

Teaching Literature Written in English in Undergraduate Language Teacher Education Programs: A Dialogic-Pragmatic Approach / O ensino de literatura em língua inglesa no curso de Letras: uma abordagem dialógico-pragmática

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to be part of the ongoing discussion on the teaching of literature written in English (LWE) in literature classes in undergraduate language programs. In order to do that, it shows the challenges posed by the Letras DCN (National Curriculum Guidelines for the undergraduate Language Teacher Education programs) as well as the reality literature teachers face due to the reduced number of hours of literature classes assigned in course curricula and to students' limited knowledge of English. Based on the dialogical concept of language and on the possibility of cooperation between scientific trends, we present a cooperative work between DDA (Dialogical Discourse Analysis) and Pragmatics, showing how consonant and dissonant they are. Besides, we present part of the analysis of Alice Walker's short story *Her Sweet Jerome* done by students, which, in this context of teaching LWE to students with limited knowledge of English, pointed to the possibility of Pragmatics being the first step towards a dialogical analysis of literary texts.

KEYWORDS: Teaching Literature Written in English; DDA; Pragmatics; Cooperation

RESUMO

*Este artigo objetiva participar das discussões sobre o ensino de literatura em língua inglesa (LLI) no cotidiano da sala de aula do Curso de Letras. Para tal, discute os desafios propostos pelas DCN de Letras, bem como a realidade do professor que trabalha com um número pequeno de horas de LLI na matriz curricular e um número alto de alunos com conhecimento limitado dessa língua estrangeira. A partir da concepção dialógica de linguagem e da possibilidade de cooperação entre áreas de conhecimento, apresentamos uma proposta de trabalho entre a ADD e a Pragmática, mostrando as consonâncias e as dissonâncias entre as duas áreas. Além disso, apresentamos parte da análise do conto *Her Sweet Jerome*, de Alice Walker, feita por alunos que apontaram para a possibilidade de a Pragmática, nesse contexto de trabalho de LLI com alunos com conhecimento limitado dessa língua estrangeira, ser um passo inicial para uma análise dialógica dos textos literários.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Ensino de literatura em língua inglesa; ADD; Pragmática; Cooperação

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Introduction

Teachers of literature written in English (LWE) in undergraduate language teacher education programs, in general, face great challenges when teaching literature in regular classes. On the one hand, the Letras DCN (National Curriculum Guidelines for the Undergraduate Language Teacher Education Programs) point to the need for the alumni to have had a critical view of the theories related to language and literature, which is fundamental for their professional development. This way, they are able to see language and literature as a social practice and recognize “difference as anthropological and as a means to develop a critical spirit toward reality” (DCN, 2001, p.31).¹ On the other hand, the pedagogical projects of undergraduate two-language teacher education programs (in our case, Portuguese and English) actually favor contents related to Portuguese. Thus, they leave few hours in the curriculum to the ones related to the foreign language, English (PAIVA, 2005). Besides those factors (the one idealized by the Letras DCN and the real one of the pedagogical projects), undergraduate students of language teacher education programs, i.e., professional development programs, usually start the program with limited knowledge of English.

This article aims, thus, to present some of what we discussed in our dissertation, entitled *Analyses of Literature Texts Written in English in a Languages Undergraduate Program: A Dialogic-Pragmatic Perspective*² (MELO JR, 2014), which was based on the Bakhtin Circle’s concept of language dialogism, which, according to Brait in *Tradition, Permanence and Subversion of Concepts in Language Studies* (2013),³ is a “language condition” (p.110).⁴ In another text, *History and Theoretical-Methodological Reach*,⁵ Brait (2012a) explains that the reflections upon the concepts of dialogism, text, utterance, discourse, authorship, readership, and image “weave a coherent web”⁶(p.89). As Adail Sobral points out in *Ethics and Aesthetics: in Life, in Art and in Research in*

¹ Text in the original in Portuguese: “a diferença como valor antropológico e como forma de desenvolver o espírito crítico frente à realidade”.

² The original title is “Análise de texto literário em Língua Inglesa no curso de Letras: uma perspectiva dialógico-pragmática”.

³ The original title is “Tradição, permanência e subversão de conceitos nos estudos da linguagem” (BRAIT, 2013).

