

# Literature in EAL and the Importance of Praxis in Teacher Education

*This paper investigates the impact of a literature-based pedagogical intervention on the professional development of pre-service teachers of English, emphasizing the vital role of teacher education. Grounded in Sociocultural Historical Theory, the research follows a narrative of intercultural praxis, spanning the researcher's methodologies training at Michigan State University (MSU-USA) and a subsequent lecture at the University of Padua (Italy). Central to this intervention was pedagogical isomorphism, wherein pre-service teachers experienced literature-based strategies firsthand as learners. By engaging with a literary artifact through accessible instructional stages and methodological strategies, participants could internalize these approaches as doable psychological tools for future English as an Additional Language classrooms. Data generated from the written verbalizations of seven participants suggest a shift in teacher consciousness. The pre-service teachers moved away from the proficiency myth - the belief that literature is restricted to advanced learners - toward a perception of literature as a manageable and humanizing resource, regardless of the level of language acquisition. Their intentions to replicate these activities suggest that the pedagogical approach experienced during the intervention resonated with participants and informed their perceptions of future teaching practice. The article concludes that pedagogical isomorphism can constitute a transformative dimension of teacher education, fostering more inclusive and accessible approaches to literature in EAL classrooms.*

**Keywords:** *Sociocultural-Historical Theory, Perezhivanie, Teacher Education, Pedagogical Isomorphism, Creative Writing*

*Teenagers are not afraid of real literature—educators are.*  
(MacLean, 2010, p. 8)

## **Introduction: Bridging the Theory-Practice Gap through Intercultural Praxis**

In the field of Applied Linguistics, a persistent challenge remains the “theory/research-practice gap”, which Poehner and Lantolf (2014) define as an epistemological divide rooted in Western dualism. This divide often treats theory as an abstract discourse that is merely “applied” to the classroom from the outside, rather than seeing the two as a dialectical unity, or praxis. Such a gap is observed in the teaching of Literature within English as an Additional Language (EAL) contexts like public schools in Brazil or in Italy. Recent scholars have noted that the relationship between language acquisition and literature remains “uneasy,” often because many teachers implement literature without a clear theoretical conceptualization (Bloemert et al., 2019).

Empirical research highlighting this gap has increased in recent years. Italian researcher Sirico (2021) problematizes the lack of research on the specific

1 impacts of literature on language learning, noting that teachers often feel trapped  
 2 by rigid history-of-literature models or simple translation exercises found in  
 3 textbooks. Similarly, Urbanski (2023) identifies a “literacy gap” where beginner  
 4 and intermediate students of additional languages are often relegated to  
 5 mechanical decoding, while only “advanced” students are permitted to engage  
 6 in true interpretation and analysis. These challenges are often exacerbated by  
 7 the absence of literature-specific training in foreign language teacher education.  
 8 Luukka (2021) argues teachers often view it as a “challenging practice” or a  
 9 burden rather than a tool for personal growth because literature education is  
 10 frequently omitted from pedagogical training.

11 The present study responds to these voids through a process that we will call  
 12 intercultural pedagogical praxis. The intervention we discuss here was born out  
 13 of a transcultural exchange that began with the first author’s teacher training at  
 14 Michigan State University (MSU-USA), in 2018. This six-week methodologies  
 15 intensive course was a scholarship<sup>1</sup> awarded to public school teachers of English  
 16 in Brazil, and the experience, at first, led to the development of a PhD thesis on  
 17 the relevance of Literature in EAL school classrooms (Seerig, 2024). Along the  
 18 PhD journey, the same course mediated what may be observed as a  
 19 deconstruction of traditional paradigms among pre-service teachers at the  
 20 University of Padua (Italy), five years later.

21 Guided by Lev Vygotsky’s Sociocultural Historical Theory (SHT) and its  
 22 pedagogical imperative — the belief that the point of theory is not merely to  
 23 contemplate the world, but to change it — this article investigates how a short,  
 24 literature-inspired intervention can suggest shifts in teacher consciousness. By  
 25 employing pedagogical isomorphism<sup>2</sup> (Prieto & Gazoli, 2020), the same  
 26 methodology used by professors at MSU, the first researcher invited pre-service  
 27 teachers to experience literature first-hand as learners, allowing them to  
 28 internalize “practical tips” not as abstract concepts, but as doable mediating  
 29 artifacts (Swain et al., 2015) for their future classrooms.

