

# *The English Teacher's Work in Relation to the Prescriptions of the Official Documents and the Work Conditions in the Public School*

Renata H. P. PUCCI\*

\* Master's Degree and PhD in Education from the Postgraduate Program in Education (PPGE) of the Methodist University of Piracicaba (UNIMEP). She is currently doing research and post-doctoral studies at UNIMEP's PPGE in the area of teacher training. Contact: renata\_pucci@hotmail.com.

## **Abstract:**

This paper presents an enunciative analysis of the discourses of a group of teachers aiming to understand the ways in which the teachers elaborate the English teaching in the public school in relation to the prescriptions of the official documents and the work conditions. The theoretical basis for the enunciative-discursive analysis is based on Bakhtin and Volochínov, authors who theorize the social, dialogic and ideological language in the discursive formation of the individual. The text develops a brief contextualization of the scenery in which the teaching of English is established in public schools, including the trajectory of the insertion of the English language in the curriculum of the schools and the presentation of official documents that support the offer of the subject. The analyzes indicate that the official documents discourses organize the teachers' view of English language teaching practices in the public school, guide the evaluation of the teaching methods and the appreciation of the work itself in the classroom.

## **Keywords:**

English teaching. Teachers' discourses. Official foreign language documents.

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## INTRODUCTION

In the present text, we analyze the speeches of a group of English teachers who work in public schools in the state of São Paulo, understanding that statements of several instances emerge in the discursive universe that involves the work of teachers. The discourses that have repercussions in the school and in the teaching work, also include those from the scope of the public policies for teaching foreign languages, brought by the official documents.

We start from the understanding that teachers are historical and social subjects, which are formed in the relationship with other subjects, in certain historical and cultural contexts, in the social interactions mediated by language. In this perspective, the concrete conditions of work and the meanings, socially engendered, about the teaching work, participate in the formation of the teachers. Cruz (2013, p. 30) points out that the work and the formation of the teacher are organized in the collective,

marked by the historical-cultural relations in which they are realized: by the models and inheritances with which they are confronted; by the numerous prescriptions and constraints related to educational policies, to the organization of schools, to careers, to educational programs, among others; by the communities it serves; by the tasks proposed.

In this study proposal, we understand that the concrete working conditions and the prescriptions of the official documents are intertwined in the dynamics of the teacher's constitution (NOGUEIRA, 2012). From this perspective, we present an enunciative-discursive analysis of the ways in which the teachers elaborate the teaching of English in the public school in relation to the prescriptions of the official documents and the concrete conditions of work. We are theoretically based on concepts developed by Bakhtin (2006; 2010) and Volochínov (2017), who theorize the social, dialogic and ideological language in the discursive formation of the subject.

In the organization of this text, we first contextualize the scenery in which English language teaching is established in public schools, developing brief considerations about the history of English language teaching in the school curriculum and the official documents that support the English language teaching. Next, we present the theoretical basis for the

enunciative analysis of the discourse and the methodological aspects, and finally, we present the analysis of the teachers' discourses.

## **CONTEXTUALIZING THE ENGLISH TEACHING IN SCHOOLS AND THE OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS THAT SUPPORT IT**

In a brief historical incursion into English teaching in Brazilian schools (LEFFA, 1999; 2001; PAIVA, 2003; DUARTE, 2007; SANTOS, 2007, SANTOS, 2011, DIAS, 2012, MULIK, 2012; VIDOTTI, 2012, among others) it is possible to observe that foreign languages enter and leave the school curriculum throughout history. Since the first insertion of a foreign language in the curriculum, with the decree of June 22, 1809, signed by the Prince Regent of Portugal, the foreign language subjects have already been 'compulsory', 'optional' (as established by Law n° 4.024, in 1961), 'recommended' (Law n° 5.692 / 71), and again 'compulsory' (as in 1996, Law N° 9.394), which influences in the identity of foreign language subjects in school, appreciated as secondary as well as itinerants.