⁴ Text in the original in Portuguese: “condição de linguagem”.

⁵ The original title is “História e alcance teórico-metodológico”.

⁶ Text in the original in Portuguese: “formam uma rede coerente”.

Human Sciences⁷ (2010), this coherent web allows for them to be characterized as “one of the Circle’s main foundations of theory, ethics, and aesthetics”⁸(p.105). In the wake of this thought, Geraldo Souza, in Introduction to the Theory of Concrete Utterance of the Circle Bakhtin/Voloshinov/Medvedev⁹ (2002), states that the dialogical dimension to language is the concrete basis for concepts, such as utterance, (verbal, social, ideological, dialogic, artistic) communication, verbal interaction, and situation.

However, analyzing literature texts based on this coherent web of concepts does not discard the analysis of their material elements. Although this double orientation is found in several works of the Circle, we would like to highlight two instances. The first one is in *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics* (BAKHTIN, 1984),¹⁰ in which the Russian author proposes the creation of *Metalinguistics*, that is, the study “not yet shaped into separate and specific disciplines, that exceed – and completely legitimately – the boundaries of linguistics” (p.181). However, for him, Metalinguistic research must not ignore Linguistics; to the contrary, it “must make use of its results” (p.181). Brait, in *Analysis and Theory of Discourse* (2010a),¹¹ explains that Metalinguistics does not fall into structuralism, for dialogic relations are extralinguistic. Nevertheless, for one to study discourse under a Bakhtinian perspective, one must consider the dialectic and double-voiced relation between the internal and external components of discourses/utterances. Brait (2010a) confirms, thus, Bakhtin’s concern to find theoretical, methodological and analytical means to study language in its constitutive double-voicedness.

The second instance we chose is in *Discourse in Life and Discourse in Poetry: Questions of Sociological Poetics* (VOLOSHINOV, 1983a). In this essay, Voloshinov (1983a) hints at a methodology when he states that, despite the fact that a sociological analysis can only start with the material elements of a text, it does not confine itself to them. For him, in the reading process, which begins with the grapheme, the reader is

⁷ The original title is “Ético e estético: na vida, na arte e na pesquisa em Ciências Humanas”.

⁸ Text in the original in Portuguese: “uma das principais bases do Círculo sobre as categorias do teórico, do ético e do estético”.

⁹ The original title is “Introdução à teoria do enunciado concreto do Círculo Bakhtin/Volochinov/Medvedev”.

¹⁰ Reference of the English version of this work: BAKHTIN, M. *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*. Translated into English by Caryl Emerson. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.

¹¹ The original title is “Análise e teoria do discurso”.

taken to other verbal elements, such as articulation, sound image, intonation, meaning, and then to realms which are “beyond the confines of the word” (p.21).

It is important to remember that research in literature based upon this perspective has been done by William Cereja, who published *Literature Teaching: a Dialogic Proposal to Work on Literature* in 2005, a book based on his PhD dissertation entitled *A Dialogic Proposal to Literature Teaching in High Schools* (2004).¹² However, despite the importance of Cereja’s doctoral research, to merely ‘apply’ it in the context of teaching LWE would not meet the needs of our research. This is due to the fact that students were often unable to enter the discursive context of the analyzed literature texts [short stories by Alice Walker, in her collection *In Love & Trouble: Stories of Black Women* (2001)] because they were not able to give the first step towards the purely linguistic context.

However, as a prosaic text is a “phenomenon multiform in style and variform in speech and voice”¹³ (BAKHTIN, 1981, p.261), a purely syntactic analysis, from abstract objectivism (VOLOŠINOV, 1986),¹⁴ which would prioritize “signality” and therefore the mere recognition of signs, would not lead students to understand the “actual reality of language-speech.” This reality, according to Vološinov (1986), is “*the social event of verbal interaction implemented in an utterance or utterances*” (p.94; emphasis in original).¹⁵

With that in mind, we thought that pragmatic studies could help us meet our challenge, for several studies done in this field are related to literature. We thus chose the Dutch pragmatician Jacob Mey, who has read the works of the Circle and who defines Pragmatics, in *Pragmatics: an Introduction* (2007), as the study of language in human communication as determined by social conditions. The author adds that “pragmatics is interested in the process of producing language and in its *producers*, not just in the *end-product*, language” (MEY, 2007, p.5; emphasis in original).

