

Arts, Linguistics, Literature and Language Research Journal

THE IDENTITY OF THE ENGLISH TEACHER: NARRATIVES, DISCOURSES AND BELIEFS ABOUT TEACHING ENGLISH IN TOCANTINS

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ABSTRACT: This study is part of a larger research for the purpose of a master's thesis, brings results of a research carried out with three English language teachers from the State of Tocantins and aimed to investigate their teacher identities based on their beliefs and discourses present in their narratives about teaching English. The research is of an ethnographic, qualitative and interpretive nature of the data collected through autobiographical narratives and questionnaires, analyzed in the light of theories of Applied Linguistics (RAJAGOPALAN 2003, 2004, 2015; ALMEIDA FILHO 1992, 2001, 2013, 2014, 2015; BARCELOS 2001; , 2006a, 2006b) and the French Discourse Analysis (PÊCHEUX, 1983; ORLANDI, 2012 a, 2012b, 2015; 2016; CORACINI 2000, 2007; ECKERT-HOFF, 2008). Through the analysis of the discourses present in the autobiographical narratives and the questionnaires, it was possible to perceive that these teachers formed and still form their professional identity based on their negative and positive experiences, on their experiences in the classroom and outside it, mixed with their perspectives of a teaching meaningful English to the student. It was also observed that, as much as the teachers understand the teaching of a language as something bordering and sociocultural, they still cannot teach English from these perspectives, given the different circumstances imposed by the educational system of the country and the region where they work. The beliefs that teachers carry within themselves about the teaching of the English language were formed and shaped throughout their lives as teachers and, based on them, transforming their teaching approaches. It is these beliefs, belonging to a whole identity of being a teacher, that shape their praxis and through them these teachers are also transformed.

KEYWORDS: Identity, Beliefs, Discourses, English Teacher.

INTRODUCTION

This research aimed to investigate the identity of the English language teacher in the State of Tocantins through their beliefs present in their speeches about the teaching of English, in the perspective of identifying how their identity (re)construction takes place from these beliefs and of how they influence their praxis.

Our thesis, our hypothesis in this research is that we need to understand this identity construct of being an English teacher so that, from it, we propose, in future works, curricula and methodologies that are more adjusted to our local reality as well as our current reality, which our students already have a series of technological tools at their disposal for teaching English (and any other language), in addition to considering the current context from a multicultural and global perspective.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

The theories we chose to guide and support our studies are the theories of Applied Linguistics (ALMEIDA FILHO 1992, 2001, 2013, 2014, 2015; BARCELOS 2001, 2006a, 2006b, 2007; RAJAGOPALAN 2003, 2004, 2015a, 2015b), and the French line discourse analysis (ORLANDI 2011, 2012a, 2012b, 2015; PÊCHEUX 1983, 2016; CORACINI 2000, 2007; ECKERT-HOFF, 2008).

This investigation was born from my concerns as an English teacher, from my fragmented practices in the classroom, from my lack of identity empowerment as a subject-teacher, in addition to the little understanding of where I must express myself, enunciate and how it happened. From this perspective, we started this research noting that there is no longer a way to not understand that being inserted in other cultures and other languages

is part of being a global citizen. Teaching how to cross borders to be able to interpret different realities under different prisms is a task that requires multiple competences from the teacher.

As the activity of teaching is also related to the personal beliefs of this teacher, which are important references for him, his attitudes in the classroom are the result of his beliefs (LUNENBURG & SCHMIDT, 1989), studies in second language acquisition they seek, today, to understand how these beliefs interfere in the process of teaching and learning the language, affecting the teacher's practice and also school life (SCHMIDT & JACOBSON, 1990).

In order to understand the teaching of a foreign language, it is therefore necessary to know the teachers and what they know about how to teach it and what they believe it is to teach FL, what they think about their practice and how this knowledge and the processes of thinking are learned through the teacher's formal education and work experience, helping them to shape more efficient teaching practices (FREEMAN and RICHARDS, 1996).