30 Thus, the objective of this work is to investigate how such an intercultural  
 31 intervention could mediate the deconstruction of the “proficiency myth” (the  
 32 idea that literature is only for advanced learners) and reclaims literature-based  
 33 lessons as a psychological tool (Kozulin, 1998) for language development. This  
 34 study suggests that by shifting the cognitive attitudes of pre-service teachers  
 35 through pedagogical isomorphism, we can encourage a professional identity that  
 36 prioritizes intelligibility and human connection over the rigid imitation of native  
 37 model.

38 Through an analysis of written verbalizations provided by participants of  
 39 the intervention, the study demonstrates how even a brief encounter with a  
 40 literary text can engage the aesthetic *perezhivanie* (Vassilieva & Zavershneva,

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<sup>1</sup>A partnership between Fulbright and CAPES (Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior), fully funded by the Brazilian Government. The Program is called PDPI (Programa de Desenvolvimento de Professores de Inglês da rede pública).

<sup>2</sup>In the context of teacher education, this concept is defined as a methodological strategy where pre-service or in-service teachers firsthand experience the same strategies, methods, and approaches that they are expected to eventually implement with their own students.

1 2020) to provide for both teachers and students a move toward a prospective  
2 view of education (Kozulin, 1998), where they are encouraged to be authors of  
3 their own meaning. Additionally, this research claims the importance of  
4 investment in teacher education.

5 Our approach is grounded in Sociocultural Historical Theory (SHT), to  
6 which theory and practice are not treated as separate domains, but as a dialectical  
7 unity. Thus, the following section presents theoretical and methodological  
8 grounds intertwined.

### 11 **Theoretical and Methodological Grounds: A Praxis-Based Approach**

13 The pedagogical intervention explored in this study is situated within the  
14 framework of Sociocultural Historical Theory (SCT), which posits that human  
15 mental functioning is a mediated process organized by material and symbolic  
16 artifacts. Within this tradition, we reject the dualistic separation of theory and  
17 practice, instead adopting the concept of praxis — a dialectical unity where  
18 theoretical inquiry and classroom reality inform and transform one another.

19 To bridge the gap between academic methodology and classroom  
20 implementation, the intervention utilized pedagogical isomorphism (Prieto &  
21 Gazoli, 2020). This strategy claims that for pre-service teachers to effectively  
22 internalize a methodology, they must firsthand experience the same strategies  
23 they are expected to implement. By engaging with literary artifacts as learners,  
24 the participants in this study were able to move beyond the previously mentioned  
25 “proficiency myth” (Balboni, 2014) to perceive it as a doable and humanizing  
26 instructional resource. This approach allowed the first author’s training at  
27 Michigan State University (MSU) to act as a mediating artifact, facilitating a  
28 transcultural resonance that was subsequently passed on to the teachers in Padua.

29 We frame literature not merely as a subject of study, but as a “psychological  
30 supertool” (Kozulin, 1998) that mediates human experience. Vygotsky  
31 understood art as a “social technique of feelings” (Kozulin, 2016) that engages  
32 the learner on corporeal, emotional, and intellectual levels simultaneously. By  
33 utilizing literature for prospective education, we encourage a shift from the  
34 reproductive nature of traditional schooling toward a model of “life as authoring”  
35 (Kozulin, 1998). This, in turn, enables pre-service teachers to recognize creative  
36 writing as a vital tool for personal expression and emotional connection, evoking  
37 meaningful literacy (Hanauer, 2012), rather than a mere assessment of grammar.

38 To analyze the transformation of professional consciousness, we treat the  
39 participants’ “Exit Ticket” responses as written verbalizations. According to  
40 SCT, language understood as a communicative activity not only mediates social  
41 interaction but also regulates mental behavior. These verbalizations provide a  
42 record of how each participant refracted the intervention through their unique  
43 personal and professional histories.

44  
45

1 *The intercultural intervention context*

2

3

4 To better understand the intercultural intervention and the verbalizations we  
5 aim to analyse in this article, a brief contextualization is required. During the  
6 first author's PhD, a scholarship was granted to undertake a research exchange  
7 in another country, in another University. From Unisinos in Brazil, the  
8 researcher went to the University of Padua, in Italy, in order to investigate the  
9 literature experiences in public schools in another country where English was  
10 studied as an Additional Language, like Brazil.