In the state of São Paulo, where our teachers work, we verified that the inclusion of the English language as a foreign language in the curriculum of the schools took place in 1980, when federal legislators attributed the foreign language only as a "recommendation" to the 1st grade curriculum. Thus, in Resolution 355/84, which came into force in 1985, the State Council of Education of the State of São Paulo changed the status of the subject to 'activity', a condition in which there was no disapproval of students with lower grades, which brought "a disincentive for teachers and a reason for disregard for students" (FERRO, 1998, p. 36). In 1996, the Law n° 9.394 makes compulsory the foreign language teaching in the country's schools, English teaching returns to the elementary school (currently, from the 6th to the 9th grades) and the high school curriculum of the state of São Paulo with the status of 'subject'.

Recently, Law n° 13.415 of February 16, 2017, that intended to reform the high school curriculum, regarding foreign languages established that the English language should be offered from the 6th grade of Elementary Education and also in High School: "High school curricula will necessarily include the study of the English language and may offer other foreign languages, on an optional basis" (BRASIL, 2017). Thus, we find that for the first time English language, specifically, becomes mandatory in the curriculum of elementary school (from the 6th grade) and high school, nationally<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Establishing compulsory English language teaching and, thus, the right of access it to students in public schools is a notable progress. However, we cannot fail to point out that foreign language teaching has always served political-economic needs, not always with noble purposes to promote egalitarian education for all social classes. If we observe the political, social and economic scenery in which the new High School Reform Law was forged, with the support of the business class, we infer that the teaching of the English language meets the need to "train" the student mainly to serve the market.

The teaching of the English language in public schools is supported by official documents that intend to guide it, thus, carries the marks of the policies elaborated for the teaching of foreign languages that determine, even before the English teacher starts his work in the classroom, a spot from where he will state and establish some rules that intend to guide their work (OLIVEIRA, 2003). Leffa (2001) points out that the training of a foreign language teacher involves academic and political aspects and, in this sense, covers issues that go beyond university education, including legal requirements for the practice of the profession and questions of language policy.

We observe that the official documents that subsidize the work of the foreign language teacher have been following the didactic tendencies of the area of language teaching and learning, at least within the prescribed scope. For instance, if in 1998, Brazilian National Curriculum Parameters for Elementary Education highlighted reading teaching over other skills, in 2006, Teaching Curriculum Guidelines brought the recognition of the role of foreign languages in the student's global education, and the introduction of theories of language and new technologies (literacy, multiliteracy, multimodality, hypertext). In this context, we recognize that methodological choices tell us much about the justification for including the foreign language in the curriculum. In the Brazilian National Curriculum Parameters (BRASIL, 1998), for example, the emphasis was on writing skills, since, according to their authors, "only a small part of the population has the opportunity to use foreign languages as an instrument of oral communication, inside or outside the country" (BRASIL, 1998, p. 20), a perspective that explicitly discriminated against the popular classes (PAIVA, 2003). The discourse is already renewed in the Teaching Curriculum Guidelines (BRASIL, 2006), which contemplates an expansion of situations of use of a foreign language by students and defends the contextualized teaching of reading skills, written practice and oral communication, emphasizing the inclusive nature of learning a foreign language by contributing to a formation that is in harmony with the needs of contemporary society.

In the state of São Paulo, in 2010, the State Government through the Education Department implemented a Curricular Proposal (a basic curriculum for elementary school and high school) for all public state schools. The new Curriculum, supported by the distribution of graphic materials, indicates the contents that must be worked, the performance of the teachers, the goals to be achieved and the way in which the students should be evaluated. The Modern Foreign Language Curriculum determines English as the main foreign language for the final grades of elementary school and high school, offering the Spanish language in the context of high school. The methodological orientation is based on multiple literacies, proposing that the oral or written text, understood as manifestation of discourse, should be the focus of pedagogical action, as explained in the document:

The essence of pedagogical action will be to promote the articulation between the text, its context of production and its context of reception, thus, providing the construction of a

vision of language teaching that can promote intellectual autonomy and a greater capacity for reflection of the learners, contributing decisively to the citizens' education (SÃO PAULO, 2011, p. 108).

