansion and internationalization of science, technology, innovation and competitiveness in Brazil through exchange and international mobility. Between 2011 and 2015, it sponsored nearly 93,000 grants for exchange in around 30 countries. Early in the program, few students applied for universities in English-speaking countries because they did not have the language proficiency level necessary to achieve the required score in mandatory tests.

For this reason, in 2013 the Ministry of Education launched LwB to enhance additional language proficiency at Brazilian universities, with an initial focus on English. The goals of the LwB were three-pronged: (1) proctor English Language Proficiency tests for university community; (2) provide online English courses for this community; (3) provide on campus face-to-face English classes for students, staff and faculty of public universities. To be part of LwB, the universities had to establish Language Centers (LCs)<sup>5</sup>, which used university facilities and workforce to enhance the three goals described earlier in the paragraph.

The LCs' size varied according to that of the university: (1) one to three tenure-track professors from the English Department as coordinators; (2) three to fifteen undergraduate or graduate students pursuing the teachers track in EAL, with a certification attesting a B2 level of proficiency (the equivalent to upper-intermediate level in the CEFR); these students would be responsible for teaching the face-to-face classes, with stipends paid for by the federal government; this is why we call them student teachers (3) and two to four Fulbright English Teaching Assistants (ETAs).

Therefore, the LwB was launched to help enhance the SwB's goals. However, our first impressions suggested that the activities had important outcomes in terms of teacher development. Student teachers, often young and inexperienced, needed support from coordination and other peers, which promoted and strengthened community bonds, and, with these bonds, instantiated systematic interactions that culminate in student-teacher learning about the profession they chose from an insider's perspective (Nóvoa, 2009).

The university that I<sup>6</sup> researched is one of the largest and most well-ranked in Brazil. At this university, the LwB is located at the Institute of Languages – together with the Department of Foreign Languages. During the data generation, it consisted of:

- 3 Professors from the English Department (Ph.D.)
- 3 Fulbright English Teaching Assistants (recently graduated from US universities)
- 15 undergraduate student teachers (sophomore to senior year)
- 2 former graduate student teachers

For this research, I went to the field on an average of three times a week, for three months, during four-hour shifts. I went to all pedagogical meetings,

<sup>5</sup> Our translation for *Núcleos de Língua Inglesa* (NucLis).

<sup>6</sup> We have opted to maintain "I" here due to the fact that data generation and the initial parts of analysis were a one-man job.

lectures and workshops. In addition to that, I spent tens of hours at the student teachers' lounge. During the observations, I produced records by writing field notes, taking photographs, collecting artifacts and generating audio recordings. Normally on the same day of the observation, I wrote an entry in my field diary and organized all the day's material in a database on MaxQda 12. After that, I interviewed six focal participants. Finally, I transcribed all the audio files orthographically and engaged on initial and focused coding (Saldaña, 2009).

Interviews were used to understand which those events were seen by participants as having impact on their professional development in the community. These regularly occurring events that were mentioned in the interviews were called teacher development practices. In this paper, only data from the participant observation of the workshops will be discussed.

### 3. WORKSHOPS IN THE COMMUNITY

In this community, teacher development sessions took place on "Friday Meetings"<sup>7</sup> according to the coordination plan. There were lectures with specialists from outside the community; micro-teaching followed by feedback sessions; a seminar with a doctoral dissertation; and workshops with more experienced peers. These activities happened almost every week and lasted for three to four hours at a time.

In the coordinator's plan, workshops were an opportunity to "revise" the "lesson planning steps" and the literature they had discussed in the first stage of her development plan, so they can "go back to this [the workshop]" when they "plan lessons". The workshops were delivered by two participants – Luisa and Maria Julia<sup>8</sup>, graduate students.