¹² The book’s title in Portuguese is “Ensino de literatura: uma proposta dialógica para o trabalho com literatura”, and the dissertation’s title in Portuguese is “Uma proposta dialógica de ensino de literatura no ensino médio”.

¹³ Reference of the English version of this work: BAKHTIN, M. Discourse in the Novel. In: BAKHTIN, M. *The Dialogic Imagination*. Translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1981.

¹⁴ Reference of the English version of this work: VOLOŠINOV, V.N. *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. Translated by Ladislav Matejka and I.R. Titunik. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986.

¹⁵ For reference, see footnote 15.

We, thus, decided to investigate how these two knowledge fields would assist undergraduate language students who, in regular foreign literature classes (American literature, for example), face the challenge of analyzing literature originally written in English despite their limited knowledge of this foreign language. It is important to mention that this type of work followed Bakhtin's cooperative principle. In *From Notes Made in 1970-1971* (1986),¹⁶ the Russian author legitimizes the cooperation between scientific trends through the knowledge of their border zones; he does not defend eclecticism, but the benevolent demarcation of border zones.

It was based on this cooperative principle that this research came into existence. It aimed to analyze the contributions of two scientific trends: Pragmatics and Dialogical Discourse Analysis (DDA). Through cooperation, they would assist students in analyzing LWE, an indispensable task for undergraduate language teacher education students who will become teachers of English and of LWE.

Departing from these considerations, this article will be divided into two sections: In the first one, we will present some consonant and dissonant elements between Pragmatics and DDA in order to identify cooperation between them. In the second one, we will present the analysis of the short story *Her Sweet Jerome* (WALKER, 2001) done by the research subjects (undergraduate language students) in a literature analysis activity created under this cooperative principle.

1 Pragmatics and DDA: Consonant and Dissonant Elements

We understand that the common starting point of these areas is the way they perceive language, that is, language in its use and not language as a system only. As it was pointed out, Mey (2007) understands Pragmatics as the study of language use, which is determined by social conditions. Similarly, in DDA, whose study object is discourse, defined by Bakhtin (1984)¹⁷ as "language in its concrete living totality" (p.181), language is not reduced to an object of Linguistics. It is important to mention

¹⁶ TN. This essay was published in *Speech Genres & Other Late Essays*, whose full reference is: BAKHTIN, M.M. *Speech Genres & Other Late Essays*. Translated by Vern W. McGee. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1986.

¹⁷ For reference, see footnote 11.

that, while the Portuguese version of this work uses the noun *integrity*, the English version uses *totality*, which allows us to think of the totality of language production.

Another consonant element between these authors is that they do not discard linguistic studies in their analyses. According to Verschueren (1999 *apud* MEY, 2007), Pragmatics cannot be considered an additional component of linguistic studies; for Mey (2007), a pragmatic view/perspective emphasizes all the areas related to Linguistics, which includes Psycholinguistics, Sociolinguistics, etc. This perspective works as a ‘roof’ for the different components and areas of Linguistics, expanding (and not reducing) its epistemological horizon. As we have pointed out in this article, despite Bakhtin’s (1984)¹⁸ emphasis on concrete utterances, which includes the production and reception components of language, he does not discard the purely linguistic elements in his analyses either. Although they are situated in Metalinguistics, they make use of the results of strictly linguistic analyses.

In this sense, both Pragmatics and DDA are concerned with discourse studies (direct, indirect, and free indirect discourses) found in texts, whether literary or not. Vološinov, in *Toward a History of Forms of Utterance in Language Constructions*, the third part of *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (1986),¹⁹ states that the big mistake one makes when studying discourses of others is dissociating them from their context. Similarly, Mey, in *When Voices Clash* (2000), pursuing texts’ vocality, that is, the voices of different “agents involved in the narrative process” (p.112), such as those of the authors, narrators, and characters, states that the analysis of discourses should be pragmatic. This is due to the fact that syntax rules (*consecutio temporum*), especially in free indirect speech, are not always respected, which demands that the reader, in cooperation with the author, pragmatically identify the voices in the texts.