11 As part of this exchange process, the visiting researcher presented some of  
12 the approaches to literature in English in the context of public schools  
13 (approaches she had previously learned at MSU and had already implemented in  
14 her own lessons) to a group of pre-service teachers taking their Master's Degree  
15 in Language Teaching. This is the intercultural intervention we aim to address,  
16 and it consists of two stages: the thesis research (Seerig, 2024), and a  
17 methodological session on how to work with literature in the classroom, without  
18 losing its character of Art (Hannauer, 2015; Luukka, 2021) . In the belief that  
19 much of the feedback we collect is not stated out loud, especially when we have  
20 a robust amount of participants (in this case, around fifty pre-service teachers),  
21 they were asked to answer a brief form<sup>3</sup> with their impressions of the two  
22 meetings. This form was called "Exit ticket", mocking the teaching method used  
23 to collect questions, learnings and feedback from students in regular school  
24 classes. Seven participants engaged in responding, and they brought interesting  
25 perspectives, considering also their own experiences as English language  
26 learners in Italy.

27 The data discussed here consists of the answers provided spontaneously by  
28 these seven respondents. These responses are understood as verbalizations, that  
29 is, for the SHT, a communicative activity that mediates mental behavior  
30 (Urbanski, 2023). When the participants wrote their "Exit Tickets", they were  
31 explaining their emerging understanding of how to teach literature in EAL, and  
32 through this data we aim to discuss the impacts of the intervention.

33 Another important aspect to be presented refers to how this intervention was  
34 planned and carried out by the researcher. One of the important aspects in the  
35 intensive course at MSU consisted of *experiencing* the contact with literature in  
36 the same way one of our future English language learners would. This particular  
37 aspect of the course helped participants internalize their learning through living  
38 it - not merely by reading grand amounts of theoretical material. This approach  
39 provides an example of what we had earlier presented as praxis (Poehner &  
40 Lantolf, 2014), that is, the dialectical unity for theory/research-practice. In the  
same way, the intervention at the University of Padua was carried out in a

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<sup>3</sup>Questions in the form (open-ended):

1. How did you feel about using literature in school before this talk and how do you feel now?
2. Is there anything new that you learnt today? What did you like?
3. Would you find a workshop on how to use literature in the classroom useful?
4. Please make any other comments or suggestions on quality, clarity, usefulness of this talk.  
Leave your contact info or contact me, if you like!

1 manner that led pre-service teachers to experience how the literary text may be  
2 *experienced* by their learners, too, in their future lessons. Additionally, this  
3 makes the episode more memorable: a good piece of literature, when language  
4 development allows for its comprehension, is always memorable, as an artistic  
5 artifact to mediate feelings and expand human potential (Kozulin, 2016;  
6 Vassilieva & Zavershneva, 2020). This was a perspective the intervention aimed  
7 to address.

8 This particular form of praxis in which the teacher-learner experiences the  
9 activity in the same manner as their own learners would is known as pedagogical  
10 isomorphism (Prieto & Gazoli, 2020). That is, instead of simply suggesting them  
11 to work with the poem “Bluebird”, by Bukowski, by stating its interesting  
12 language, resonance with teenage experiences, and the emotions evoked, the  
13 intervention was begun with the reading, as the teacher-researcher’s regular  
14 language classes would. Pre-service teachers were allowed to experience the  
15 poem as learners: they were first introduced to vocabulary that could cause  
16 interruptions to the flow of reading. Then, they all looked at the poem together,  
17 as the teacher-researcher read it out loud. After gathering comments from the  
18 group, a second reading, with pauses, and an invitation to highlight particular  
19 verses that impacted them provided more room for expanding the poem’s wide  
20 interpretations. This firsthand encounter with the “Bluebird” activity served as a  
21 mediating artifact of their experience with language. The aesthetic impact they  
22 felt (their aesthetic *perezhivanie*) allowed them to internalize the strategy not just  
23 as a “tip” but as a meaningful, doable practice for their own future classrooms.  
24 Having experienced the potential of this approach during training at MSU, the  
25 first author designed the intervention to investigate whether similar forms of  
26 engagement would emerge among the participating pre-service teachers.