The implementation of the proposed Curriculum is supported by two main resources, the Teacher's Notebook and the Student's Notebook. In the Teacher's Notebook, there are proposed learning situations, suggestions and guidelines to support the teacher in the content development, evaluation and self-assessment resources, recovery activities and indications of additional material (mainly movies, websites and music) which complement the themes and contents of each Notebook. In the Student's Notebook, in addition to the learning situations (with blank spaces for students to write and take notes), there are complementary activities (Homework: Focus on Language) with the objective of providing individual and independent study moments, such as complementation of the content worked in the learning situations. In an analysis of the content presented by the Curriculum of Modern Foreign Language, we observed that, on the one hand, the teaching of English in the state schools of São Paulo seems to be well supported by didactic materials specifically designed for our students, which propose a discursive perspective in teaching the language and promulgate the learning of a language as part of the student's integral education. On the other hand, we cannot fail to point out that a homogenizing proposal of teaching (in any subject) does not seem to take into account the heterogeneity of the classrooms. Thus, questions about the prescriptive and homogenizing character of São Paulo State Curriculum emerge. In a Critical Review of the Curricular Proposal of the State of São Paulo, different groups of teachers' organizations<sup>2</sup> raise points of discussion that question, for example, the autonomy of teachers and the disregard of regional differences, social, economic and political realities in the Curriculum. In our point of view, the adoption of ready materials - with the objective, among others, to standardize teaching -, considering the concrete working conditions of teachers in schools, presents itself as a palliative measure, adopted by the state, to make classes feasible even among the diversity of problems encountered in the schools. In general, in the public schools the rotation of teachers is intense, the workload is exhausting, there is little time for the preparation of classes and the classrooms are crowded, to name just a few adversities<sup>3</sup>. In this sense, we point out that the implementation of a new Curriculum, by

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<sup>2</sup> Sindicato de Supervisores do Magistério no Estado de São Paulo (APASE), Sindicato Estadual dos Professores do Ensino Oficial do Estado de São Paulo (APEOESP) and Centro do Professorado Paulista (CPP). We recommend the reading: Sarno; Noronha; Menenucci (2008).

<sup>3</sup> In the State of São Paulo there are still a significant number of non-effective teachers. According to data from the State of São Paulo's Education Department, updated in January 2017: 61.5% (123,508) of the total number of teachers working in the state network (200,515) are effective and temporary category "O", submitted to a very unstable contract, add up to 15.2% (30,606). Available at: <<https://bit.ly/2CWkLZi>>. Accessed on 10 Dec. 2017

itself, does not approach a true improvement for education, which would pass through public policies that included the valorization of the teaching career, investment in training, salaries compatible with the specifics of teaching work and improvement of working conditions.

We consider that this contextualization of the organization of English language teaching in public schools, with emphasis in the context of the state of São Paulo, is necessary to present the scenery, including the discursive one, in which the teachers act. During the analysis, aspects related to the content and methodology of English language teaching, brought by the official documents, will be presented in the dialogue with teachers' discourses.

## **THE BAKHTINIAN THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTION**

The enunciative-discursive analysis carried out in this study is based on Bakhtin's dialogism, in which the statement is a response, an evaluative expression of the subject, a positioning in relation to another discourse. Fiorin (2010) helps us to understand the basis for this analysis, considering the dialogical relations between the discourse and the discourse of the other: "These two voices don't need to be marked in the thread of the discourse, they are apprehended by our knowledge of the different discourses that circulate in a given epoch in a certain social formation" (FIORIN, 2010, p. 40).

Bakhtin conceives a subject that is constituted in the discursive dynamics, in a concrete social context, where all the presence and action of the individual happens in correlation with otherness. For the author, we live in a world of other people words and our whole life is an orientation and reaction to these words (within the infinite possibilities of manifestation of this reaction), from the process of initial assimilation of the discourse to the assimilation of human culture, the word of the others is a condition of every action of the self (BAKHTIN, 2006).

In the theory developed by the Bakhtin Circle<sup>4</sup>, individual consciousness acquires form and existence in the signs created by a socially organized group, in the course of social relations, that is, "the logic of consciousness is the logic of ideological communication, of the signic interaction of a collective" (VOLÓCHINOV, 2017, p. 98). Thus, through the shared word in society, the discursive / dialogical practice, the individual is constituted, forms and changes their way of being in the world.