During the period that I was doing fieldwork, there were two workshops, which are summarized in the table below:

**Table 1.** Summary of workshops

| Presenter             | Description  | When         | Resources                             |
|-----------------------|--|--------------|---------------------------------------|
| Luisa                 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Microteaching*;</li> <li>2 discussion of what was done in the micro- class;</li> <li>3 discussion of the micro-class' steps;</li> <li>4 homework: choose a lesson from the book and prepare a lesson to present.</li> </ol>   | Seventh week | Handouts and Power Point Presentation |
| Luisa and Maria Julia | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Discussing the steps for reading class (previous workshop);</li> <li>2 brainstorming more tasks student teacher could do in each step;</li> <li>3 analyzing a course book chapter;</li> <li>4 homework: preparing a lesson plan for a chapter to share in collective drop box.</li> </ol> | Ninth week   | Handouts                              |

\* A teacher development technique whereby a teacher or student teacher teaches a micro-class in order to get feedback from peers, superiors or teacher educators about what has worked and what improvements can be made to improve their teaching. Invented in the mid-1960s at Stanford University by Dwight W. Allen, it has been used to develop educators in all areas (Ping, 2013).

As earlier mentioned, Luisa and Maria Julia are the only participants that get to present workshops in the pedagogical meetings. They usually helped the coordinator to deliver the teacher development plan. Luisa held an MA in

<sup>7</sup> We will use quotes here to indicate either that participants used an expression as a local term.

<sup>8</sup> Pseudonyms, as all other proper names henceforth, except if otherwise mentioned.

Applied Linguistics and was pursuing her PhD at the time of data generation. She had worked years as a teacher and head teacher for a private language school for over five years before joining the LwB. During fieldwork, she had been working at the program for about 8 months. Therefore, she was officially a student teacher at the program as well as Estevam's<sup>9</sup> right hand. Maria Julia was a public-school teacher in the municipal system – considered, in this city, a good job – and an MA student in Applied Linguistics. She had been a student teacher in the program for two years in the first cohort and her MA thesis focused on researching EAP in the program. On the one hand, they were not professors, specialists, coordinators, or outsiders like me. On the other, they were not conventional peers to student teachers, for they were recognized as having qualifications and performing roles that other student teachers did not; for instance, they gave student teachers feedback when Estevam was unavailable, which happened at least four times during fieldwork. Thus, they had an interstitial role, straddling between the identities of student teachers and that of the coordinator. This interstitial nature in their participation is central to explain the importance of the workshops, as developed below.

The two workshops happened in the seventh and ninth week and had an intermediate function between the microteaching meetings and the lectures. In other words, you have microteaching, where student teachers prepared and presented a micro-class based on something they did in class, and lectures, where student teachers discussed more abstract themes in their field (e.g. teaching methodologies, proficiency exams and lesson planning for a context that is different from theirs).

Workshops also have an interstitial nature, as they bridge the world of their immediate experience with the world of the profession into which student teachers were being socialized and beginning to navigate. Since both workshops are quite similar, we will describe only the first one densely. The first workshop was presented by Luisa and consisted of the following components:

- (1) a micro-class that lasted one hour and twenty minutes;
- (2) a discussion about what was done by participants' during the micro-class;
- (3) how each task corresponded to a "step" as proposed in their framework for lesson planning.
- (4) homework to be presented in a future meeting.

Below, the field note that describes this micro-class is reproduced:

Maria Estevam says "one, two three, ready!". At this moment, Luisa begins speaking English and asks for six volunteers to be her students<sup>10</sup> (with air quotes really). Eight people volunteer, and she asks six of them to move their desks forward. Then, Luisa begins speaking as if they were students. She begins a whole-class activity in which she elicits from students what they should get to know when they first meet somebody

<sup>9</sup> Estevam is the pedagogical coordinator of LwB at this university.

