

Linguistic Variation and Social Representation in Portuguese Language Classes in High School

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Abstract:

In this article, we present partial results of research on ways of building the teaching of linguistic variation content and its relationship with social representation. The issue on focus is to know which activities and teaching resources were used by teacher and students in Portuguese language classes. The execution of the research was in a sophomore year of high school of a public school in the State of Paraíba, in the first semester of 2019. The corpus was constituted through notes, an audio recording of classes and interviews with teacher and students. The analysis, based on studies of culture, social representation, linguistic and didactic variation, showed as main results, that the study of linguistic variation, provided by the teacher's methodology, is done through a diversity of activities production that benefits more assimilation of the content from a linguistic point of view than from the implications of its use for exploring the socio-cultural components of the phenomenon.

Keywords:

Linguistic variation. Language teaching. Social representation.

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INTRODUCTION

It is an irrefutable fact that it is through language that any society communicates, interacts and builds knowledge and understanding of itself. This makes it the privileged means by which senses and meanings are produced for the maintenance, transformation or renewal of beliefs and values attributed to the beings, objects and phenomenon that constitute social groups. Among these phenomena, perhaps one of the most important, the use of language continues deserving special attention as it is through what is said (speaking or writing) that society keeps its set of values and meanings, but it also produces effects of an ideological order (saying what you think when you speak/write), through implications for the construction of the social representation of subjects and social groups.

We are, therefore, in a problematic context that relates language, society, culture and social representation. In this context, the focus of this research is on the production of language from the point of view of its diversity, as a product of the transformations that all languages go through overtime. From a linguistic point of view, we can say we would be facing a sociolinguistic phenomenon, according to consolidated theoretical guidance in the field of Linguistics, which is called Sociolinguistics, especially the Labovian Variationist (LABOV, 2008), widely disseminated and produced in Brazil. However, the case of unpleasant linguistic diversity and what it involves as social implications need to be considered besides a linguistic phenomenon, especially when taken as a study object and teaching it in Basic Education.

About this general issue, the need for research that considers social, historical, political and cultural aspects in Brazil, there is a wide production (BORTONI-RICARDO, 2004; BAGNO, 2007; CAMACHO, 2013; FARACO; ZILLES, 2015; PIOVEZANI, 2020, among many others) that has collaborated to understand the complexity of the phenomenon, proposing other forms of analysis that take language as a living and heterogeneous system, object of internal changes, but also object of social regulation.

Thus, the study of linguistic variation requires that we consider aspects of a socio-cultural, political, historical and ideological order, which, as a whole, contribute to a better perception of the social representations proceeding from their use or the regulation and valuation of use. From these aspects, it is possible to look at linguistic variation as a language phenomenon that occurs, in the case of Brazil, in multicultural and linguistic situations under certain political and ideological conditions. For the teaching of language in Basic Education, such aspects unravel in questions that concern how to convert knowledge about linguistic variation into an object of teaching, so that it is not limited to a sociolinguistic vision of associating certain modes of speech and determined vocabularies to social groups, without considering the implications of uses and their effects for the construction of identity.

Therefore, there is a necessity for researches in the investigation of the construction modes of knowledge about this subject in school practices. In this study, we joined in a conclusion phase of research, to investigate what types of activities and didactic resources were used by teacher and students in 06h / class (six hours/class) of a high school class in a public school of the State of Paraíba. It is a research that is

categorized as a case study, from which we expect to contribute with a sample of an important issue for reflection on language teaching, regarding the relationship between language, culture and society. Hence, the reflection to be presented through analysis and results can contribute to the discussion on the construction of school education curriculum.

To develop the study, this article is organized into three sections. The first is focused on the elements about the Linguistic Variation Constitution, the second aims to present the methodological research path, in which we characterize the involved subjects and describe the empirical research situation. In the third, the data analysis, we present the results of the study, based on analysis and discussion of the types of activities with the *linguistic variation* content which established the set of the observed classes.