27 The study shares characteristics with practitioner inquiry and action-  
28 research traditions since a proposal was held by the practitioner-researcher in  
29 order to observe prospective changes in the environment where the intervention  
30 was held. This also emphasises the researcher's self-study and the fruitfulness of  
31 a practitioner’s inquiry into their own educational environment. This approach  
32 values the practical knowledge generated by teachers to improve instruction,  
33 shifting the focus from statistical generalization to the qualitative depth of  
34 professional transformation (Locke et al., 2013).

35 Data that emerged from respondents correspond to certain aspects of the  
36 SHT, such as the recently revisited Vygotskian concept of *perezhivanie*  
37 (Kozulin, 2016; Vassilieva & Zavershneva, 2020). As the creator of the term,  
38 Vygotsky defined *perezhivanie* as the “unit of analysis of a social situation of  
39 development” (SSD) (Fleer et al., 2017, p. 11). He used it to represent the holistic  
40 unity of affect and intellect, arguing that mind and body, or thought and emotion,  
41 are inseparable (Swain, Kinnear & Steinman, 2015). It is often translated into  
42 English as “experience”, “emotional experience” and “lived experience”  
43 (Lantolf & Swain, 2019; Liberali & Fuga, 2018) and scholars struggle to find an  
44 equivalent term in English. As it is both an experience and content, it can be  
45 understood as “how someone experiences something and what is in fact  
46 experienced” (Lantolf & Swain, 2019, p. 82).

1 In this sense, the concept of *perezhivanie* as this internal prism, a refractor  
2 of the experiences we engage in (Fleer et al., 2017; Lantolf & Swain, 2019), may  
3 be firsthand considered to analyse the value of data presented: each of the  
4 respondents experienced the intervention in their own particular terms, and each  
5 of their spontaneous responses configure a complete and legitimate unit of study  
6 through their written verbalizations.

7 Written verbalizations were read repeatedly and analyzed through a  
8 qualitative interpretive procedure informed by SCT. Particular attention was  
9 paid to verbalizations indicating changes in participants' perceptions of  
10 literature, teacher identity, and classroom practice. The following section  
11 presents data generated after the intercultural intervention held at the University  
12 of Padua, in 2023. After this, the analysis of the written verbalizations is  
13 developed.

#### 14 15 16 **Data presentation: written verbalizations**

17  
18 This section divides the written verbalizations of seven respondents in two  
19 tables that refer to the two main questions. The first question in the Exit Ticket  
20 was: "How did you feel about using literature in school before this talk and how  
21 do you feel now?". Participants are organized by number, in Table 1. The most  
22 relevant parts of their verbalizations are highlighted in bold for further  
23 discussion.

24  
25 **Table 1.** *Pre-service teachers' written verbalizations to the first question about*  
26 *my lecture*

Part.	Answer
1	I liked it and I'm more excited about it now!
2	Even before the class, I was aware that using literature in class can be useful, but not on so many layers. I mostly recognised the value in terms of variety of language, breaking the monotony of the class and offering something new and refreshing. <b>I did not know that you can work with literature even on the lower levels and that it has so much benefits in terms of emotional connection with the language, reducing language learning anxiety and also putting the focus on the students as well.</b> Literature helps the students to relate to real life situation and the language they will find outside the classroom and can help with dealing with topics of social justice, taking the language learning class to the whole new level. It seems to be highly beneficial in terms of practicing pronunciation and intonation. <b>Lastly, I was astonished with the analysis of the literature produced by the students. Writing about their emotions and giving meaning to the language is beneficial on so many levels.</b> Honestly, I am amazed and surprised that literature is not used more in language learning classes. There is so much you can do with it and I am sure that the ideas we covered in class is just the beginning.
3	I always felt literature is a great tool for motivating students.
4	I was afraid to use literature in my classroom. When I was a student, <b>I was always told my interpretations were wrong. So it feels like I could only do it wrong.</b> Now I feel more encouraged to do it and just have fun with my students working in poetry.
5	I've always thought that literature can be useful, interesting and engaging. However that was not my experience with literature because I have always felt like it was an obligation to deal with it (due to the traditional educative system we find ourselves into)