According to Leffa (2001), training a foreign language teacher involves mastering different areas of knowledge, including mastering the language he teaches and mastering the pedagogical action necessary to make language learning happen in the classroom.

Almeida Filho (2013) postulates that the teacher teaches in a certain way, guided by their competences. The linguistic-communicative competence enables the teacher to use the target language in the context of communication. Applied competence enables and allows the teacher to explain why he teaches in a certain way and why he obtains the results he obtains. Professional competence is developed when

the teacher knows his social importance as a language teaching professional and when he is engaged in updating activities on a permanent basis. The implicit competence, as named by the author, is made up of intuitions, beliefs and previous experiences and is often unknown to the teacher; is developed long and subconsciously in it and is of fundamental importance in the teaching process, since it is present in the entire scenario of foreign language teaching actions. It strongly determines what happens in the classroom.

Thus, the need for autonomous teachers with the ability to reflect on their own practice and critics of the world around them has been accentuated over the years, as the school scenario and the world have been rapidly changing. These changes, not all of them positive, require new attitudes towards teaching and learning, both from teachers and students, as stated by Sturm (2008, p.340).

This professional, who is inscribed as a subject who is ideologically inserted in the place of subject-teacher, is constituted by different histories and relationships, from which his identity as a language teacher also results, because:

what we are and what we see is loaded, therefore, with what was silently muffled in discursive memory, as an anonymous, forgotten knowledge. We can, therefore, only speak of identity as having its existence in the imagination of the subject that is constructed in and through the intertwined discourses that constitute it. The discursive memory, that is, the interdiscourse, concerns the countless voices coming from texts, from the experiences of the other that intertwine in a network in which the threads mix and intertwine. This network is shaped by values, beliefs, ideologies, cultures that allow subjects to see the world in a certain way and not another, that allow them to be, at the same time, similar and different. This network, fabric, weaving, or rather, writing is done in the subject's body,

(re)veiling indelible marks of his singularity (CORACINI, 2007, p.9).

For the theory of Discourse Analysis, a person's speech has "fragments kept" by situations experienced by this person at other times in his life and that, throughout his experience, these "fragments" join the speeches that are being said currently. In this perspective, these "fragments" are called interdiscourses, which form the discursive memory. This memory, according to Coracini (2011), is made up of forgetfulness, silences, unsaid meanings, meanings left unsaid. It consists of fragments of subjects that cross(a)m our existence and that constitute archives, a network, tangled threads, whose heterogeneous and hybrid origin remains unknown, in the unconscious as emphasized by Derrida (1993).

Coracini (2011) tells us that memory will always be interpretation, invention, fiction, which is constituted after the event, at a time when others have already crossed paths and made history. We retain what seems relevant at a given moment, what is justified and can be legitimized by others, and we forget what, apparently, does not matter, has little relevance.

Therefore, in every discourse there is an interdiscourse. Everything I speak today is completely loaded with speeches that I have already heard, experienced and forgotten, but I have appropriated it and used it, unconsciously, as my legitimate speech.

We also believe that it is quite relevant to align ourselves with Fairclough's (2001) vision, which shows us that discourse contributes to the constitution of all dimensions of the social structure that, directly or indirectly, shape and restrict it: its own norms and conventions, as well as the relationships, identities and institutions that underlie it.

The discourse, therefore, according to the author, is a practice, not only of representing the world, but of meaning the world, constituting and constructing the world in meaning. It contributes to the construction of social identities, to the construction of social relationships between people and to the construction of systems of knowledge and belief, finding here our starting point for the studies of the identity of the English teacher.