LINGUISTIC VARIATION AS A STUDIED PHENOMENON

In this research, in conformity with the intended research objective, we made a theoretical approach to understand the phenomenon of linguistic variation not only from a sociolinguistic point of view but it is traditional to conceive it, almost as a common sense. Here, our understanding is like a social and cultural phenomenon proper to the realization of any language. We started from a basic hypothesis, with the support from Camacho (2013) about linguistic realization. The author reminds us that every language or variety is a structured system that is entirely possible as an instrument for the logical and coherent transmission of content concerning social reality. The varieties, although different in terms of formal mechanisms, are equally functional from the point of view of communication and social interaction. From the point of view of functioning, it is also necessary to consider, as defended by Pagotto (2004), that the meaning of the variant forms is a result of the subject's identity process in its relationship with language, in different social practices. To develop this thinking, we also rely on Pagotto (2015), when questioning about the subject's place in variation and about which theory of meaning would allow linking the functioning of the variant forms to the social functioning, because, for him, these two questions remain. First, as when talking about the subject's place, in addition to thinking about the effect that occurs when one or another variant form is enunciated, in the process of implementation and propagation of linguistic forms it is questioned whether the subject has a place in theory. Second, because in this, the variants appear on labels in the functioning social, such as age, gender, education, social class etc., as we usually consider, but these do not account for factors such as, for example if the subject suits more than one of these categories.

As language is a cultural product, a social artefact that is due to a long historical path, because of the explanation to be constructed, in this study, for the phenomenon under analysis, we propose a path that notices the relationship between subject and variation linguistics as dependent on culture and social representation. That is why, initially, it is necessary to elucidate the concept of culture that guides us in this study.

In an anthropological nature, Laraia (2008) shows us that the development of the concept situates us before the importance of culture in the constitution of human beings as we know them (and we are) in society. Briefly, we are interested in highlighting two points in the construction of this concept. When conceptualizing "culture", human learning and action are highlighted to react to knowledge or bits of knowledge already given. Therefore, according to the author, the constitution of the concept withstands the consideration of human behaviour as a genetic inheritance before the understanding as a complex of control mechanisms, plans, rules, instructions to rule the behaviour.

Following this last utterance, human beings would be genetically able to receive this set of mechanisms as a kind of program that can be called *culture*. As a more concrete empirical result, we can say that we have access to what we call cultural heritage; the way of seeing the world moral and evaluative judgements,

behaviours and postures. This heritage is materialized in characteristics such as ways of acting, dressing, eating and expressing oneself through a natural language. At this point, it is worth highlighting the important relationship that we propose, in this work, between linguistic variation, culture and representation. As Laraia (2008) reminds us, every individual's experience is transmitted to others, in an endless process of accumulation. Thus, human language is also part of a cultural heritage and, at the same time, the instrument, as an articulated system of oral production, which enables transmission and accumulation. It is precisely because of this relationship of dependence between culture and language that this process is not done linearly because the understanding of what is anticipated as significant can be accepted, denied or reformulated. So, we need the concept of representation, coming from Cultural Studies, from Hall (2016).

The concept of representation occupies an important place in the study of culture. For Hall, *representation* involves the use of language, signs, and images that mean or represent objects, but this does not happen simply. It means using language to intelligently express something about the world or represent it to others. In his theory, the author presents three different approaches to explain how the representation of meaning by language works: reflexive, intentional and constructivist. In this research, we focus on the third approach because it provides us with the most appropriate theoretical apparatus for the intended study.

According to Hall, the constructivist approach does not deny the existence of the material world, but it disagrees with reflective thinking, according to which meaning is in the object of the real world, and language should function as a mirror of that sense. In the constructivist perspective, it is the language system (s) that allows us to build meanings, to make the world communicable and intelligible. Therefore, representation systems are compounded of signs with a material dimension that manifests itself as sounds or images. The representation is, finally, a practice of using this material and its effects with symbolic functions. Sounds, words indicate, symbolize or represent concepts and, thus, carry meanings. For the case of the study and teaching of Linguistic Variation, we are understanding as a phenomenon that materializes through the language, predominantly oral, on which there are historically constructed representations, which are activated when social actors (in Hall's words) are brought in contact with their material realization and their meanings.

At this point, we can say that, in the scope of this study, at least two sets of meanings about linguistic variation need to be considered. First, about what originates from the grammatical tradition and its impact on the constitution of a lay knowledge or the speaker's knowledge of their native language (RAJAGOPALAN, 2008). Second, about what is built by linguistic science. Regarding this last one, the main knowledge of the impact on school practice of formal teaching on linguistic variation has been that of variation-based sociolinguistics, whose perception of society is limited to the order of the linguistic, as Pagotto (2004) affirms us, although the description of the forms operates to relate the variation to external factors to the linguistic such as age, ethnicity, geographic location, among others.