<sup>10</sup>We will use students without quotes because it is repeated many times.



and writes this info on the board; topics such as name, age, occupation and relationship status emerge. Next, together with her students, she transforms the topics that were brainstormed into questions, and writes the outcome on the board. They make mistakes on purpose, laughing a lot. After that, Luisa instructs students to ask and answer the questions in pairs. The room is noisy because participants are talking and laughing. After a few minutes, they have a whole group feedback about their discussion; everyone reports their “friends’ answers” to the questions. Some people invented fake names. Kelly even asks Luisa to let them know if they are “horsing around too much” so that they can stop the jokes.

Luisa announces that they are going to read a text. Before that, though, they will see some vocabulary. She shows a Power Point presentation with some pictures to introduce vocabulary – “apartment, building, house, suburbs, city center and married to”. She tries to elicit all vocabulary words from students by showing them the pictures. Kelly asks whether building “isn’t *construir*”. Then, Luisa shows a drawing of a traditional family (dad, mom and two children); she has students make up names for the people in the drawing and writes them on the board. She explains ‘married to’ and ‘married with children’. Luisa uses Helena as an example to explain that “she’s married with a daughter”.

Luisa introduces the words ‘city center’ and ‘suburbs’, emphasizing the fact that in English suburbs doesn’t mean a place for poor people (unlike Portuguese). Then, she projects the picture of a young man and a young woman and asks students to brainstorm info about them –if they are married, if they are married to each other, where they are from, etc. Just like before, she elicits info from students and writes on the board under the pictures. “Students make” more mistakes – “she has 31 years old” or “she has two childrens”.

Luisa gives out the handouts from the course book and asks them to check the info they brainstormed in the texts. She asks a concept check question: “what are you going to do?”; they respond “read the text and check the info”. Then, she asks them to compare in pairs. After the pair work activity, they elicit it as a whole group, comparing the info in the text with what they had brainstormed, which is still written on the board. After that, Luisa asks them to read the text again and do the reading task on the handout, and asks them to compare in pairs. Then, they have a whole group check in.

After having worked on the comprehension exercises, Luisa asks them to go back to the text and underline all the uses of ‘and’ and ‘but’. Then, she asks them to check with their peers. Next, she writes two sentences from the text on the board and asks Kelly to read one of them. Kelly reads them aloud, imitating what would be common mispronunciation for Brazilian learners of English (“andji”); Luisa repeats the sentence with rising intonation, the word ‘and’ pronounced correctly and a soft stress on this word. Luisa asks the group whether ‘and’ is an opposition or adding new info; people respond it is ‘adding info’. Next, Lucas volunteers to read the other sentence. Again, Luisa asks if it is adding info or contrasting info; student teachers respond it is presenting a contradiction. After that, Luisa asks them to do an exercise from the handout, which consists of joining sentences with either ‘and’ or ‘but’.

After a few minutes, they check it as a whole group: the volunteers read the completed sentences.

Luisa asks them to circle the verbs in one of the texts. Students ask some questions, such as “is can a verb?”<sup>11</sup>. After a couple of minutes, she asks students to check in pairs. Next, as a whole-group task, volunteers read aloud the verbs they circled. Then, Luisa asks whether the verbs refer to present or past situations, and students say it refers to ‘present’. After that, Luisa announces they will study the ‘present simple’. Someone reads the verb ‘have’ and Pedro says “Have a car in the street”. Everyone laughs as this is one of the classical mistakes Brazilian learners make when learning English (mixing with the use of ‘there is’ as Portuguese uses the ‘ter’ (have) verb for both uses). Luisa says “Oh, there is a car on the street”, with rising intonation.

Luisa explains the use of the present simple with ‘I, you, we, they’ based on example sentences from the texts. Then, she asks them how to make those sentences negative; one of the students says it is by adding ‘no’; she responds negatively; someone says it is by adding ‘don’t’, to which she agrees. Luisa elicits the auxiliary ‘do’ from students, as well as the contraction ‘don’t’. Then, she gives them some tasks to practice. After that, she asks them to check it in pairs. So, she has a whole group feedback in which she asks people to read their answers aloud. Some people start leaving for classes or other appointments.