Therefore, in order to delineate the aspects of the (re)construction of the teacher's identity, we will delve into the studies of beliefs, which are also the starting point for theorizations, that is, a potential reserve for the assumptions in language teaching, intimately interconnected with our pedagogical practice and with the training of language teachers, emphasizes Silva (2005). Barcelos (2006, p.18) emphasizes that beliefs:

they are like a way of thinking, like constructions of reality, ways of seeing and perceiving the world and its phenomena, co-constructed in our experiences and resulting from an interactive process of interpretation and (re)signification. As such, beliefs are social (but also individual), dynamic, contextual and paradoxical. The researcher also reinforces that beliefs have a strong impact on our behavior. Thus, if a teacher believes that her role is to be a facilitator, in her practice, given the necessary conditions, she can try to play this role, interfering as little as possible, formulating activities where students can exercise greater control, creating an environment learning environment where its interference is minimal.

Thus, in order to reflect on the identity of the English teacher based on their narratives, their discourses and their beliefs about teaching English, this study investigated three English language teachers from the federal education network of the State of Tocantins, Elen, Paola and Meire¹.

1. Fictitious name.

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE IDENTITY OF THE ENGLISH TEACHER: HIS SPEECH, HIS BELIEF

All the factors that involve the teacher's personal and professional life continually shape, shape and transform their identity. Cunha (2010) recognizes and corroborates these considerations when he points out and reflects under a very important and sensitive look at training and teaching work, emphasizing that the teacher experiences tensions between his training and his work as a teacher. This permeates from their initial training, ways of exercising their profession, their continuing education and a whole routine of being a teacher in an increasingly global and at the same time situated world.

For Pimenta (1997), investigations on the reflective teacher, by placing the links between training and profession, as constituents of specific knowledge of teaching, as well as the material conditions in which they are carried out, value the work of the teacher, as subjects of transformations. that are needed in school and society.

The author also complements by saying that teacher training in a reflective perspective is configured as a policy of valuing the personal-professional development of teachers (...). This is because working knowledge in the dynamics of the multimedia society, globalization, multiculturalism, transformations in productive markets, in the training of students, children and young people, also in a constant process of cultural transformation, of values, interests and needs, it requires permanent training, understood as a re-signification of the teachers' identity.

In this perspective, Cunha (2010) emphasizes that the teacher must also seek his own identity formation, seeking his qualification as a way of personal evolution, and not waiting for the university to do it for him or for things to happen for him. alone.

Training is something that belongs to the subject and is part of a process of being: life and experiences; the past, and in a process of becoming, the projects, and the ideas of the future. It is an achievement made with a lot of help: from teachers, books, classes, computers, but it always depends on personal work. Nobody forms anybody. Each one forms himself. (NÓVOA, 2004 apud CUNHA 2010).

Morin (2006, p. 61) states that one of the vocations of future education will be the examination and study of human complexity. That is, educational and/or training practices will be better understood and experienced from the awareness that the human being is multiple, multifaceted, individual, social, historical, biological, psychological, affective, poetic, intellectual, subjective, singular and plural, cultural, in short complex.

In this sense, identity is not a given, it is not a property, it is not a product. Identity is a place of struggles and conflicts, it is a space for the construction of ways of being and being in the profession. Therefore, it is more appropriate to speak of an identity process, highlighting the dynamic mix that characterizes the way each one feels and says he is a teacher (NÓVOA, 1992).

This way, understanding the teacher's beliefs helps us to understand the actions of teachers and students and the process of their decision-making in the classroom. Beliefs act as a filter for human behavior, they are an important feature of reflective teaching that encourages teachers to reflect and question their beliefs to understand how they teach. Specifically, beliefs are an important feature of educational and teacher change, as a change in teachers' practices requires a change in their beliefs. (BARCELOS, 2017).

What we are and what we believe is loaded, therefore, with what was silently muffled in discursive memory, as an anonymous, forgotten knowledge. Therefore, we can only speak of identity as having its existence

in the imagination of the subject that is constructed in and through the intertwined discourses that constitute it, including the discourse of science, the colonized and the media. The discursive memory, that is, the interdiscourse, concerns the countless voices coming from texts, from the experiences of the other that intertwine in a network in which the threads mix and intertwine. This network is shaped by values, beliefs, ideologies, cultures that allow subjects to see the world in a certain way and not another, that allow them to be, at the same time, similar and different. This network, fabric, weaving, or rather, writing is done in the subject's body, (re)veiling indelible marks of his singularity (CORACINI, 2007, p.9).

