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Studying the Concept of Love in Language Education: a Review of Studies Within the Critical Approach[1]

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Abstract:
Love is a universal emotion and phenomenon. Despite its importance, this concept has not been the focus of studies in language education, with a few exceptions. This reticence and uneasiness in researching love in academia and in education is considered to be related to misconceptions about love that equate it only to intimate relationships and family matters (PATIENCE, 2008), as well as exclusively to romantic love (VINCENT, 2010). In this paper, I review some international studies that have focused on the concept of love in education from a critical perspective. In order to do that, I first review the crisis we are living today, which makes it ever more important to talk about love. Next, I discuss six studies which investigated the concept of love within the critical approach (in the North American context). I conclude suggesting reflections and implications for practice and summarizing the main elements of a critical revolutionary love approach to language teacher education and language learning and teaching.

Keywords:
Love. Critical approach. Language education.

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Introduction

> *Without love, our efforts to liberate ourselves and our world community from oppression and exploitation are doomed. As long as we refuse to address fully the place of love in struggles for liberation, we will not be able to create a culture of conversion where there is a mass turning away from an ethic of domination* (HOOKS, 2006, p. 243).

Love is a universal emotion and phenomenon – one that has called the attention of many philosophers and researchers across time and disciplines, such as Freire (1996, 2005), Buscaglia (2016), and Hooks (2000), just to mention a few. Thus, as one of the eight core virtues[2] common across almost all religions and philosophical traditions, it is not a new topic for academic exploration (SELIGMAN, 2002, cited in VINCENT 2010, p. 16-17).

Despite its universality, there is still reticence and uneasiness about love in academia and in education, as explained by Barcelos and Coelho (2016) and Vincent (2010). Talking about love is at best, seen with suspicion. This uneasiness towards the term may be due to a restricted view of love, which equates it with intimate and adult romantic/erotic exclusively heterosexual relationships, personal and family matters (GOLDSTEIN, 1997, p. 17; PATIENCE, 2008; VINCENT, 2010). This popularized, trivialized view of love portrays it as one-dimensional and commodified concept (BYRON, 2011, p. 1-2). Byron (2011) explains that this commodification of emotions benefits capitalist interests, without bringing satisfaction or meaning to our lives. In addition, this superficial and trivialized view of love does not leave room for its transformative potential and neither does it help us in trying to reach an understanding of love in education. This is mainly because, firstly, in the neoliberal world, love is seen as difficult to measure and unresearchable (GOLDSTEIN, 1997). Secondly, in general, love is equated to lack of rigor, which is a myth, as already suggested by Paulo Freire (1996) and as reviewed by Barcelos and Coelho (2016). Finally, love makes us vulnerable. This was especially true during the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of us feared failing and emotionally giving of ourselves. Some of us also felt vulnerable to our students' judgement and, sometimes, to their apparent indifference to our teaching (one of the biggest complaints of teachers I have spoken to was that students did not turn on their cameras on virtual classes).

In this paper, I discuss the concept of love by reviewing some international studies about it in the field of education from a critical perspective. Besides this introduction, I start by, first, reporting on the crisis we are living in today, which makes it ever more important to talk about love. I then review studies on the concept of love within the critical approach, in order to understand how it is defined from a critical perspective. I conclude with reflections and implications of revolutionary love for language teacher education and language learning and teaching.

[2] "Seligman (2002, p. 133) identified wisdom and knowledge, courage, love and humanity, justice, temperance, and spirituality and transcendence as the common virtues of humanity" (VINCENT, 2010, p. 16-17).