	and not something to enjoy both on a more immediate and on a deeper personal level. <b>After our talk I realized that it's possible to embrace also in an educational setting all the beautiful possibilities that the nature of literature itself brings to the table.</b>
6	I really like literature and I had a great experience in high school <b>because I loved my teacher</b> and she always seemed so good at her job. For this reason even before this talk I was pretty confident about using it in class. One day I will be able to teach English here in espo and I will for sure include literature even in small bits. After <b>this talk</b> I am even more confident about it and how to introduce it. <b>I really enjoyed the practical tips</b> and I will for sure replicate some of them.
7	I felt it was a big challenge to get my students interest and keep them focus and engaged. Now I <b>know that literature is not only the "big books", and students can approach the concept of literature itself, and get used to it before moving to the big scary literature.</b>

1 *Source:* Made by the author.  
2

3 Pre-service teachers' verbalizations in Table 1 reveal the resonance between  
4 the researcher-instructor's pedagogical aim and the participants' written  
5 verbalization, with a shared commitment to make English language classes  
6 meaningful through the mediation of literature. These verbalizations can be seen  
7 as a sample for their emerging professional identities.

8 The second question was: "Is there anything new that you learnt today?  
9 What did you like?" Their answers are presented in Table 2.

10  
11 **Table 2.** *Pre-service teachers' written verbalizations to the second question*  
12 *about my lecture*

Part.	Answer
1	I'm not ready to teach yet!
2	I think I covered this in the answer to the previous question.
3	I really liked this lesson, all of the attention to teaching languages using literature <b>while being aware of students' interests and abilities.</b>
4	That <b>poetry can be fun.</b>
5	lot but what <b>struck with me the most is the many possibilities that creative writing</b> experience as a student was quite different because <b>in Italy</b> we are always asked during Italian creative pieces of writing. As I kid I used to love it but then as a teenager teachers would start for assessing our abilities with grammar, the language etc. <b>I remember that the first time I my teacher got mad I because I liked being somewhat funny in my writing and was not appropriate for an educative setting.</b> I started disliking writing and these few years I realize again that creative writing can be about expressing yourself, your feelings and your thoughts as a person. <b>It can help you connect with emotions and people and I was able to remember why I enjoyed it so much.</b>
6	<b>I liked the "present" idea. Starting the day with a poem was mind blowing. I see myself doing that also with a quote or a painting.</b>
7	I really like <b>the ways to get students close to the concept of literature with them barely noticing it. It can be very helpful to prepare students to study and love literature.</b>

13 *Source:* made by the author.

14 In Table 2, the details regarding what participants found most inspiring—  
15 such as the "present" idea (Participant 6) and the possibilities of creative writing  
16 (Participant 5)—underscore the effectiveness of pedagogical isomorphism. By  
17 experiencing the "Bluebird" activity firsthand as learners, these future teachers  
18 internalized the methodology as a doable and humanizing practice for their own

1 future classrooms. Even the seemingly negative awareness of not being “ready  
2 to teach” (Participant 1) can be interpreted as a “dramatic event” that exposes  
3 the tension between past paradigms and a budding professional consciousness.

4 The subsequent section moves beyond these initial observations to provide  
5 a structured analysis of the written verbalizations, understood as refractions  
6 (Fleer et al., 2017) of the intervention. Through the lens of Sociocultural  
7 Historical Theory, three interconnected thematic shifts emerged from  
8 participants' responses: (a) the deconstruction of the proficiency myth through  
9 methodology, (b) the transformation of dramatic educational experiences into  
10 prospective authoring, and (c) the role of aesthetic perezhivanie in understanding  
11 literature as a humanizing gift. Together, these themes illustrate how  
12 pedagogical isomorphism may foster transformative experiences in teacher  
13 education, enabling future teachers to reimagine both literature and their own  
14 pedagogical practice.

## 15 16 17 **Data analysis: Refractions on the Padua Intercultural Intervention'**

### 18 19 *a) Deconstructing the “Proficiency Myth” through Methodology*

20  
21 One of the main reasons that lead public school language teachers to avoid  
22 literature regards to the wide variety of proficiency levels we encounter in our  
23 classrooms (Seerig, 2018, 2024). Participant 7’s realization that literature is not  
24 restricted to "big scary books" (Table 1) signifies a major paradigm shift in their  
25 perception as a teacher-to-be. This mirrors Balboni’s (2014) argument that the  
26 difficulty of working with literature in the EAL classroom is a methodological  
27 problem, not a student proficiency problem. The reflection on that matter is  
28 repeated by the same participant again (Table 2) when stating their amazement  
29 on working with literary aspects with “them barely noticing it”.