For the French Discourse Analysis theory, which is one of the theories that support this study, based on studies by Orlandi (2015, 2012a, 2012b, 2011), and M. Pêcheux (1983, 2016), discourse is what we say loaded with all our experience and ideology; the interdiscourse is the entire set of formulations made and already forgotten (already said) that determine what we say. That is, in every saying of a person there are “fragments kept” by situations experienced by this person at other times in their life and that, throughout their experience, these “fragments” join the lines that are currently being said. In this perspective, these “fragments” are called interdiscourses, discursive memory. Therefore, in every discourse there is an interdiscourse. Everything I speak today is completely loaded with speeches that I have already heard, experienced and forgotten, but I appropriated it and unconsciously announced it as my legitimate speech.

Therefore, the teacher's identity is a “mix” of situations appropriated by him/her from all aspects of his/her personal and professional life, which are constructed throughout his/her life, and therefore, in constant transformation, observed through their speeches and beliefs to act. That is, it is in his saying, in his

enunciation, in his action that the teacher reveals his identity of being who he is.

For Clarke (2008), in general terms, discourse is a set of patterns of thinking, speaking, behaving and interacting socially, culturally and historically, constructed and sanctioned by a specific group of people. At the level of intrapersonal identities, discourse is constitutive of who we are and how we are perceived by others. The author also adds that discourse can be seen as a bridge between community practices and identity, while it is through discourse that the social is reflected in the individual and it is through discourse that the individual engages with the social. In this sense, discourse links social and individual identities.

Discourse contributes to the constitution of all dimensions of the social structure that, directly or indirectly, shape and restrict it, its own norms and conventions, as well as the relationships, identities and institutions that underlie it. Discourse is a practice, not only of representing the world, but of meaning the world, constituting and constructing the world in meaning. (FAIRCLOUGH 2001, p. 91).

It contributes to the construction of social identities, to the construction of social relationships between people and to the construction of knowledge and belief systems. The author adds that discourse implies a way of acting on the world as well as a means of expression or form of representation. It is through discourse that the social production of meanings changes, through discourse that social relations are created and maintained, and it is through discourse that social identities are produced.

Thus, the studies of beliefs are the starting point for theorizations, that is, a potential reserve for the assumptions in language teaching, closely intertwined with our pedagogical practice and with the training of language teachers, emphasizes Silva (2005).

According to the studies by Campos (2011), beliefs are personal truths, acquired by the individual throughout his life, which tend to guide his behavior and influence the way he interprets reality. In the educational context, if we assume that beliefs act as a filter in the teacher's practice and that the teacher will tend to act according to them, we can understand the importance of analyzing the teacher's belief system (RICHARDS, 1998; BARCELOS, 2000; ABRAHÃO, 2004 apud CAMPOS 2011).

For Barcelos (2006) beliefs are like a way of thinking, like constructions of reality, ways of seeing and perceiving the world and its phenomena, co-constructed in our experiences and resulting from an interactive process of interpretation and (re)signification. As such, beliefs are social (but also individual), dynamic, contextual and paradoxical. It also reinforces that beliefs have a strong impact on our behavior. Thus, if a teacher believes that her role is to be a facilitator, in her practice, given the necessary conditions, she can try to play this role, interfering as little as possible, formulating activities where students can exercise greater control, creating an environment learning environment where its interference is minimal. This way, the results of studies on beliefs often show that they not only influence actions, but actions and reflections on experiences can lead to changes and/or create other beliefs. (BARCELOS, 2001).