The Post-modern World we are Living in: Reasons to Bring in Love

Several authors who have researched the concept of love in education have described the post-modernist contemporary world scenario we are living in, which is characterized by:

a) *Heartbreak/dysfunction*: Colonna and Nix-Stevenson (2013) describe the heartbreak, disease, dysfunction, and corruption that we are experiencing, along with "a system of unearned privileges, mixed with limited access to an education that fragments knowledge into separate spheres of importance" (COLONNA; NIX-STEVENSON, 2013, p. 6).
b) *Cycles of indignation and dominant anger discourses*: Hattam and Zembylas (2010, p. 28-29) explain the prevailing affective economy of conflict in which anger is seen as something natural and integral to the dominant model of political activity, often characterized in terms of the sequence: suffering–anger–revolt. Lanas and Zembylas (2015b) suggest love as a revolutionary power to break the cycles of indignation.
c) *Utilitarian pedagogy*: According to Patience (2008, p. 58), utilitarian pedagogy refers to some preferred contemporary teaching practices, that focus on isolation, exclusion of "a sympathetic understanding of the cultural Other while promoting an ego defensiveness and anti-social narcissism". Patience (2008) believes that this utilitarian pedagogy in the classroom results in:
    a. *The friendship deficit in the classroom*: according to Patience (2008), oversized classes have aggravated too many contemporary teacher-student relatings, which are often characterized by emotional distance, repression of feelings and cynical attitudes. Patience (2008) believes that affective pedagogy can overcome this deficit;
    b. *Neo-liberal economics and curriculum*: this refers to a curriculum that focus on a productive, efficient and disciplined workforce; performance rather than understanding; and students' "skills acquisition, conditioning and mental programming" (PATIENCE, 2008, p. 63);
    c. *A cult for multimedia learning technologies*: Patience (2008) believes that some multimedia strategies in most educational and higher educational contexts can "minimise the relatings between teachers and students" (PATIENCE, 2008, p. 63)[3]. Although Patience recognizes the power of the internet as an educational resource, she believes that because of the cult for multimedia pedagogies, discussion, interaction, conversation, and dialogue have been marginalized. She criticizes the lack of place for nurturing and mentoring in schools nowadays and says that they are "handled therapeutically, by professional counsellors, not by teachers" (PATIENCE, 2008, p. 63).

In Brazil, the current scenario for teachers has worsened with more and more teachers complaining of mental health problems, anxiety symptoms, stress and headaches, weakness, and fear of going to work. Research[4] has revealed that some teachers have experienced psychological problems mainly due to depression, security situations, violence, low status of the teaching profession in Brazil, students' disrespect, low salaries, crowded classrooms and exhausting schedules. This may also explain why in a review of Brazilian language teacher's emotions (BARCELOS; ARAGÃO, 2018), negative emotions such as fear, frustration, and sadness seemed to prevail. During the pandemic, these problems increased, especially due to social isolation and inequities between students and teachers who have access to technological resources and those who do not.

[3] Patience (2008) uses the word *relatings*, instead of relationship to avoid the kinds of connotations about this word when talking about student-teacher relationship.

[4] Available at: https://observatorio3setor.org.br/noticias/60-dos-professores-sofrem-com-ansiedade-e-estresse/#.XaijDlQNsAw.facebook. Retrieved on January 9th, 2022.

Given these scenarios, researching, talking, and teaching about love is important for mainly three reasons: First, love is an extraordinary force that can propel us into the direction of making changes. Second, love is important for students' mental health and well-being; love is necessary in a world that has lost its human touch. Thirdly and finally, love helps us in the education of citizens "embracing the human experience in all its complexities and possibilities at intellectual *and* emotional levels. This entails the cultivation of purposeful, mature relatings between teachers and students" (PATIENCE, 2008, p. 58).

In view of this, we can say that concept of love has started to make its way into a lot of many different fields, under different names, showing that perhaps, the taboo is starting to dissolve. Gidley (2016), for instance, talks about post-formal pedagogies and many recent developments that have allowed us to talk about pedagogical love. According to her, "Evolutionary spiritual development, and the related post-formal qualities are supported by educational styles that emphasize care, contemplation, empathy, love and reverence". She shows the importance of the concept of love in education by citing several authors and researchers who have talked about the concept of love[5]. She calls "these interrelated clusters of evolutionary and educational research and practice under the core value of *pedagogical love*" (GIDLEY, 2016, p. 4).