After that, she asks them to go back to their books and complete the chart with info about themselves. She asks them to write paragraphs using info from the class. After a few minutes, she has students share their answers to the chart. Based on these answers, she asks them to write a paragraph about themselves. Subsequently, Luisa asks students to hand in paragraphs. Finally, Luisa says ‘so, guys, the class is finished’ (Field journal, week 7).

This micro-class was different from the ones that I had observed in the first, third and fifth weeks of fieldwork, for students participated a lot more. In a way, sometimes students – as Kelly put it – “horsed around too much”<sup>12</sup>. They seemed to be having a good time, and Luisa did not look upset. The segment below shows one of those moments:

**EXCERPT 1: “She is lesbian”**

- 244 **Luisa:** All right. Adam, and your friend?  
 245 **Adam:** She’s lesbian.  
 246 ((Laughters))  
 247 **Luisa:** Lesbian  
 248 **Adam:** And she is from Picada Café. That’s what she told me.  
 249 And she study Gastronomy.  
 250 **Luisa:** She studies.  
 251 **Adam:** Oh, yes, she studies.

<sup>11</sup> Can é verbo?

<sup>12</sup> Avacalhar muito.

In this short segment, participants laugh aloud twice; that happens numerous times during the whole micro-class. In this segment, student teachers are supposed to introduce their partners after having interviewed them. The questions probed for information such as where the partner was from; where he or she went to school; their relationship status; etc. Although they were not required to make up characters, most of them they did. Adam says that Kelly is a “lesbic” (line 245), both offering an irrelevant (and maybe slightly inappropriate) piece of information for the task at hand and making a mistake on purpose – he says “lesbic” rather than lesbian, which is something he knows to be wrong<sup>13</sup>– as other field notes suggest. Participants perceive it as a joke, as Adam’s turn is followed by a burst of laughter.

Next, he provides two pieces of information about Kelly’s life (lines 248-9), both of which are fake. Again, Adam makes a mistake on purpose – he drops the third person singular -s in “she study” (line 248), which Luisa notices and responds to by recasting (Tedick, 1986) Adam (line 249); she signals that it is a corrective feedback with a rising intonation. In my interpretation, this segment gives a good taste of what the whole class feels like. Bell (2007) refers to what she calls a carnivalesque performance of student teachers, as they exaggerate their “studentness” by emphasizing small things they perceive to be integral to how students perform their identities.

After Luisa finishes the micro-class, there is a ten-minute coffee break. When the meeting restarts, they align to a different activity: describing participants’ (“teacher and students”) activity during the workshop. The focus of this debrief is on describing participants’ observable behaviors – “what they did”. According to the participants, the activities were the following:

- (1) Luisa greeted students and asked how everybody was;
- (2) elicited what students considered important when you first meet someone;
- (3) all participants together prepared questions to interview a classmate while Luisa wrote the questions on the board;
- (4) students interviewed a “friend”;
- (5) Luisa showed pictures of two people;
- (6) students guessed information about them;
- (7) students read the text to check guesses;
- (8) students filled in a chart with information about the text;
- (9) students compared answers with a partner;
- (10) Luisa taught verbs in the present simple;
- (11) students did exercises;
- (12) students completed the chart with information about themselves using present simple;
- (13) Luisa assigned homework: writing a text about themselves using the one they had read as a model.

After identifying the different activities in the class, Mari comes up with feedback for Luisa, which generates a rather interesting segment. Let us look at it:

<sup>13</sup>It is important to make it clear that what is known to be wrong is the misuse of the word “lesbic” and not the fact that someone is a lesbian.