CONTEXT, PARTICIPANTS AND COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

Data collection for this study was done through autobiographical narratives and open-ended questionnaires for three English teachers from the federal school system in the State of Tocantins. The participants are of the same age group (35-45 years), married and teach English classes for high school and

higher education. The method used was an ethnographic, qualitative and interpretative research of the data in the light of Applied Linguistics and French Discourse Analysis theories.

According to Johnson (2009) in educational research, adopting an interpretive epistemological stance required a shift away from observational studies of which teachers make ethnographic descriptions based on observation, description and interviews with teachers about why they do what they do. Furthermore, rather than trying to predict what teachers must and must not do, interpretive research is interested in finding out what they already know and are able to do and how they make sense of their work within the contexts in which they teach. In this sense, interpretive research focuses on what teachers know, honors what they know, and helps clarify and resolve the dilemmas they face. From an interpretive stance, researchers can no longer ignore the fact that the teacher's previous experiences, their interpretations of the activities in which they engage and, most importantly, the contexts in which they work are extremely influential on how and why teachers do what they do.

According to Telles (2002) apud Barcelos (2006) due to its historical qualities and its potential to characterize the human experience, narrative research is present in several fields, such as literary theory, history, anthropology, theater, arts, films, theology, philosophy, psychology, linguistics and education. In Brazil, the studies by Telles (2002, 2004) suggest narrative research as an adequate approach to the investigation of teachers' thinking and experiences. It is important because it allows teachers to reconstruct their personal knowledge and representations, helping them to become more aware and, consequently, agents of their own practice.

According to Johnson (2009), narratives capture the complexity of their practices, trace their development/improvement over time and reveal the ways in which teachers made sense and reconfigured their work. As narrative inquiry, it is argued, it enables teachers not only to make sense of their learning experiences, but also to give meaning that is worth changing in themselves and in their teaching practices. Narratives represent a socially mediated view of human experiences.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the autobiographical narratives and the questionnaires of the enunciating subjects that constitute the corpus of this study revealed, through their materiality, the beliefs brought by them and the (re)construction of their identities, emerged in the discourses about their initial formation, the difficulties that faced and face as English teachers, their teaching methodologies in the classroom, as well as their beliefs about how to teach English. In this perspective, we align ourselves with the assumptions of Eckert-Hoff (2008), considering that the life story of the subject-teacher mixes with several voices, that is, it consists of several stories.

In this imbrication, the remembrance of history takes place through sparks of discursive memory. Therefore, the moment of enunciation of the subjects is what allowed opening the lock of the borders between the forgotten and the remembered. Therefore, the author states that talking about oneself, about one's history, allows several ways to experience the teacher's identity, to keep it at a distance, to simulate it, to reinvent it. This is not due to stability, but through movements, flexibility, in view of an imaginary formed about "being a teacher". Being an English teacher is challenging.

In order to analyze the discursive materialities of the participating teachers' statements, we divided the reports into four enunciative moments in: (i) Motivation, that is, what led them to form in the area they work and their trajectories; (ii) Teaching, in which they will reveal their methodology for teaching English in the classroom; (iii) The Best Teaching, revealing how they believe it is the best method for teaching the English language and (iv) The Resistance, in which they reveal the confrontations, difficulties/facilities, barriers and maneuvers they had to develop as English teachers.

When analyzing the discursive records brought by the teachers, in general terms, we observed the following revelations:

- The identity of an English teacher begins to be constructed before initial training, during imagined instances of being a teacher;
- The fascination and seduction by the symbolic object, here the English language, were present as a trigger for the participating teachers to sign up as a subject-teacher of English;
- We perceive the hybrid voices that permeate their discourses, such as the doctrinal voice, the voice of formation, the voice of ideology, and others, which are the voices that constitute them in identity;
- The participants built and brought beliefs about being an English teacher and, opposing these beliefs, after being enrolled as a subject-teacher of English, what was left for them and made of them, because, very commonly, they did not fit into their realities, that the object symbolic, being an English teacher idealized by them one day, was now flawed and different;
- Marks of silencing - when the subject-teacher is still unable to self-represent himself, to enunciate himself from his own perspective as a subject-teacher of English;