Critical Approach to Love in Education

In my survey of research on the concept of love during my post-doctoral in 2019, I surprisingly found many studies on love (for all the approaches to love, please see (BARCELOS, 2019). Many of these investigated the concept love from a critical perspective. In this section, I summarize them within this framework.

The critical approach to love is mainly based on Freire's work and his pedagogy of love[6] in education. Table 1 illustrates these studies and the terms used about love (arranged in chronological order):

Table 1 - Terms about love used in the Studies in the Critical Approach.

Authors/papers	Type	Terms used
Chabot (2008)	Theoretical	*Revolutionary love*
Schoder (2010)	Empirical	*Love/Freire's pedagogy of love*
Byron (2011)	Empirical	*Love/Pedagogy of love*
Douglas & Nganga (2015)	Theoretical	*Radical love*
Colonna & Nix-Stevenson (2013)	Theoretical	*Radical love*
Lanas & Zembylas (2015b)	Theoretical	*Revolutionary love*
Lanas & Zembylas (2015a)	Empirical	*Revolutionary love*
Smith & Campbell (2018)	Empirical	*Freirean pedagogy of love*

Source: Author (2022).

[5] "[…] care (Noddings 2003), contemplation (Altobello 2007; Brady 2007), empathy (Palmer 1998), love (Nava 2001; Zajonc 2005b) and reverence (Steiner 1909/1965; Whitehead 1916/1967). Related educational approaches include the spirituality in education movement (Glazer 1994; G. Woods et al. 1997; de Souza 2006; Erricker et al. 2001), contemplative and transformative pedagogies (Altobello 2007; Brady 2007; Hart 2001a; Zajonc 2005a); social and emotional education (Goleman 1997) and integral and holistic educational approaches (Esbjörn-Hargens 2006; J. Miller, P. 2000; R. Miller 2000)" (p. 4).

[6] Freire (1996) used the term *Pedagogia da Amorosidade* (pedagogy of love/pedagogy of amorosity).

In this section, I comment first on the theoretical papers about revolutionary love (CHABOT, 2008; COLONNA; NIX-STEVENSON, 2013; DOUGLAS; NGANGA, 2015; LANAS; ZEMBYLAS, 2015b), and then, on the empirical studies that investigated love (BYRON, 2011; LANAS; ZEMBYLAS, 2015a; SCHODER, 2010; SMITH; CAMPBELL, 2018). I discuss them in chronological order.

Douglas and Nganga (2015) use Paulo Freire's concept of *radical love* to talk exclusively about teacher education. They criticize current teacher education practices that are reduced to technical issues. According to the authors, prospective teachers need to learn more than best practices to teach diverse students and teacher education programs need to include the complex social-political and economic scenarios schools are situated in (DOUGLAS; NGANGA, 2015, p. 59). Thus, they suggest Freire's radical love as a way to open up spaces for dialogue and prepare educators who are willing to examine their own values and assumptions when working with diverse students. The authors explain that pre-service teachers need to have the space in their teacher education programs to interrogate their assumptions and also question their own positionalities and how they enact radical love in their own classrooms. This is possible by using critical pedagogy and by giving opportunities for students to learn about and inquire critically regarding the role that society has played in their education. Douglas and Nganga (2015) explain that Freire's (1993) notion of radical love embraces a commitment to dialogue and non-oppressive practices (contrary to the banking system of education), and is founded in love, humility and faith and requires a mutual trust between people. This kind of love privileges marginalized voices and will help liberate students from ignorance and oppression. In this kind of love teachers are facilitators and co-learners who look to create spaces for dialogue and enact a practice that helps them question their beliefs towards culturally, ethnically, and linguistically diverse students.