**EXCERPT 2: "This is a deconstruction that is going on now"**

- 87 **Luisa:** Was there anything else that you'd like to  
 88 mention?  
 89 **Mari:** I liked your instructions.  
 90 **Luisa:** Um?  
 91 **Mari:** I liked your instructions. I'd just like, um, it  
 92 got me thinking about how you showed family... It was,  
 93 like, um, a traditional family, and then when Helena,  
 94 um, she was married people already asked her, um,  
 95 what's the name of your husband... So, thinking that she  
 96 would have a husband and then... I don't know. I just, um  
 97 **João:** It is a, I mean, it is a deconstruction that is  
 98 going on now. So these kinds of things are going to  
 99 happen. Eventually. You could change the picture.  
 100 **Mari:** I'm not talking about the picture. I'm just  
 101 saying that people just act like, it's obvious, of  
 102 course, we already know her life.  
 103 ((Laughter))  
 104 **Mari:** I don't know. What if, um, I was just thinking  
 105 another situation. She doesn't have a husband. And then  
 106 the person would be like, maybe, embarrassed. It just got  
 107 me thinking of this possible scenario ((Inaudible  
 108 segment))  
 109 **Josiana:** ((Inaudible)) in order not to make  
 110 embarrassment in class, to go on vocabulary, to use the  
 111 vocabulary you can maybe use famous people to be  
 112 example instead of students. For example, Brad Pitt is  
 113 married to-  
 114 **Mari:** ((Inaudible))  
 115 **Luisa:** Because when I tried to find on Google that, and  
 116 all the photos are of traditional families and white  
 117 people. Then I got to the drawing.  
 118 **Josiana:** And the point was not to provoke a thought. It  
 119 was to teach how to say that vocabulary.  
 120 **Nadia:** ((Inaudible)) To show the differences you can  
 121 bring, like, famous people who are persons of color,  
 122 like Jay-Z and Beyonce. And they have children.

In this segment, participants discuss two pressing issues in the language classroom: gender and ethnicity (Pavlenko, 2002). The segment begins with Luisa's question (line 87). Mari interprets Luisa's question as an open floor to make comments on the micro-class that started the workshop; first, she makes a positive remark about Luisa's micro-class's instructions (line 88), which she repeats (line 91) after Luisa's response (line 90) signals that she has not understood what Mari said. Mari's appraisal can be interpreted as a move to mitigate the face-threatening act (Brown & Levinson, 1987) which comes in the next turn. In a turn that is full of prolonged silences (expressed in "...") and hesitation marks ("um", "like"), Mari says, "thinking she'd have a husband... I don't know" (lines 95-6), which can be interpreted as a criticism to the fact that Luisa asked Helena about her husband after she said

she was married. Jumping over the prolonged silence after the end of Mari's turn (line 97), João comes in to say, "this is a deconstruction that is on the way" and then says that Luisa could change the picture (lines 97-9). Luisa had just used the drawing that is a representation of a traditional (father, mother, and children) white family, which I reproduce below.

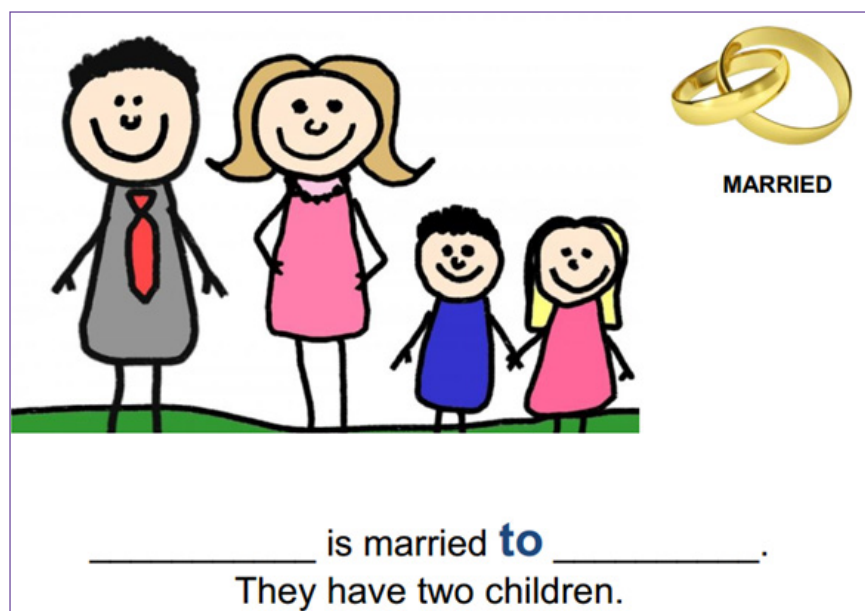


Figure 1. Workshop 1 (Slide 2)