Still on this very theme, it is important to mention that, although Mey (2000) uses the known terminology related to discourses (direct, indirect and free indirect), his focus is not upon their syntactic elements but upon the texts’ vocality. Thus, what really interests the pragmatician is finding the voices in a text and their effects on the reader, which allows one to assert that vocality is a pragmatic concept. The effects, however, are not to be seen as readers’ reactions to works (or to voices), but as an active

¹⁸ For reference, see footnote 11.

¹⁹ For reference, see footnote 15.

cooperation between interlocutors. This line of thought leads us to another consonant element between Pragmatics and DDA, that is, readers' active participation in the reading process.

Before this analysis, however, it is necessary to point out that Vološinov's (1986)²⁰ pillar concepts of his language philosophy are based on the principle of otherness. This principle is found in the concept of verbal-social interaction (be it face-to-face or otherwise) as well as in his presentation of the different discourses and their modifications. This allows us to draw another conclusion: Despite the fact that the authors' focus is different (Mey pursues vocality in texts and its active effect on readers, and Vološinov, the constitutive dialogism in utterances through discourses of others and their manifestation in the different types of discourse), they analyze direct, indirect, and free indirect discourses linguistically and discursively.

Back to the reader's active position in the reading and comprehension process, for Mey (2000, 2007), the reader is far from being a passive listener. It is through his/her creative spirit that he/she participates in an active process or recreation of the work. Reading, understood as a pragmatic act by the pragmatician, is a collaborative activity through which the reader enters the literary work and becomes a co-author. As such, despite the limitations of the text, he/she is free (this freedom is granted by the text) to create a literary textual universe that is consonant with the contextual conditions of the reader. However, it is important to remember that this freedom is subjected to a 'contract' between the author and the reader, by means of which the author's and the reader's perspectives on the literary text come into cooperation and agreement.

In the same way, Bakhtin, in different instances, points to the need to regard the reader as an active participant of the comprehension process. For him, this process involves the recognition and the understanding of not only the meaning of reproduced elements in a text (be it literary or not) but also the senses (contextualized meanings) produced, requiring the reader to adopt an active-dialogic attitude. For Bakhtin (1986, p.68),²¹ the "diagrams of the active speech processes of the speaker and the corresponding passive processes of the listeners' perception and understanding of the speech," in actual speech contexts, are seen as scientific fiction. The listener/reader, in

²⁰ For reference, see footnote 15.

²¹ TN. This citation is from the essay *The Problem of Speech Genres*, published in *Speech Genres & Other Late Essays*, whose full reference is in footnote 17.

the comprehension process, takes an active, responsive position, whose result may be immediate (such as obeying an order) or remote (such as written cultural communication). Based on that, it is possible to understand the Russian author's assertion that "understanding is always dialogic" (BAKHTIN, 1986, p.111),²² echoing, thus, *Marxism's*²³ definition of genuine understanding as a form of dialogue. If understanding, for Bakhtin (1986), is characterized by responsiveness, it is subsequently characterized by evaluation. As a concrete utterance (such as a short story) is a unit of speech communication, its sense (contextual meaning) becomes related to value (truth, beauty, etc.) and requires the reader to understand it responsively. The Russian author states that this responsive understanding is a result of the very nature of words, which want to be heard. They do not stop at immediate understanding but make it limitless.

However, despite this limitless number of possibilities, we see that, for Mey (2000) and the Bakhtin Circle, the utterance or discourse bases itself on the semantic-ideological orientation of language. We find, in Bakhtin's (1986)²⁴ 'methodology' to comprehension, that the first two acts of understanding are the perception of the physical sign and the understanding of its meaning. For the Circle, meaning is different from sense (contextual meaning). Brait (2012b) explains that meaning is a set of possibilities a language provides, and sense is the whole meaning, dependent on its context, situation, interlocutors, spheres of communication, and dialogic relations, requiring responsive understanding. In *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (1986),²⁵ Vološinov presents similar concepts, viz., meaning and theme: The first is comprised of repeatable and identical elements; the latter, on the contrary, is "individual and unreproducible," for it is "the expression of the concrete, historical situation that engendered the utterance" (VOLOŠINOV, 1986, p.99).²⁶ This is the reason why the author conceives *theme* as "the upper, actual limit of linguistic significance" (VOLOŠINOV, 1986, p.101; emphasis in original)²⁷ and *meaning* as potentiality, i.e.,

²² TN. This citation is from the essay *The Problem of the Text in Linguistics, Philology, and the Human Sciences: An Experiment in Philosophical Analysis*, published in *Speech Genres & Other Late Essays*, whose full reference is in footnote 17.