Colonna and Nix-Stevenson (2013, p. 7) talk about radical love and characterize it as "acts of kindness, balanced policy-making and honest concern for all of those around us". They also believe that critical pedagogy is one way to understand radical love, since it provides this space of resistance, reflection and imagination of different possibilities of existence. Their view of radical love is based on three guidelines. The first one refers to the concept of engaged pedagogy (HOOKS, 1994), which is related to teaching rooted in understanding students as whole people (mind, body and soul). The second is based on critical pedagogy and critical spiritual pedagogy that refers to service to others for the community as a whole. The idea of service is based on equity (not equality), i.e., service to all and social justice in everything. The third and last factor refers to conversation, or the willingness to engage in conversations from a loving perspective. Staying in the conversations means listening intently, being curious about others and the world that connects us, and having empathy for others.

Chabot's (2008) and Lanas and Zembylas' (2015b) papers use the term *revolutionary love* and I discuss their views next. Chabot (2008, p. 808) believes that love and revolution need to re-conceptualized because of the presence of contemporary forms of alienation, competition, and personal ambitions in today's societies, and in order to form more authentic human relationships. The view of revolutionary love defended by Chabot (2008, p. 808) goes against the conventional and common view of love as belonging to our inner circle of family and intimate friends, which, according to him, ignores social inclusion, transformation and justice. In order to have a deeper understanding of love, we need to focus on human relationships. Thus, to Chabot (2008, p. 809), genuine love involves "connections among social individuals who work together toward a common purpose while validating each person's uniqueness". Loving relationships refer to joint acts between people who, for shorter or longer periods, contribute to a shared understanding on a specific course of action or project. In education, this means to promote (and rely on) genuine love when they engage in "dialogue and collaboration with students, and treat them as equally significant co-investigators in projects aimed at understanding and changing oppressive conditions in their social worlds" (CHABOT, 2008, p. 810).

Chabot (2008) explains that this genuine love is never complete and that some people and some communications and interactions can be more loving than others and thus, it is necessary to see which spaces and social structures encourage us to learn the art of loving or not. Yet, according to Chabot, we are always capable of creating new spaces for hope, in small or large scales, or even imaginary structures for loving and

learning to develop more loving relationships and meaningful dialogues. Revolutionary love requires "constant effort through *giving, care, responsibility, respect and knowledge*" (CHABOT, 2008, p. 812). He explains these terms as follows:

> Care refers to the emotional and practical concern of one human for other humans and it is active and involves work. Responsibility implies a person's ability and willingness to respond to the psychological as well as physical needs of other persons. Respect means reaching out and relating to other people, while encouraging them to develop for their own sake and in their own ways. Respect requires subjective autonomy and freedom among everyone involved, and precludes oppression and alienation of others as well as ourselves. And finally, care, responsibility, and respect are impossible without seeking deeper knowledge of ourselves and others. This means that I should not merely observe and react to the overt manifestations, statements, and emotions of my life (or myself), but should also try to discover and respond to their underlying sources (CHABOT, 2008, p. 812).

In order to develop this revolutionary love, besides needing all of the qualities cited above, we need to change our actions in private and public spheres. Revolutionary love requires constant effort. Chabot (2008) recommends us to have discipline, concentration, patience and concern. Discipline is necessary in our reflections and actions in our loving relationships. Concentration refers to dedication, time, and space to slow down and build meaningful ties with other human beings. In our fast-paced world, patience is necessary in developing these meaningful relationships with people like and unlike us. Finally, concern is about developing the courage and commitment to "respond lovingly to feelings of hatred, anger, fear and despair, and form alliances with different oppressed social groups" (CHABOT, 2008, p. 813). Chabot believes that love is significant for our emotional health and interpersonal relationships, and it is incompatible with violence. This revolutionary love implies a different kind of power: power *with*, which involves "mutual dialogue and collaborative action to improve the lives of oppressed people as well as everyone else living in particular communities" (CHABOT, 2008, p. 816).