Among the ideological signs, Volóchinov (2017, p. 98) claims the word is considered the "ideological phenomenon par excellence", due to its characteristics such as neutrality, which allows it to assume any connotation of values and fulfill any ideological function,

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<sup>4</sup> The Bakhtin Circle, so called by contemporary scholars, includes a group of intellectuals, among whom Bakhtin, Medvedev, and Volóchinov, who developed works that dialogue with one another in the former USSR, in the 1920s. In this text, we refer to Bakhtin (2006; 2010) and Volóchinov (2017).

besides being considered the privileged material of human communication, linked to daily life and the processes of production and, therefore, to the bases of the various spheres of ideology. The word accompanies all ideological creation; every cultural sign is verbally approached by consciousness and, once understood, “becomes part of the unity of the verbally formalized consciousness” (VOLÓCHINOV, 2017, p. 101).

In the perspective of the Circle, the words of others reach us in the dynamic of the communication, filled with their expression and their values; these words are assimilated and re-elaborated, forming the discursive universe of each one.

Bakhtin (2006) teaches that in the process of verbal interaction, “other people’s words” are appropriate at first and re-elaborated dialogically in “my-other words” (with the participation of different words) and, finally, are appropriate as “my words”, of a creative nature. Our words are words of others that have lost the quotation marks.

In this way, it is understood that all statements maintain intrinsic relations with other statements about a given object:

Each statement is full of echoes and resonances of other statements with which it is bound by the identity of the sphere of discursive communication. Each statement must first be seen as a response to the preceding utterances of a particular field. Because the statement occupies a definite position in each sphere of communication, in a given question, in a given subject, and so on. It is impossible for someone to define their position without correlating it with other positions (BAKHTIN, 2006, p. 297).

In the Bakhtinian theoretical framework we find that the concrete conditions of the production of the discourse orient the sayings of the subjects: from where the statement came (every word evokes a context or contexts: a profession, a genre, a tendency, a party, etc.) and to whom the statement is directed, in a dialogical and intrinsic relation, results in the expressive tone of the enunciation, a moment of creative nature, in which the subject takes the word and fulfill it with their intention. Bakhtin, however, warns that precisely because language is not a neutral means of passive appropriation by the speaker, on the contrary, it is full of the intentions of others, “to dominate it and to subject it to one’s own intentions and accents is a difficult and complex process” (BAKHTIN, 2010, p. 100). In the complex process of assimilation of the words, there are those discourses that resist the appropriation of the individual, remain alien and, even against the speaker’s will, are placed “in quotation marks”.

According to Bakhtin, in the social interaction, locus of the process of the ideological formation of the man, the words can act of different forms in the constitution of the conscience, exerting the function of authoritarian word or internally persuasive word. These words, endowed with inner authority and / or persuasion, define the basis of the subject’s ideological attitude and behavior. In summary, the authoritarian word imposes itself on us, they are united to authority, to a hierarchy, “demands our unconditional recognition, and not absolutely a free understanding and assimilation in our own words” (BAKHTIN, 2010,

p. 144). The authoritarian word enters entirely our verbal consciousness, we reject or accept it integrally, they are immune to the limits of contexts or variations of style, they are definitively incorporated into authority - political power, institution, personality. On the other hand, the ideological word, internally persuasive and recognized by us, is intertwined with our words (words elaborated from the assimilation of other words, in the process of verbal interaction), it is mobile and open to contexts and circumstances, it is incomplete and lives a creative life in the context of the ideological consciousness, we introduce it in other contexts, we put it in new positions in order to obtain new answers.

In short, we can affirm in the light of Bakhtin's theory that the discursive constitution of the subject occurs in tension and in conflict with these words. The complex relations of reciprocity with the words of others constitute the whole of consciousness and organize "all domains of everyday existence and ideological verbal life" (BAKHTIN, 2010, 153). We take the words of others and we strive to make them our own, we clothe them with our intentions and values (also given by others), but in this eminently social constitution our statements are always responses to other statements and the domain of the word, as the original and exclusive property of the individual, under any circumstance, is illusory. The individual is a dialogue (PONZIO, 2009).