30 In a similar manner, participant 5 (Table 1) stated their understanding of  
31 literature as “useful, interesting and engaging”, but described her difficulty in  
32 dissociating it from an “obligation” when put into the classroom. Participant 5’s  
33 words resemble the first author’s perception of literature prior to the scholarship  
34 at MSU. Thus, by employing pedagogical isomorphism, the intervention  
35 provided "practical tips" that allowed these future teachers to internalize  
36 literature as a doable psychological tool, bridging their theory and practice  
37 successfully. Finally, they perceived that literature can be engaging regardless  
38 of their students' language levels, as Participant 2 (Table 1) defined: “I did not  
39 know that you can work with literature even on the lower levels (...)”. This was  
40 one of the main points of the intervention.

### 41 42 *b) Dramatic Events and Prospective Authoring*

43  
44 Veresov (2017) argues that development does not happen through every  
45 social interaction, but specifically through deep, "dramatic" encounters that are  
46 refracted by the individual’s prism to become higher mental functions. The

1 responses from Participants 4 and 5 (Table 1) and Participant 5 (Table 2)  
 2 highlight how past experiences with literature in their own education acted as  
 3 demotivators. These past experiences can be analysed, in the lens of SHT, as  
 4 such dramatic events that once shaped their perception of literature in the  
 5 classroom. For these participants, the lecture acted as a mediated intervention  
 6 that allowed them to re-process these past “dramatic events” (or maybe live a  
 7 new one!) and reach a new level of professional consciousness. Their  
 8 expressions reframed nomenclature for literature is more related to the realm of  
 9 emotions and beauty, precisely where elements of art should delve in our human  
 10 development: “Now I feel more *encouraged* to do it and *just have fun* with my  
 11 students working in poetry” and “... it’s possible to *embrace* also in an  
 12 educational setting all the *beautiful* possibilities that the *nature of literature itself*  
 13 brings to the table”.

14 Additionally, Participant 4’s fear of “being wrong” illustrates the  
 15 retrospective nature of traditional schooling, which focuses on reproducing  
 16 “correct” answers and is criticised by SCT scholars (Kozulin, 1998). In contrast,  
 17 the intervention encouraged a shift toward prospective education, where learners  
 18 are supported in “authoring” their own meanings, instead of simply reproducing  
 19 what is being imposed (Kozulin, 1998). This can be observed in Participant 5’s  
 20 “dramatic event” (Table 2) regarding suppressed sense of humor through writing  
 21 (“I started disliking writing”). This episode was recalled by them because one of  
 22 the final provocations of the intervention was related to proposing language  
 23 learners to write poetry in the target language (one of the optimistic learnings  
 24 and findings of the first author’s PhD thesis). Then they claim: “these few hours  
 25 together made me realize again that creative writing can be about *expressing*  
 26 *yourself*, your *feelings* and can say a lot about you as a person. It can help you  
 27 *connect with emotions* and people and I was able to remember why I enjoyed it  
 28 so much.” In this sense, intervention acted as a mediating artifact, and the written  
 29 verbalization allowed them to re-process these memories and recognize creative  
 30 writing as a vital tool for personal expression and emotional connection, very  
 31 much aligning with Hanauer’s belief on the importance of “meaningful literacy”  
 32 (Hanauer, 2012), as he argues that poetry writing is a way of “humanizing” the  
 33 classroom by putting the learner’s authentic experience at the center. The shift  
 34 observed in Participant 5 - moving from a suppressed sense of humor to a  
 35 reclaimed joy in creative expression - aligns with the findings of Vautier (2015),  
 36 who argues that bilingual poetic writing provides a unique “mental space” for  
 37 individuals to reflect on personal histories and reach a level of psychic comfort  
 38 with past conflictual encounters (also Swain & Lantolf, 2019). By treating the  
 39 literary text as a site for subjective development, the intervention allowed the  
 40 pre-service teachers to move beyond mechanical decoding toward the expression  
 41 of the “ineffable” aspects of their professional and personal selves.