Lanas and Zembylas (2015b) contend that love is a more powerful force than anger in promoting political change. Love in critical education can encourage social transformation, justice, equality and solidarity, similar to Freire's (1996) theory of education as an act of love. Lanas and Zembylas write extensively about Freire's work on love, but argued, however, that Freire did not explain or explore what it means to teach with love. Their theory of 'revolutionary love' in practice is comprised of six interrelated perspectives that see love as relational and political; in addition, love is also an emotion, a choice, a response, and praxis[7]. In summary, the authors believe that love can help us to promote equality and social justice and helps us move away from dominant anger discourses. They believe we can do this by following Chabot's suggestions on discipline, concentration, patience and developing loving ties.

For the remainder of this section, I bring the results of four empirical studies that have investigated the concept of love. Three of them used Paulo Freire's pedagogy of love in the North-American context (BYRON, 2011; SCHODER, 2010; SMITH-CAMPBELL, 2018); and one of them (LANAS; ZEMBYLAS, 2015a) was an investigation of the concept of revolutionary love within a teacher's practice in Finland. I comment on each study below (in chronological order).

Schoder (2010), in his Ph.D. dissertation, was concerned with theoretically exploring the concept of Freire's theory of love. Schoder believes that Freire neither defined nor explained how education is an act of love; therefore, the centrality of his theory of love has been ignored. Thus, Schoder set out to investigate the following research questions: 1) What is Freire's theory of love as presented in Education as the Practice of Freedom and Pedagogy of the Oppressed? 2) What literature on love can help us understand his theory? and

[7] For a review of each of these perspectives, please see Lanas and Zembylas (2015b) and Barcelos (2021).

3) How does Freire's theory of love guide his educational theory? In order to answer these questions, Schoder analyzed Freire's writings and compared with philosophical ideals about love.

In discussing love, Schoder (2010, p. 3) first defines it as "a conscious moral appraisal and bestowal of value on a person or thing". He identifies three virtues in Freire's pedagogy of love: fairness, respect and gratitude. Lack of fairness and love can prevent "dialogue, inquiry, humanization, and further love" (SCHODER, 2010, p. 7). Schoder explains that fairness is exercised in Freire's dialogue when we consider people as equal participants and give them the same kind of respect we give to ourselves. Without love, fairness, respect, and gratitude there is no dialogue. According to Freire (1970, p. 77-78):

> Because love is an act of courage, not of fear, love is commitment to other men. No matter where the oppressed are found, the act of love is commitment to their cause – the cause of liberation. And, this commitment, because it is loving, is dialogical. As an act of bravery, love cannot be sentimental; as an act of freedom, it must not serve as a pretext for manipulation. It must generate other acts of freedom; otherwise, it is not love. Only by abolishing the situations of oppression is it possible to restore the love which that situation made impossible. If I do not love the world – if I do not love life – if I do not love men – I cannot enter into dialogue.

To Freire (1994), humanization is man's vocation, which is threatened by injustice, exploitation and oppression, but affirmed by the yearning of the oppressed for freedom and justice; all dehumanizing processes "perverts and prevents love" (FREIRE, 1994, p. 69), since oppression inhibits fairness and respect. In this process of humanization, teachers play a great role since they can either consciously foster it or oppress it through their choices and decisions about teaching practices that promote or hinder love.

Byron (2011, p. 27) defines love as "a social and political activity, working toward the transcendent qualities of love: affection, compassion, empathy, connection, and justice". As the core foundation of critical pedagogy and critical peace education, this kind of love is concerned with the development of "thought, voice, agency and action towards social justice" (BYRON, 2011, p. 27), as well as "skills overlooked by the neoliberal agenda: reflective thinking, critical analysis, compassion for marginalized populations, civic participation, and action toward social justice" (BYRON, 2011, p. 9). This development is done "by cultivating relationships (teacher-students and community at large)" and by using storytelling "as a way to counteract the disconnected objectified standards of neoliberal education and create connection, foster imagination and wisdom" (BYRON, 2011, p. 27).