## **METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS**

As we propose to analyze the subject's discourse, we interviewed a group of English teachers, who worked in public schools in a city in the state of São Paulo. In order to delimitate the empirical field, we chose ten state schools of the city, taking as criterion the location of the schools, so the interviews were not focused on teachers who act only in certain regions of the city. After the process of presenting the research and having the acceptance of the teachers, we managed to conduct the interviews in six of the ten schools visited, and in one of the schools we interviewed two teachers, having a total of seven interviews.

With the theoretical framework already consolidated and guiding the methodological process, the interviews were based, from conception to execution, on the concepts of the dialogic interview, developed by Freitas (2002; 2007). The author calls dialogic interview, based on the dialogism of Bakhtin, the one in which, in verbal interaction, researcher and interviewee seek mutual understanding.

It [the interview] is not reduced to an exchange of questions and answers previously prepared, but is conceived as a production of language, therefore, dialogic. The senses are created in the interlocution and depend on the situation experienced, the spatial horizons occupied by the researcher and the interviewee. The enunciations that took place depend on the concrete situation in which they take place, on the relationship established between the interlocutors, it depends on who you speak to. In the interview it is the subject that expresses himself, but his voice carries the tone of other voices, reflecting the reality of a group, gender, ethnicity, class, historical and social moment (FREITAS, 2002, p. 29).



We emphasize that we went to the field with an open, flexible and adaptable script, with ample room for the expression of the teachers and for the questions that could arise during the interview. In this regard, we assure that the interviews have moved towards dialogue, for the mutual construction of meanings.

The teachers interviewed had between 6 and 25 years of teaching and most of them worked exclusively in one school; four of them only taught the English language and three were Portuguese and English teachers. The teachers were licensed in Portuguese / English, except for one teacher, that was licensed only in English Language.

Focusing on the objective of analyzing how the teachers elaborate the teaching of English in the public school, in relation to the prescriptions of the official documents and the concrete conditions of work, we sought in their discourses the allusions to the prescriptive instance, which were recurrent in the teachers' narrative.

### **THE OFFICIAL DISCOURSE IN THE TEACHERS' DISCOURSE**

*“So, somehow you end up changing a little bit, you get out of that stuff you learned and then, suddenly, you come into the classroom and see that reality is different”*  
(Gaia)

We observed that teachers, when discussing about how they teach (or how they would like to) and the strategies and resources they use (or would like to) in class to achieve the “interested student participation”, identify themselves as English teachers, in the specificities of this job. The teachers reiterate the discourses that circulate in the scope of their profession, which normalize and particularize the practice of the English teacher.

In the teaching of the English language there is the purpose of approaching the content to be taught to the situations of the “real world”, of the everyday of the apprentices. From the 80s, we observed in the teaching-learning scenery of foreign languages the passage of a kind of teaching that relied on methods with a structural emphasis, based on the memorization and repetition of grammatical structures, for a teaching based on principles of the communicative approach, which promotes the contextualization and activities that provide students with authentic communication situations, with the use of varied resources, such as materials originally produced in the language studied. In the Curriculum of the State of São Paulo, we have that the methodological emphasis that subsidizes the material and, therefore, the practice of the teacher, is the one that emphasizes the multiple literacies, that proposes an articulation between the principles of the previous approaches.

It is no longer a question of privileging grammar or communicative functions; it is a question of promoting, in the study of the foreign language, the discursive engagement through authentic texts and social practices that enable the student to know and recognize himself and the other in different ways of interpreting the world (SÃO PAULO, 2011, p. 108).