²³ See reference in footnote 15.

²⁴ TN. Bakhtin explains these acts of understanding in the essay *Toward a Methodology for the Human Sciences*, published in *Speech Genres & Other Late Essays*, whose full reference is in footnote 17.

²⁵ For reference, see footnote 15.

²⁶ For reference, see footnote 15.

²⁷ For reference, see footnote 15.

the possibility of having a specific meaning in a concrete theme. It is important to remember, however, that whereas Mey (2000) defends focalization, Vološinov declares that “there is no theme without meaning and no meaning without theme.” “A theme must base itself on some kind of fixity of meaning,” without which the theme loses its significance (1986, p.100).²⁸

We can conclude, thus, that, to the Circle, the theme of a concrete utterance is similar to the utterance *per se*, which is unique and related to the enunciative situation, which is also unique. Therefore, the concept of a unique utterance, comprised of verbal and non-verbal elements, brings the two areas (Pragmatics and DDA) close to one another. Nevertheless, at the same time, this very concept pulls them apart, for the Circle defines the utterance as “a link in the chain of speech communication” (BAKHTIN, 1986, p.84).²⁹ In DDA, there is this unparalleled interest to analyze the preceding links of a specific utterance in dialogic relations with it. This dialogic perspective of language is found in every corner of DDA, making it divergent from Pragmatics, which limits its scope of analysis to the context of the enunciation.

To the Bakhtin Circle, just as the preceding links of utterances are pursued, an analysis of speech genres cannot do without the pursuit of the elements of the genre’s *archaic*, that is, the preceding links which are preserved and renewed due to its plasticity. Thus, according to Brait (2010a), when doing a dialogical analysis (of literature), the analyst needs to take four aspects into consideration: (1) the material elements of the text/discourse; (2) the genre to which it belongs; (3) the activity tradition of which it is part; and (4) the spheres in which it is produced, received and in which it circulates, examining the dialogical relations it establishes with other discourses and subjects. As to the material elements of the text, its analysis must include the semantic field of the text, its micro and macro syntactic organizations, and enunciative marks and articulations.

Besides this dissonant element, that is, the very concept of utterance, we believe that Mey, despite his doing analyses based on Literary Pragmatics, did not take into account, in *When Voices Clash* (2000), the relation between the literary works and the genres to which they belong. There was no word of explanation on the relevance of the

²⁸ For reference, see footnote 15

²⁹ TN. This citation is from the essay *The Problem of Speech Genres*, published in *Speech Genres & Other Late Essays*, whose full reference is in footnote 17.

study of genres (even the traditional literary genres) to his area of expertise. The word genre is mentioned only twice in this work, which is dedicated to literature. Thus, we assume that the author is not epistemologically concerned about this concept, which creates, thus, a big gap between these two knowledge fields.

These epistemological dissonances between DDA and Pragmatics confirm Bakhtin's idea that, actually, an "eclecticism" between scientific trends would be "fatal to science (if science were mortal)" (1986, p.136-137).³⁰ However, based on well-demarcated borders, we understand that studies done in the field of Pragmatics may assist this study, especially due to the fact that several works that aim at the study of concepts, such as presupposition, implicature, speech acts, among others, for classroom use have been published.³¹

As the possibility of a cooperative work between DDA and Pragmatics has been confirmed, we will move on to the presentation of the dialogic-pragmatic analysis of the short story *Her Sweet Jerome* (WALKER, 2001). It was done by undergraduate students enrolled in a Language Teacher Education Program (Portuguese and English) from a private university in São Paulo.