Byron (2011, p. 39) set out to investigate "how postsecondary social justice educators use storytelling, in the context of critical peace education, to create social change and to transform students' relationships with social justice" (and injustice)". The data for this qualitative study were generated from interviews with a diverse sampling of postsecondary social justice educators. Her results have identified "storytelling as a method of ideology critique" within a "larger process of loving praxis" (BYRON, 2011, p. 5). Byron's participants stressed the importance of personal reflection as fundamental in understanding themselves and their identities and being able to facilitate the process of raising consciousness towards social change. In other words, when educators themselves expose their own process of criticality they help students to engage in self-discovery. In addition to this, storytelling helped with: (a) *building loving relationships*: cultivating dialogue and fostering connection, creating encouragement, voice and agency to participate in a democracy, in addition to modelling respect, accountability, and vulnerability through their relationships with students; (b) *normalizing complexity*: acknowledging the complex nature of social justice issues, ("desensationalizing the nature of conflict") (Byron, 2011, p. 70; and (c) *possibilizing*: imagining possibilities of a better world with hope and action. Sharing stories contributes to this sense of becoming more active in civic life.

Lanas and Zembylas (2015a) conducted an in-depth case study of one teacher in a reindeer herding village in the Finnish rural north, which indicated a conflict of perspectives (on goals of education, upbringing, children and childhoods) between the educators (from Finnish urban cities), presented as experts and

professionals, and the receivers of education (reindeer villagers), who are seen as somehow "deficit, dangerous, or in need of improvement", "stupid, laughable, unsuccessful or socially excluded" (LANAS; ZEMBYLAS, 2015a, p. 5). Lanas and Zembylas (2015a, p. 5) explained that "students and parents opposed and resisted this kind of marginalization in their own village", and resented their children being treated unfairly. The data comprised of the researcher's field journal and the teacher's personal reflective journal, participant observation in the school, and daily discussions with the teacher, in addition to meetings with parents and visits to students' homes.

The results have suggested that in this particular context and relation, the transformative loving acts and responses, and the reaffirming choices that the teacher presents, revolved around: (a) voluntarily and visibly choosing to commit (by choosing to stay in the village); (b) learning to listen in multiple ways (taking extra time to listen to them privately and also allowing them to do several things based on their needs and feedback); (c) being constantly alert to respond in a loving way (such as giving positive feedback and valuing them and their local knowledge); (d) providing positive feedback; and (e) accepting pain[8]. Lanas and Zembylas (2015a) explain that the teacher's revolutionary love entailed practices that focused on her students' interest and in "intentionally engag[ing] in efforts of changing practical ways of life" by acknowledging the specific culture of that context and finding suitable methods and contents. Thus, feeling revolutionary can refer to: (a) situations when we feel "our current situation is not enough, and that there is something missing"; (b) "opening up the space to imagine a collective escape, an exodus, a going-off script' together"; and (c) may "be as simple as choosing to stay in a tough situation and do something about it." (LANAS; ZEMBYLAS, 2015a, p. 11).

In sum, Lanas and Zembylas (2015a, p. 13) help us reflect on the power of revolutionary love. First, they explain that "society is not 'out there', but "it is in the everyday of societal institutions", in what we do. They explain that despite not being able to change "the history of oppression or the national discourses that legitimized it, or banish the difficult emotions", the teacher responded to these issues with love in her particular context. This is what revolutionary love is about: transforming power. Because of the teacher's actions, the relationship between the school and the villagers changed and became warmer. Secondly, in order for teachers to become more loving in their own contexts they need to engage in "active, labor-intensive relationships with themselves and other people" through "simple, often explicit, acts of giving, caring, responsibility, patience, concern, and discipline, painstaking effort and wholehearted sustainable commitment" (LANAS; ZEMBYLAS, 2015a, p. 14)[9].

Smith and Campbell (2018, p. 91) describe love as "a prerequisite for learning and instruction in a teacher-student relationship built upon love, humility, and faith". This pedagogical love contrasts with *sadistic love* which, according to Freire (2005, p. 59-60), is part of the traditional education approach in which "the pleasure in complete domination over another person whether as a teacher or leader is the dominant form of interpersonal communication approach". Smith and Campbell's (2018, p. 1) view of pedagogical love entails actions: "a *critical* love, a love that demands, and expects, nothing but the best from students, a love that believes that students can engage with the world, and that they have a right and a responsibility to change it (Nieto, 2008, p. 129)". They define pedagogical love as conveying "ideas of actions – not emotions necessarily – related to educational outcomes of humanization; sociopolitical and existential equity; and movements for democratic justice" (SMITH; CAMBPELL, 2018, p. 20).