What is expected of the English teacher is that he is able to work with the communicative skills of the language in the classroom, engaging the student in the discursive communication “through authentic social texts and practices”. Also, there is a generalized understanding that in the teaching of the English language the activities in groups and pairs and the technological resources (as it preaches the communicative approach and the extensive range of materials that accompany it) promote the practical involvement of the students with the language and, consequently, their learning. The teaching of English presupposes differentiated activities, games, collective activities, didactic resources to practice the oral comprehension of the language and the use of technological resources, it is a school subject that, according to the teachers, needs these means to interest the students, as stated by teacher Nice:

We work to try to motivate a little bit more, bring it to the reality of the student, it is the kind of concern that we have, right? The form. That’s why I told you I work with movies, with music, why? Because I know I can achieve a little bit more. **(Nice)**

In the Bakhtinian conception we do not regard language as neutral, but already “*ideologically saturated*, as a conception of the world, and even as a concrete opinion that guarantees a *maximum* of mutual understanding in all spheres of ideological life” (BAKHTIN, 2010, p. 81). In this way, we understand that the teachers state in response to the statements of a certain sphere of ideological life, which includes their profession, the particularities of their professional practice that is endorsed by speeches that dictate how English is taught<sup>5</sup>.

Responding to the discourses of the official documents that guide foreign language teaching, such as the Brazilian National Curriculum Parameters (BRASIL, 1998) and the basic document of São Paulo State Curriculum (SÃO PAULO, 2011), the teachers emphasize the importance of working with the textual genres. The teaching based on textual genres, as guided by the documents, are evoked by the teachers as the intended and effective approach to teach English:

It’s ... teaching (English) I think I have to prioritize the comprehension of the language in general, and if I interlace with Portuguese (subject), I have to prioritize the text, textual genres, because it will not do any good for the student to know an isolated expression if he does not have a construction process of a presentation dialog, at

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<sup>5</sup> We refer to the great variety of English-language teaching materials that covers methods, methodologies, approaches and techniques to support the work of the teacher. The theoretical and methodological conceptions of foreign language teaching (from structuralist conceptions to those that emphasize literary theories) subsidize didactic materials, official documents and also the teaching perspectives disseminated by language schools. Thus, the (diverse) orientations of how English should be taught are widely disseminated.

least. It will not do any good for him to know how to speak his age if he does not know in what specific types of texts he will use that language, he will use that date of birth, understand? So, this teaching must prioritize the text. (Ártemis)

But, even in the Student's Notebook, English (subject) now works much more with textual genre. So, we work ... For example, in the second grade it will work only with movies, so the student learns to do a summary and a review, because the content is "movie". So, they learn the feature of an English narrative, and I think it's quite different from what I learned back then. But, in that case, we'll be adapting, right? (Nice)

In the Student's Notebook, one of the materials distributed by the Education Department of the State of São Paulo, in the guidelines on content we find the methodology that should be followed by teachers. We also recognize these materials as an official discourse, which guides the teaching work. Analyzing the methodological approach proposed in the Student's Notebook for elementary and high school English teaching, we find the following indications: knowledge of the meaning of words should prevail over knowledge of grammatical rules; the importance of students' familiarization of the oral and written genres and the orientation of, in the case of longer texts, the use of reading strategies as cognate words and deduction of meaning by the context to accomplish the activities; the proposition of activities that use diverse resources like movies and music; the appreciation by the teacher of what students already know and can do in reading and writing and the use of pairs and groups dynamics for students to learn together. We find in the words of teachers Nice and Íris, when talking about their classroom practice, the appropriation of the prescribed principles, as they say:

Oh, I do it the way I think it should be. I think it should be dynamic, it should always be with group work. For example, the workbook activities I always work in a group, trying to put the student who has more difficulty with the one who knows better, to motivate. I think it has to be this way. (Nice)

That's what I do until today. I say: 'so, let's see, for whom is this text, what is it for, what is its form, what are the cognates?' 'Do you have to know all the words to read the text?' 'If I know fifty percent, can I infer the meaning?' And also, comparing with Portuguese: 'Who reads a whole book and knows all the words?' (Íris)