42 Allowing language learners to write in a freer, more poetic manner even in  
 43 less proficient stages helps them develop a more affectionate relationship with  
 44 language, or even to *think* in English on their own (Seerig, 2024). Recent  
 45 research by Bon and Charubusp (2024) indicates that while many educators  
 46 acknowledge the value of diverse linguistic varieties, they often remain tethered

1 to native-speaker norms as the only “standard” for teaching. Thus, offering this  
 2 opportunity as an EAL teacher means to deconstruct the “proficiency myth” once  
 3 again, by allowing learners to explore the new language with more feeling and  
 4 less correction.

5 Participant 2 (Table 1) commented on their astonishment when presented  
 6 with high school learners’ writings produced in English in the PhD research  
 7 (Seerig, 2024): “I was astonished with the analysis of the literature produced by  
 8 the students. Writing about their emotions and giving meaning to the language  
 9 is beneficial on so many levels. Honestly, I am amazed and surprised that  
 10 literature is not used more in language learning classes”. For Participant 5 and  
 11 Participant 2, their written verbalizations seemed to be a major shift in the  
 12 pedagogical and personal perception on creative writing for this person. The  
 13 reflections on the possibilities of creative writing align with the researcher’s own  
 14 transformation during the PhD, framing the university classroom as a site for re-  
 15 authoring the professional self.

### 16 17 *c) Aesthetic Perekhivanie and the “Gift” of Literature*

18  
19 During the intervention, the poem (“Bluebird”, by Charles Bukowski) was  
 20 delivered to participants as a “present”. This is why Participant 6 (Table 2) stated  
 21 “I liked the “present” idea. Starting the day with a poem was mind blowing.”  
 22 Although not being completely aware by the time the researcher adopted this  
 23 nomenclature - learnt from professor Amy Kroeshe at MSU - one can claim that  
 24 this strategy of conceptualizing a work of literature as a "present" promotes a  
 25 shift in consciousness where art is viewed as a social technique of feelings  
 26 (Kozulin, 2016), precisely as Vygotsky understood it. In fact, Participant 6  
 27 considered using other works of art as a present to students. This contact with  
 28 literature not as part of work or of a task, but as a moment of fruition, engaged  
 29 the participants on an emotional and intellectual level simultaneously, surprising  
 30 them with the accessibility of poetry and with their pedagogical possibilities.  
 31 Following the tradition of Hanauer (2012) and Hogan (2015), the intervention  
 32 presented literature not as a static, canonical museum piece (as Participant 7  
 33 defined, “scary literature”), but as an “emotional calibrator” and a “super tool.”  
 34 It serves as a mediator that facilitates the development of higher mental functions  
 35 by bridging the gap between external linguistic input and internal emotional  
 36 state.

37 The respondents’ written verbalization demonstrate that the research  
 38 presented and the firsthand interactions resonated deeply with them, in many  
 39 levels, as defined by Participant 2 (Table 1), who summarized some of the main  
 40 points of the intervention whilst showing the shift in her perceptions of literature  
 41 in the classroom, in a way that is more aligned with the proposed in the  
 42 intervention: “Literature helps the students to relate to real life situation and the  
 43 language they will find outside the classroom and can help with dealing with  
 44 topics of social justice, taking the language learning class to the whole new level.  
 45 It seems to be highly beneficial in terms of practicing pronunciation and  
 46 intonation. (...) Honestly, I am amazed and surprised that literature is not used

1 more in language learning classes”. Another shift in pedagogical perception is  
 2 simply stated by participant 4, who claimed that the learning was “That poetry  
 3 can be fun.” - which indicates a previous perception that was opposed to that.

4 All of these perceptions of the same event (the intercultural intervention)  
 5 may be framed under the concept of Aesthetic *perezhivanie* (Vassilieva &  
 6 Zavershneva, 2020), defined by the holistic unity of the subjective (the  
 7 participants’ feelings and understanding) and the objective (the intervention, the  
 8 poem and the classroom environment) and the very individual perceptions of  
 9 each of them. All, however, seemed to be guided towards reflection on what  
 10 pedagogical frameworks guided them before and after the meeting, in terms of  
 11 literature and creative writing in the EAL classroom.