2 Analysis of the Short Story "Her Sweet Jerome" (WALKER, 2001)

Before presenting the short story and the analysis done by the students, we would like to mention that this research was carried out in three different phases. In the first one, three short stories from *In Love & Trouble: Stories of Black Women* (WALKER, 2001), a short story collection, were read and analyzed based on concepts from Pragmatics. In the second one, other three short stories from the same collection were read and analyzed based on concepts from DDA. In the third phase, other three short stories from the same collection were read and analyzed based on concepts from Pragmatics and DDA. It was exactly during this third phase that the students who participated in the research analyzed *Her Sweet Jerome*.

Alice Walker, a poet, a novel, short story and essay writer and also an activist, graduated from Sarah Lawrence College, in the state of New York, during the period of

³⁰ For reference, see footnote 17.

³¹ One work we highlight is *Pragmatics: Language Workbook* (PECCEI, 1999).

the Civil Rights Movement. She received a Pulitzer Prize for *The Color Purple*, her most renowned work, which was published in 1982. According to Gilyard & Wardi (2004), there is a recurrent theme in Walker's work: Black feminism, which she called *womanism*. We find, in *African American Literature* (1998), Walker's statement, in an interview, that she was "committed to exploring the oppressions, the insanities, the loyalties, and the triumphs of the black woman" (p.541). This commitment of hers is found in the short story analyzed by the students in this research.

Her Sweet Jerome is about a Black woman who owns a beauty shop at the back of her father's funeral home. She got married to Jerome Franklin Washington III, a school teacher who does not show much affection for her. Despite that, she is proud of her marriage because she can make ends meet without having to depend on her father. Once, while working in her shop, she overhears that her husband is betraying her. Instead of confronting her husband, she starts searching for her husband's lover. She carries some sort of weapon in her purse, and several times people see her intimidating some woman with a knife pressed against her neck. She becomes so obsessed with this search that she quits her work. Once, after following her husband to a meeting he often participated in, she sees him talking to a group of men and is able to eavesdrop on some phrases she cannot fully understand, such as "slave trade," "violent overthrow," "join the revolution." Back home, she searches their bedroom for anything that would connect her husband to his lover. Instead, under their bed, she finds some books and, based on their titles, she finds out that her husband's lover is not a woman, but a cause, that is, an African-American revolution against White oppression. Very disturbed, she sets the books on fire, but the fire spreads in the area between her and the bedroom door, the way out.

This is the plot of the short story with which the undergraduate students of the Teacher Education program (with limited knowledge of English) had contact during an extracurricular course offered to them. They studied the concepts of presupposition, implicature and deictics from Pragmatics and the concepts of word, utterance, discourse, understanding, and dialogism from DDA. After the study of these concepts, the short story was read with the students. Then, they answered the literary analysis activity, whose questions had been created based on the articulation of these concepts.

As an example, we will present three questions of the activity which were divided into two others: one based on a concept from Pragmatics and the other, from DDA.

Question 1a. What does the sentence “He was beating her black and blue” presuppose³² (p.26)?

Question 1b. Based on the concept of word/utterance, what do you see as being the position of the woman portrayed in this short story?

Question 2. Read the sentence “Other times, when he didn’t bother to look up from his books and only muttered curses if she tried to kiss him good-bye, she did not know whether to laugh or cry” (p.27) and answer the questions below.

2a. To whom do the deictics *he*, *his*, *she* and *him* refer?

2b. What discourse underlies the fact that the deictic *she* has no name in the story?

Question 3. Read the sentence “Some days she would get out of bed at four in the morning after not sleeping a wink all night, throw an old sweater around her shoulders, and begin the search” (p.29) and answer the questions below.

3a. Based on the short story context, what does the word *search* imply?

3b. Considering double-voicedness as a constitutive element of words, how do you ideologically understand this type of “search”?

Even if students did not fully understand the expression “black and blue” (dark marks of bruises), in Question 1a, they were expected to answer that the use of the verb in the past continuous presupposed that her husband was constantly beating her. Among the students who were able to identify the presupposition from the use of the verb tense, one of them wrote the following³³:

It is presupposed that she was being beaten for quite a while; she disguised it with colorful make-up. It is possible to presuppose that “he” (Jerome) had always beaten her even before they were married.³⁴

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³² The sentences in these questions are extracts from the short story *Her Sweet Jerome* (WALKER, 2001, pp.24-34).