As we noticed, the methodological path indicated by the teachers as the one that propitiates the learning reverberates what the official documents convey and it is proper to the current approaches of the language teaching field, such as: the instructions to work the text in the classroom seeking the previous knowledge of the student and using texts from different spheres of reality, and the offer of activities involving students in authentic communication situations. These directives from the official discourses that guide the teachers'

appreciation of their own practice are words endowed with authority and accepted in their entirety by the teachers. We have seen with Bakhtin (2010) that the word acts in different ways in the constitution of our consciousness, endowed with inner authority and / or persuasion, these words define the bases of our ideological attitude and our behavior. We observe in the excerpts above that, despite the teachers trying to dominate the word of authority and “submit it to their own intentions and accents” (BAKHTIN, 2010, p. 100), the directions of official discourses are “quoted”. These authoritative discourses organize how teachers look at their practice, in the attempt to tailor practice to the demands they deem from their own classroom experiences (but which, in fact, correspond to the directives of official documents) the teachers tell how they teach English. Teachers attribute a positive sense to changes in their own ways of teaching English, the rupture with the old method of teaching gives space to a new approach, and the teachers seem to find a methodological path that they recognize as more appropriate for English teaching, as Íris and Gaia say:

Then, when I started, I worked with grammar. Then, in about three or four years, that did not work, at least in the public school it did not work, it could work in private schools, but in public schools it did not work. And then we were adjusting, I was adjusting, and I approached the instrumental English teaching, to work the text, to show, to try to make the student read the text in their different ways of reading, to enter the genres, right? In instrumental teaching and in the genre, that's how I work. [...] So I followed this way, and then I'm conducting the texts, also pulling the grammar I want them to learn, but without hitting the structures, like I did twenty years ago: 'Pass the sentence to the negative and the interrogative', I do not do that anymore. I can even do it, but in a different way, then: 'Today we're going to ask questions, today I'm going to ask my colleague what he likes'. So, I help them formulate ten questions, then they go around looking for ten people to answer the ten questions. (Íris)

So, somehow you end up changing a little bit, you get out of that stuff that you've learned and, suddenly, you come into the classroom and see that the reality is different: there are some students who like music a lot, so you end up researching more songs to work over the lyrics... (Gaia)

The English language teaching valued as favorable to student's learning corresponds to the prescribed teaching and, possibly, to the one planned by the teachers, which, nevertheless, competes with the interferences in the concrete accomplishment of the work. Although they know the practices currently established in English language teaching and endorse them, teachers continue to use traditional teaching, since in the concreteness and dynamics of the classroom, not foreseen in any official document, the new practices are not feasible:

The Student's Notebook that came from the State, for example, I follow it and complement with the book that was also distributed, which I think is very cool. And

they complete in the book itself, because there are blank spaces for them to complete. There's also a CD. The CD I do not use because there are rooms that do not ... there is no way, and it has ... And so, it is a great difficulty, sometimes in the school, because they do not lend the cd player, and we have to bring it from home. So, there are rooms that you can use it and there are rooms that you cannot. [...] last year, for example, so the rooms were ... The (in)discipline was too much, they talked too much, I had to keep calling their attention all the time, so when I brought something different it was chaos, then it did not work, you know? Because there were too many students in the classroom. When you work with a few students, it's different, especially in English classes, they get more interested ... When the room has thirty-five students, it becomes difficult. (Bia)

Because, as I said, when I came in I had the idea that they were going to produce much in a short time, and you see that it is not so, right? An activity that I planned to do in one class, sometimes, they take three to do. So that's what I've been learning. Activities that work and activities that do not work, right? That: 'Ah, but you have to do something that catches their eyes', you see that sometimes it's worse, the mess, the bustle inside the room is bigger, it's harder for you to control. Then you learn. Unfortunately, you start learning in the worst possible way. (Hera)

So, there are rooms I manage to do things, there are rooms that I do not venture. For example, I have a room with six students with mental deficiencies, in a room. So, in this room I do not venture to make them walk around the room, I have two students in wheelchairs too, so, there they work more each one in their corner, or pairs. I also do not put them in groups, because they fight, so it does not work there. (Íris)

In the same perspective of Machado and Abreu-Tardelli (2009), who analyze the Brazilian National Curriculum Parameters of Sciences, we understand that the cited documents referring to the English language, instruct teachers about the application of methodological rules to be followed and the organization of tasks, however,

the constitutive acts of the interactions that we judge to be constantly developed between the teacher and the students, acts that are constitutive of the concrete work of the teacher, are very little thematized or are not very precise. This leads us to consider that, even when they are configured to be developed by teachers, the prescriptions continue at a generic level and attribute to the teacher the role of a simple applicator of the proposed methodology (MACHADO; ABREU-TARDELLI, 2009, p. 113).