Smith and Campbell (2018) developed a qualitative narrative study aimed at determining whether the Freirean pedagogical love model would be adequate in P-12[10] curriculum development, instruction, and learning

[8] Pain in this case, according to the authors, referred to the "difficult emotions that had to be endured"; they were seen by the authors as "fundamental as the despair of questioning of the entire process and the value of love itself". They continue explaining that "One aspect of 'doing' love in the teacher's practices was, thereby, enduring disheartening moments, lack of faith in the process, and lack of knowledge about the outcomes" (LANAS; ZEMBYLAS, 2015a, p. 10).

[9] Although I agree with Zembylas and this may true for the context of that study, we need to see this, at times with a salt of grain in other contexts, such as the Brazilian one in which teachers are exploited financially and emotionally. Revolutionary love in this case may mean to stay or to leave the context for the sake or their mental and emotional health.

[10] Pre-school through senior high school year.

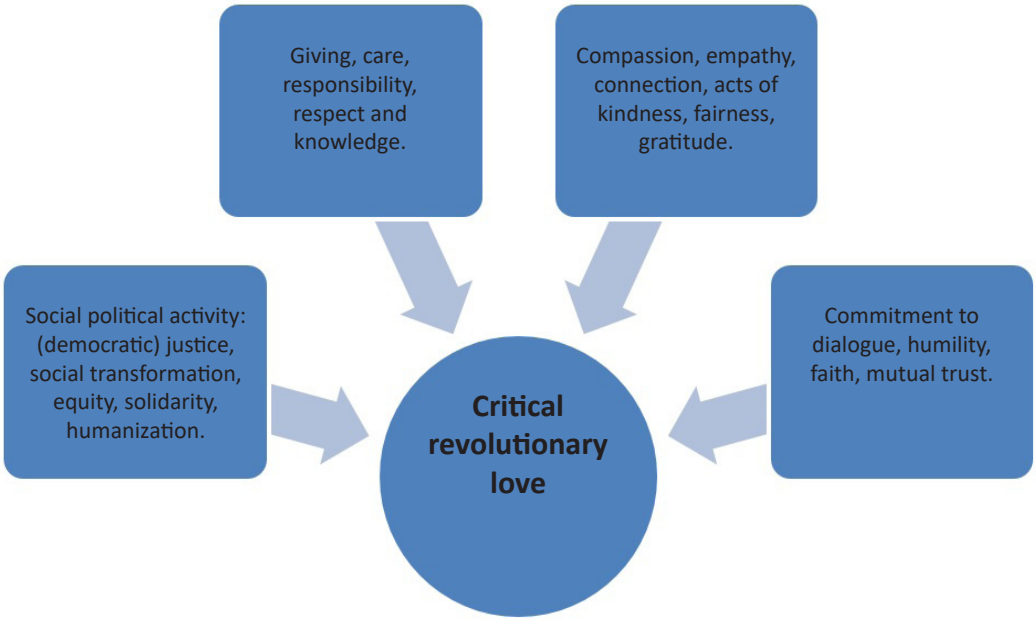
in contemporary United States settings, by comparing themes in the participants' narratives with elements from the Freirean model. The results indicated that the narratives of educational experiences in the United States mentioned 16 elements of the Freirean model, suggesting that Freire's pedagogical love model is useful for the participants' experiences. Smith and Campbell list the best practices cited by the participants as part of their pedagogical practice (and these are neither new nor unique to Freire): "dialogue, criticality, reflective practices, collaborative instruction grounded in student-as-teacher and teacher-as-learner approaches, as well as problem-posing and problem-solving educational strategies" (SMITH; CAMPBELL, 2018, p. 310). According to the authors, these "go back to times of ancient civilizations in Plato, Aristotle, and Confucian approaches" (SMITH; CAMPBELL, 2018, p. 310).