³³ Due to article size constraints, only one answer will be presented. Other examples can be found in the dissertation, in which we presented potentially coherent (with the plot and the underlying discourses) and potentially incoherent answers.

³⁴ TN. Although the answers were faithfully transcribed from the literary analysis activity, some minor grammatical slips present in their answers in Portuguese were not kept in English, for they did not alter understanding.

³⁵ Original in Portuguese: “Pressupõe-se que ela já apanhava a algum tempo, ela disfarçava com maquiagens coloridas. É possível pressupor que “ele” (Jerome) sempre bateu em sua esposa, antes mesmo de se casarem”.

Although Question 1b resulted from the reflection made in 1a, it went beyond the scope of the plot. It asked students to discuss the position of Black women refracted in this short story, pointing to the life of submission they were subjected in a male chauvinist society (whether Black or White). Among the students who understood the utterance (in Bakhtinian terms), one of them wrote:

Total submission to men. She could not interfere in his business besides being spanked and not having the right for choice.³⁶

Question 2a has to do with deictics of person and asked students to identify, in the story, to whom *he*, *his*, *she*, and *him* in the sentence given referred. It is important to mention that the study of deictics of person goes beyond the mere study of personal and objects pronouns. According to Mey (2007), the deictics of person, place and time allow a point of view (whether the enunciator's or the enunciatee's) to be set, which helps us to understand not only pragmatic contexts, but also the literary narratology itself. All the students answered that the deictics *he*, *his* and *him* referred to Jerome, and the deictic *she* referred to the main character. This is what we see in the answer below:

The deictics *he*, *his* and *him* refer to the character Jerome. The deictic *she* refers to the main character of the short story.³⁷

Based on this question, in question 2b, students were asked to explain, discursively, the reason why the deictic *she* did not have, as reference, a character whose name was made known. Some students wrote that the fact that the main character did not have a name due to the alleged inferiority of women, making this discourse even stronger because she was Black. One of them wrote:

At the same time "she" refers to Jerome's wife, it includes Black women, who lived under submission, who were assaulted and suffered in silence. It refers to a social situation related to Black women.³⁸

³⁶ Original in Portuguese: "*Total submissão ao homem, que não podia se intrometer nos negócios particulares além de ser espancada e não ter o direito de escolha*".

³⁷ Original in Portuguese: "Os dêiticos *he*, *his* e *him* referem-se ao personagem Jerome. O dêitico *she* refere-se à personagem principal do conto".

Question 3a asked students to write about what the word *search* implied. The immediate context of the sentence under analysis did not provide them with such understanding. Among the students who stated that the search was for the alleged husband's lover, one student wrote:

In the short story, within the context, the word search means looking for, going out in the middle of the night to find the husband's lover.³⁹

Departing from the understanding of what this *search* was in the story's plot, Question 3b looked for the ideological understanding of this search based on the concept of word, which, in its social function, is analyzed from its material element and ideological content. Moreover, because it is historical, "outside the living utterance a word exists only in dictionaries" (VOLOSHINOV, 1983b, p.144). It is in Discourse in the Novel that Bakhtin (1981)⁴⁰ introduces the idea that words are double-voiced: They are comprised of "two voices, two meanings and two expressions" (p.324), which are internally dialogized. This "internal social dialogism of novelistic discourse requires the concrete social context of discourse to be exposed" (p.300). For some students, the *search* was not limited to the *search* implied in the story plot, i.e., the search for the husband (and his lover), but to the woman's need to find what her role and her place in society was. It was not a physical search only, but the search for her own identity, found in her husband. One student wrote:

Search has to do with the woman looking for her husband, not only in the physical sense, but also in the sense that she looked for an identity in her husband.⁴¹

By means of these examples, it was possible to recognize that the articulation of the questions, without eclecticism, allowed students to reflect upon pragmatic and

³⁸ Original in Portuguese: "Ao mesmo tempo que "she" remete-se a esposa de Jerome, estende-se as mulheres negras, que viviam a submissão, que sofriam agressões e quantas delas que sofriam caladas, remete a uma situação social voltada para a mulher negra".

³⁹ Original in Portuguese: "No conto, dentro do contexto, a palavra search quer dizer procura, sair pelo meio da noite para procurar, achar a amante do marido".