By assigning to the teacher the role of applicator of a methodology, according to Machado and Abreu-Tardelli (2009), the documents reinforce the premise that if the teachers applied the methodological principles required, they would achieve the objectives of the activities. Thus, the authors evaluate that the reproduction of such prescriptive texts contributes to "the consolidation of negative social representations about the work of the teacher, which can, of course, contribute to their social devaluation and the identity crisis

of this professional” (MACHADO; ABREU-TARDELLI, 2009, p 114). Considering the ideology of the set of texts that accompany and regulate their practice and comparing to what is possible to achieve in the classroom, the teachers evaluate themselves with severity:

I try, I study a lot, right? I like to study. I’m always trying to innovate, as I told you. [...] Everything that is offered I do, I go and what I can I take to the classroom. Has it worked? Very little, very little, not close to what I would like... And then, I’m really analyzing myself as a teacher, and sometimes the analysis is not very good. (Íris)

We realized that the teachers appropriate the speeches of the official documents and appreciate their practice regarding what was institutionally established. Even considering the variables of each classroom and adapting to them, the teachers are frustrated when they do not reach their goals. We infer that the prescribed, even if it’s not feasible, constitutes an important part of the ideological sphere of action of the teachers and, therefore, approaches them to a community of experts<sup>6</sup>. In the public school, where the challenges are enormous due to a long process of devaluing teaching in general and the English language subject is still considered of minor importance to the students<sup>7</sup>, teachers seem to rely on the prescribed to make sense of what they do, in the context in which they do. They identify themselves as English teachers by echoing *statements that are linked by the identity of the discursive sphere of communication* (BAKHTIN, 2006, p. 297).

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In the present article, when analyzing the speeches of a group of English teachers who work in public schools we considered the historicity inherent in the constitution of their discourses, seeking to contemplate the social voices that are added to the voices of the teachers, who enunciate them as if they were their own. In the Bakhtinian enunciative perspective, the subject is constituted in the discursive tension, in the process of assimilation of the word of others, that works in different ways in the socio-ideological formation of the individual. As seen, subjects’ discourse is marked by authoritative words and internally

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<sup>6</sup> Young (2011) affirms that school disciplines are true “communities of experts”, who have distinct histories and traditions, and through these “communities”, teachers in different schools and colleges are linked (or should be) to one another and also to those who are in the universities producing knowledge. Thus, in the author’s view, the disciplines are generators of identity not only for the students, who enter the “communities of experts”, but mainly for teachers as members of a profession; teacher’s knowledge of the subject is the basis of teacher authority.

<sup>7</sup> Foreign language teaching researchers point to the marginality of English in the school curriculum, which is considered a less important subject in the hierarchy of school subjects, especially for public school students (LEFFA, 2011, SOUZA, 2013).

persuasive words, that are constantly and dynamically building the individual discourses and their ideological positions in life. We recognize the speeches of the official documents as one of the voices teachers respond to and that constitutes them.

We infer from the analyzes that the ways in which the teachers elaborate the practice of teaching English, conceived in relation to the discourses conveyed by the official documents that are closest to them and considering the conditions in which the practice takes place, reveal the authority of the official discourse. Although they recognize the limitations of the contexts in which they act, the guidelines of the official documents represent, for the teachers, the desired teaching.

The discourses of the official documents, typical of current paradigms in the field of foreign language teaching, organize the teachers' view of teaching practices (what and how to teach), guide the valuation of teaching methods (the prescribed documents bring the most current and adequate methodology to teach) and the appreciation of the planned / desired / developed work in the classroom.

Finally, we notice that when teachers welcome the proposals of the official prescriptions and evaluate the practices through this lens, they reveal the mismatch between the planning and the concrete work of teaching, emphasizing the fragility of the prescribed discourse that ignores this asymmetry.

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