The papers on the concept of love in education reviewed here have used Freire's critical theory as basis for their research. They all point out to revolutionary love as a social political activity. As such, revolutionary love involves working on three fronts. First, in the creation of spaces for critical pedagogy in teacher education which care for valuing the marginalized voices of diverse students and fighting against oppression. This space should be founded on fairness, respect, gratitude and dialogue, according to Freirean theory. Dialogue is not possible without love. This pedagogy is based on equity, service to others and on seeing students as whole persons (mind, body and soul). Second, in the promotion of an engaged pedagogy, as suggested by Hooks (1994). This engaged pedagogy involves reflection and imagination. A pedagogy of imagination and possibilizing invites us to visualize possible worlds of more freedom, peace, justice and democracy. Third and finally, in learning the art of loving. In other words, it means taking time for meaningful dialogue, for more conversation and for more empathetic listening with care, responsibility, respect and knowledge. In sum, it is a constant effort that demands discipline in order to expand, create and expand revolutionary spaces of love and hope.

Conclusion

I began this article by pointing out the uneasiness towards the term love, mainly due to a trivialized view of it. I then briefly summarized the present scenario we are living in, which only strengthens the need for a critical view of the concept of love in education. The discussion was based on studies on love in education conducted mainly in the North American context, having Paulo Freire's theories as the focus. From these studies, I have attempted to pinpoint the main elements of what constitutes a critical revolutionary love as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1 - Summary of the elements of a Critical Revolutionary Love.



Source: Author (2022).

As shown in Figure 1, a critical revolutionary love pedagogy (CRLP) is a social political activity that involves acts of kindness, which aim at democratic justice and equity. Above all, the goal is towards humanization. In order to reach this goal, one needs to be committed to dialogue. This dialogue requires humility to listen, faith in others and mutual trust so that we can have knowledge of ourselves and others. The democratic social transformation necessary in a critical love pedagogy can only be possible if we are willing to give, to care and act with responsibility, respect, compassion, empathy, fairness and gratitude. In short, a CRLP is relational and it involves power relations (power *with*). This can only be done with ethics, patience and time. In addition, one must be willing to accept being vulnerable and engaging in critical reflective practice.

I would like to invite fellow researchers to embark on this endeavor of studying love in education. I believe we have yet much to learn about this concept of love or revolutionary love in education. It would be interesting to see further research to address some of these questions (or others that may arise from this paper): (a) What do language students, teachers and teacher educators believe in regards to love in language learning and teaching?; (b) How is love present in their narratives and in their practices?; (c) How can we incorporate critical revolutionary love in our practice as language teachers and teacher educators?; and (d) how can these insights be used to transform or help English teachers and students in public schools in Brazil?

I hope that one of the contributions of this paper can be a better understanding of the broader concept of love as more than an emotion or one-dimensional concept. What I wish for us it to be able to be knowledgeable of the risks involving in choosing a critical love pedagogy and knowing that by doing so we are combating the neoliberal agenda and the capitalist world so focused on performance, efficiency, isolation and productivity. The concept of love, as explored here, is connected to justice, dialogue and collaboration. Thus, it is necessary to understand and study love and its complexities in education. In order to do that, we must commit and choose love with all the risks and vulnerability it entails. Choosing love means choosing to dedicate time to it and to its practice with ethical, equitable and inclusive activities in the classroom which involve understanding, listening, giving and having time for students and using stories/narratives (and other methods) to get to know students, as well as activities that foster criticality and dialogue. Choosing revolutionary love means promoting collaboration, empathy, justice and democracy. It is a social-political activity founded on fairness, respect, dialogue and humility. Finally, choosing revolutionary love implies integrating self-care and being patient with oneself (and others) when things become wearying, and being resilient to face the struggles that come by choosing love.

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