12 Finally, the first respondent’s admission (Table 2), "I’m not ready to teach  
 13 yet!", is interpreted not as a failure of the intervention, but as a "dramatic event"  
 14 (Veresov, 2017) that exposed the gap between the participant's past paradigms  
 15 and an emerging professional consciousness. In the framework of the Zone of  
 16 Proximal Development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978), this awareness represents the  
 17 “budding” stage of development; the tension created by a multitude of new ideas  
 18 serves as a necessary step toward eventually mastering literature as a mediating  
 19 artifact for the classroom. Professor Novello later revealed that most of their  
 20 final papers on her subject dwelt on literature in EAL, which made the researcher  
 21 feel a sense of accomplishment for inspiring other colleagues.

#### 24 **Final thoughts: watering the buds through teacher education**

25  
 26 The resonance between the participants’ feedback and the first author’s own  
 27 professional trajectory underscores the dialectical unity of praxis. These  
 28 responses, treated as written verbalizations, reveal how the Padua intervention  
 29 served as a catalyst for a transformed professional *perezhivanie*.

30 The stated intention of some participants (Participants 4, 5, 6, 7) to replicate  
 31 the strategies during the intercultural intervention suggests the effectiveness of  
 32 pedagogical isomorphism as a means to understand the experience their students  
 33 may have. By experiencing the Bukowski poem as an aesthetic *perezhivanie* -  
 34 an unexpected “present” for the learner (Participant 6) - the pre-service teachers  
 35 internalized the “practical tips” not as abstract theories, but as doable and  
 36 meaningful psychological supertools. Their realization that students can be  
 37 guided toward literature “barely noticing it” (Participant 7) confirms that the  
 38 intervention successfully mediated the deconstruction of traditional EAL myths,  
 39 supporting the view that literary artifacts are viable and essential resources even  
 40 in regular school contexts.

41 The findings suggest that even a single, literature-inspired intervention can  
 42 trigger new developmental “buds” within the professional identity of pre-service  
 43 teachers. Since the intervention would not have been possible without the course  
 44 provided by CAPES to Brazilian public school English teachers in 2018, this  
 45 paper demonstrates the importance of teacher education and the circular  
 46 movement a researcher can build, being led to a PhD, a scholarship abroad and

1 the sharing of knowledge with other pre-service teachers. Such a movement  
2 could be named as intercultural praxis.

3 In accordance with Vygotsky’s metaphor for demonstrating his ZPD  
4 concept (1978), teacher education must distinguish between “fruits” (already  
5 matured functions) and “buds” (functions in the process of maturation).  
6 Authentic praxis does not merely harvest the fruits of existing competency; it  
7 actively waters the buds of future potential. In this sense, pedagogical  
8 isomorphism may offer a valuable pathway for teacher education, enabling  
9 future educators to experience, internalize, and later recreate transformative  
10 encounters with literature in their own classrooms.

### 11 12 13 **Acknowledgements**

14  
15 The authors would like to express their deepest gratitude to the Coordenação  
16 de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior (CAPES) for the financial  
17 support provided through the PhD scholarship and the PDSE (Programa de  
18 Doutorado Sanduíche no Exterior) scholarship. We also thank the Federal  
19 Institute of Education, Science and Technology of Rio Grande do Sul (IFRS) for  
20 granting the first author the necessary leave for exclusive dedication to this  
21 research.

22 Special thanks are extended to the first author’s supervisors, Prof. Dr. Cátia  
23 de Azevedo Fronza (Unisinos), co-authoring this research, and Prof. Dr. Alberta  
24 Novello (University of Padua), whose guidance, patience, and academic rigor  
25 were fundamental to the completion of the PhD. We also recognize the  
26 invaluable contributions of the MSU Methodologies course instructors and the  
27 participants in Padua and Brazil, whose spontaneous refractions made this  
28 practitioner inquiry possible.

29 AI Disclosure. Google NotebookLM was used in a limited capacity to assist  
30 in reviewing and organizing concepts from references previously selected and  
31 analyzed by the author and compiled in a reference sheet. All factual content,  
32 interpretations, methodological decisions, and written text were reviewed and  
33 verified by the author, who assumes full responsibility for the manuscript.

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