⁴⁰ For reference, see footnote 14.

⁴¹ Original in Portuguese: "Search é a busca da mulher pelo marido, não só no sentido físico, mas no sentido de que ela busca uma identidade para si nesse marido".

discursive aspects of the short story. In fact, in our research, we noticed that it was exactly in the third phase that students gave a greater number of coherent answers and were able to make use of the concepts in their everyday classroom context. This is confirmed when we read what they wrote about their experience of having participated in the research:

A rich experience which enhances professional and personal growth, helping to broaden the understanding of dialogues underlying utterances.⁴²

It helped me a lot both to develop my discursive-enunciative competency of the English language and to analyze North American and English literary works studied during this term.⁴³

Another noteworthy observation is that these students, even with limited knowledge of English, were able not only to have a different understanding of discourses underlying the utterances they studied, but also to make use of this knowledge in other classes they had during that semester. These factors allow us to make a few considerations, which will be presented in the final section of this article.

Final Remarks

This research was an attempt not to close our eyes before the challenges LWE teachers face when their students, English teachers to be, start the undergraduate language teacher education program with limited knowledge of the English language. This concrete reality posed (and still does) some challenges for the teacher, who, for theoretical reasons, does not use translated versions of the literature works to be analyzed. Students were challenged too, for they were allowed to start a language teacher education program with limited knowledge of English.

Thus, this research was not regarded (and still isn't) as a finished, permanent product, or as a "formula" for successful literary analyses done by students whose

⁴² Original in Portuguese: "Uma experiência rica que só vem a somar tanto no desenvolvimento profissional quanto o desenvolvimento pessoal, sobre a ampliar a visão sobre os diálogos que existem por trás dos enunciados".

⁴³ Original in Portuguese: "Ajudaram muito, tanto no desenvolvimento da minha competência discursivo-enunciativa da língua inglesa quanto nas análises, estudadas neste semestre, de obras norte americana e inglesa".

knowledge of English is limited. To the contrary, it is perceived as an ongoing process which dialogues with other studies related to the teaching of Lowe in Brazil, being aware that this type of teaching has its own specificities and challenges.

However, at this point, this research has reached some conclusions which may guide other studies related to the teaching of Lowe in the everyday classroom context:

- (1) It was possible to notice that the study of concepts from Pragmatics and DDA enabled students with limited knowledge of English to better understand and analyze literary texts written in English. Because it did not focus only upon their underlying discourses, it was also possible to state that the knowledge of these two scientific trends helped students to advance their own knowledge of the English language: Pragmatics helped them work on more specific elements of language (Micropragmatics), and DDA allowed them not to disregard the linguistic components of any discursive analysis.
- (2) It was also possible to advance another assertion: Because Pragmatics does not focus on language away from the context in which it was produced, when using this area of knowledge to work on linguistic elements of the texts, students with limited knowledge of English were able to more easily step into the discursive level. This would have been harder had the linguistic work been done by means of structuralism.

This research presented itself, therefore, as a scientific utterance which does not sustain the “illusion of wholeness” (CASTRO, 2008, p.296).⁴⁴ Bakhtin/Medvedev states that “a scientific work never ends: one work takes up where the other leaves off. Science is an endless unity” (1991, p.129).⁴⁵ We hope, thus, that this research may contribute to further studies on the teaching of Lowe so that this work done by means of cooperation between Pragmatics and DDA may help present and future undergraduate students of language teacher education programs to better analyze literary texts written in this foreign language. As Brait (2010b, p.15) states, “language and literature make a

⁴⁴ Text in the original in Portuguese: “ilusão de completude”.

⁴⁵ This citation is from *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship*, whose full reference is: BAKHTIN, M.M.; MEDVEDEV, P.N. *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship: A Critical Introduction to Sociological Poetics*. Translated by Albert J. Wehrle. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991.

partnership that is unquestionable, innate, acknowledged by the complicity between creators, creations, and different language studies.”⁴⁶

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⁴⁶ Text in the original in Portuguese: “línguas e literaturas formam uma parceria inquestionável, nata, atestada pela complicidade firmada entre criadores, criações e diferentes estudos da linguagem”.

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