- Marks of subversion - a way found at various times by the participants precisely when they perceive themselves inscribed in the condition of subject-teacher, they also perceive themselves inscribed in the condition of subject-of-desire to break the border that prevents them from enunciating, if reinventing, filling gaps and subjectivizing themselves as subjects, actors in the construction of teaching and learning, subjects of their own (re) constitution;
- The participants bring in the narratives beliefs that are primarily manufactured by the collective imagination: “teaching for love”, “being a teacher is a mission”, transforming the profession into a priesthood;
- View of teaching the English language, as a bordering, political, social and emancipating factor, as it contributes to the construction of the individual to be a citizen of the world;
- They constantly come up against structural and language learning resistance, the devaluation of language teaching and the belief that English cannot be learned in public schools;
- Their praxis are entirely guided by the beliefs developed in the (re)construction of the identities of these teachers and start to print what the participants deem appropriate or inappropriate, what must or must not be addressed in their classroom;
- From their experiences, their engagements, their assemblages, they began to perceive themselves as subjects-teachers of English, causing a strong individual empowerment and strengthening of the class.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Outlining memories, reliving situations through our forgetfulness, memories that

permeated and still permeate our doing is something that causes us to encounter ourselves, a point of reflection, a divine spark of self-perception, a discursivity full of materiality there, placed, at the waiting for the interpretations that are ours, as analysts, and that we manage to make of them, also from our perspective, which we discover is inevitably not impartial. The analysis carried out in this study carries, above all, its incompleteness, understanding that the interpretations are also crossed by the subjectivities of the subject-analyst.

Doing the discursive analyzes seemed, for a few moments, a little disconcerting to us, because we were constantly reminded that we were being almost or not impartial, since we also remembered that our beliefs, our identities imprinted there, in the analyses, our marks in the discursive materialities presented.

We understand that the training of an English teacher does not have a ready and unified formula to be molded in order to achieve the best method of training and teaching English. We also understand that the psychological and sociological factors that make up identity (beliefs, emotions, perceptions and discourses) cannot be disregarded from training curriculum documents, as we are talking about people and attitudes that affect people.

Thus, when we try to outline the beliefs brought by the participating teachers, we do not fail to take into account the fact that when the subject-teacher talks about himself, the discursivity brought by him is full of other voices, other meanings, other sayings. In this same direction, “identity, far from being homogeneous, integral, is constructed in heterogeneity, in fading, in the dispersion of multiple voices and multiple meanings” (ECKERT-HOFF 2008, p. 65).

Ideology and the power relationship

are always permeating the participants' discourses, since the subject is always questioned by ideology and the condition of position-subject-teacher is inscribed in power relations with the relations in which they are inscribed. Thus, the actions of the enunciating teachers are always in the condition of (re) constitution of their identities. How to build a differentiated practice is always in their discursive memories of subject-teacher, teachers organize their speeches according to their imagined formations and go in search of an ideal of being a teacher.

We see the issues of teacher discourses, beliefs and identity little explored and almost never put into perspective at the time of construction of the initial and continuous training curricula of English language teachers offered by universities and, in equal proportion, in the construction of curricula and proposals of teaching English in public schools, in the context of this research, in public schools in the State of Tocantins.

Thus, focusing more on this sphere would enable the construction of a curriculum more adjusted to the professional in the area as well as the construction of English language teaching documents more adjusted to the global reality and its current requirements.

Analyzing the speeches of these participants allowed us to continue an existing, but perhaps forgotten, reflection of a subject that must currently be seen as decentered, fragmented, liquid, enabling us to outline new perspectives that form and transform the English teacher for a more adjusted to current needs and better prepared for teaching within global and multicultural perspectives.

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