Moving away from the main topic of this article but focusing on an important aspect of language teaching, the segment above is an interesting starting point to discuss the critical dimensions of teaching EAL as well as its impact on teacher professional development (Pennycook, 2001; Pessoa, 2014). Critical language teaching is "a political-cultural tool that treats seriously the notion of human differences, particularly those associated with race, class, and gender" (Pessoa, 2014, p. 356). Critical teacher education "aims at relating micro-relations of applied linguistics to macrorelations of social reality and tries to problematize not only the inequitable relationships of power and social reality but also language neutrality" (p. 356). In the end of the day, theorists aligned with critical paradigms have social change to overcome inequality as their utmost goal. In excerpt 2, for instance, themes that are dear to critical perspectives on EAL – gender and ethnicity – emerge because participants bring them to the table. Pennycook (2004) refers to critical moments as "an instant when things change" and "when we seize the chance to do something different, when we realize that some new understanding is coming about" (p.330). In this sense, this interactional segment shows one of such moments in the data. It is interesting to note that interactions like the one documented in excerpt 2 – in which participants seem to be developing critical thinking regarding sensitive issues in their field – are recurrent in the data – not only in the planned moments of teacher development but also in the unplanned ones.

In the next step of the workshop, student teachers receive a handout with the 'names' of the steps that Luisa used in her micro-class and are

supposed to match the different activities that they observed with a specific step. Student teachers are supposed to order the “steps” on the handout according to the micro-class’ tasks. Let us also look an interactional segment in which participants are doing this:

**EXCERPT 3:** *“So, skimming is when they just look at the text to find general information or to check information”*

- 129 **Luisa:** The third  
 130 **Josiane:** Pre-reading task  
 131 **Luisa:** Uhum. The pre-reading task  
 132 ((inaudible))  
 133 **Luisa:** Ok. And then?  
 134 **Helena:** Reading the text for skimming.  
 135 **Luisa:** Uhum. Do you understand this, guys?  
 136 **Josi:** Mmmmmmm  
 137 **Luisa:** The first task. Remember what was the first  
 138 reading task?  
 139 **Josiane:** Yes  
 140 **Luisa:** OK  
 141 **Ellen:** Read the text to check.  
 142 **Luisa:** And, then, read the text to check. Yes? So,  
 143 skimming is when they just look at the text to find  
 144 general information or to check information, and to  
 145 check information that you presupposed. So, it wasn’t so  
 146 detailed as the next one.  
 147 **Josi:** So, in this case you asked us to confirm our  
 148 guesses or not.  
 149 **Luisa:** Uhum  
 150 **Helena:** General information  
 151 **Luisa:** Yes

In this segment, participants discuss the “steps” in which the class was divided and the activities of each step. After having discussed steps one and two, participants focus on step three. Luisa asks other participants about “the third” step in her micro-class (line 129). Josi answers it is a “pre-reading” activity (line 130), which Luisa evaluates as being a correct answer (line 131). Next, Luisa asks about the fourth step – “and then?” (line 134). Helena answers it consisted of “reading the text for skimming” (line 135), which Luisa also evaluates as a correct answer. Then, Luisa reviews “what the first [reading] task was” (line 137-8), and explains what skimming is– “it’s when they just look at the text to find general information or to check information” (line 142-6). All this segment of the workshop unfolds in a similar manner: (1) students name the “step”; (2) Luisa elicits steps from student teachers, when they know it, or explains the step based on what she did in her micro-class, when they do not; (3) she facilitates a discussion of the general purpose of including such “step” in the class plan.

After having covered all the “steps” on the handout, Estevam steps in and starts ending the workshop. There is homework for student teachers: they are supposed to choose “a part of a unit” of the new book – Headway Academic Skills – to prepare and present a lesson plan for it taking into consideration

the “steps” that they discussed throughout this day’s workshop. Let us look at how this unfolds in the segment below:

**EXCERPT 4: “You see guys, included a lot of things”**

252 **Estevam:** So, we talked about units from the book and  
 253 ask you to choose a task or part, not a whole unit,  
 254 but part of a unit, a reading task, specific for this  
 255 course. A unit. And this will be the point for you to  
 256 start working with the book, which is the book we are  
 257 thinking about using for a new course, to be a forty-  
 258 five, forty-six-hour course.  
 259 **Will:** Forty-eight  
 260 **Estevam:** Forty-eight-hour course. So you can work work  
 261 in pairs, right? So-  
 262 **João:** Work in pairs?  
 263 ((Inaudible question))  
 264 **Estevam:** Really simple. Reading and writing. It should  
 265 probably be the book we will use in our course. Find a  
 266 task, ok? So you have like ten minutes or  
 267 fifteen minutes to choose part of a, um, unit, ok? And  
 268 see if you can find, um, some sort of pre-teach vocab  
 269 (.). And reading task one, reading task two, papapa. And  
 270 if you don’t see any activity there, like to do these  
 271 steps, you see, or these stages. I want you to,  
 272 right? To include.  
 273 **Luisa:** You see guys? I included lots of things. And  
 274 also think about how you could do it.  
 275 **Estevam:** So, ten minutes for you to choose

First, Estevam explains why the homework is important – it is the book they will be “using for a new course” (line 256-7). Then, she explains what they are supposed to do: choose part of a unit, spot the steps discussed in the workshop in the lesson and present to peers in the next meeting (lines 264-272). Luisa stimulates student teachers to recognize the steps in the course book but also to “include things” as she did in her class (lines 273-4). This has a lot to do with Luisa’s master’s research on the use of course books in the EAL classes. According to her research, the main aspect that makes up good use of course books is teachers’ skill to adapt materials –omitting, including and transforming tasks<sup>14</sup>.

### 3. FINAL REMARKS

We discussed the use of “workshops” at a community of teachers instantiated by the LwB program as a strategy for EAL teacher development. In this community, the workshops seem to have an interesting role: they served as a bridge between activities that were strictly grounded in everyday classroom experience (such as micro-teaching, conducted by all members) and those that transcended this to focus on more abstract aspects of the job as an English teacher (such as the lectures, carried out by invited speakers).

<sup>14</sup> I do not include her thesis in the references to protect her identity.

In the data, two participants who are considered more experienced peers in the community use workshops as a way to share their reflections, technical knowledge and hardly learned practical tokens. In addition to that, the workshops provided a chance for a critical moment of discussion regarding issues that are central to teacher development – race and gender. In Excerpt 2, student teachers bring up the importance of taking such issues into consideration when planning lessons. Furthermore, in excerpt 3 technical aspects of the discussion regarding EAL emerge (e.g. skimming, pre-reading task) in a context where they are related to a practical dimension of their work (planning a class).

In this scenario, it seems clear that the less experienced peers benefit from this type of interaction with more experienced peers, learning new practices which allow these less experienced participants to move from the periphery to a more central location in the community (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Thus, this paper corroborates evidence that suggests workshops, often disputed in teacher development literature, is a good opportunity for teachers to share the results of their own reflections, as well as for the emergence of critical teacher development (Pennycook, 2001; Pessoa, 2014).

Finally, it is interesting to note that the evaluation of whether or not a practice is worth its while in terms of teacher development depends on how it is performed in context by participants. In the context of this community, at least in our dataset, workshops prove a fruitful practice.

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