At this point, it is important to highlight, briefly, with support from Camacho (2013), a bit of the history of the consolidation of the concept of variation in the scope of linguistic studies. According to the author, it was with the structural (Saussurian) and generative (Chomskyan) paradigms that the epistemological procedure was consolidated in Linguistics according to which "the basic data for linguistic analysis should be regularized to eliminate the variability that exists in the language as a real phenomenon" (p. 41). The rupture will occur with sociolinguists and the establishment of the variationist model that not only provides evidence of the inherent heterogeneity of language but also considers the variable as a structural unit. The problematic question, which arises, mainly for language teaching, is that the scientific and academic practice of this model inclines to see variants (for example *thing pass / things pass; he speaks macaxeira / he speaks aipim*) as belonging to two different systems, being an interchanged situation of *dialectical mixing or code alternation* (p. 43).

The main result to be prepared as training knowledge, both in the context of the teacher education and in basic education, through the baseline texts of the introduction or dissemination of linguistic science

and textbooks circulating in schools is predominantly this polarized categorization between two systems, which constitutes a useful space to favour standardization, an important issue for linguistic policy and, consequently, for the determination of which variety should be considered as the country's official language. This fact will unfold in countless other important ones, but, for this research, we believe it is satisfactory to highlight what reminds us Signorini (2001) when dealing with the relations between language about spoken and written uses. The author also reminds us of the change, caused by the variationist sociolinguistics, of the focus of the homogeneity and stability of the language system (which would be for the paradigmatic change, according to Camacho (2013)) for the instability of this system when seen in space and time. This way of describing the language results in the concept of linguistic variety as the achievements of historical, geographical, social and stylistic origin, additionally to the notions of form and informal style, however, it is this homogeneous classificatory set that will prevail to determine which linguistic forms will be more or less close to an ideal form of language.

Consequently, for language teaching, it is necessary to consider, in a brief summary, that from the scientific study of language, especially when taking natural languages as an object, the main contributions to the phenomenon of variation related to the undeniable discovery of that linguistic diversity accompanies external factors, reflecting the social diversity of its speakers, because if we have a society that presents itself in multiple ways, language would not be different, having to deal with these diverse human manifestations, but the representation of language inherited from tradition and part of common sense, is that language is a homogeneous block.

This conception is largely due to the strength of the cultural tradition of writing and the school's historical construction of a language taken as a model, a standard norm, ready and finished. In this case, the language represents a cultural product, but it is also a symbol of prestige and an instrument of segregation and exclusion. According to Milroy (2011, p. 53), in general, the "standard variety" has been associated with the "most prestigious variety" instead of the variety characterized by the highest degree of uniformity. However, it is important to clarify that, as the author says, the varieties of language do not have prestige in themselves, but such varieties acquire prestige when their speakers have high prestige. Thus, for what they represent, symbolically, the prestige is attributed by human beings to certain social groups and inanimate or abstract objects. Or, as defined by Camacho (2013), as variation is a typical phenomenon of phoneme pronunciation (phonetic level), in morphosyntactic coding and lexical organization (lexical and morphosyntactic levels), the forces of uniformity tend to resort to the establishment of standardization principles. So, the ideal language model would be, supposedly, the one that is considered appropriate for official publications, formal school education, media uses and public institutions.

On the other hand, as it seems to be built by the linguistic science, especially after sociolinguistics, more than a product, language is a process of socio-cultural reality, of a heterogeneous and changing nature. For this reason, it requires knowing how to treat it pedagogically, so that it expands and stimulates reflections on school issues involving linguistic variation, especially the socially prevalent factors regarding language. To this conclusion, linguistic science teaches to consider the social in the use of language and to observe that standards are not always imposed on the daily use of their users because the opposite also occurs when the concrete uses of their speakers establish standards. Neves (2006) warns that different uses must be adapted to different situations of use and the existence of non-standard records is a guarantee of efficiency and use of language. In this line of thought, linguistic heterogeneity is, in our understanding, the vital force of language and is related to social heterogeneity, as it needs to accompany it.

Linguistic Variation as a School Teaching Object

As an object of school education, linguistic variation needs to be taken as a content of a critical nature and not merely a classification of the speaking of a language. In other words, from the point of view of studies on education (pedagogy and didactics), needs to be taught to expand the student's insight into the awareness of the effects of linguistic uses for their role in society. This perspective adopts a conception of teaching as a social practice, that is, as a set of articulated actions between subjects (teachers and students) that aims to meet the wider needs and functions socially and pedagogically determined (LIBÂNEO, 2011). However, this general character needs to be transformed into concrete action in a teaching-learning situation (in class, in person or not), which will lead the activities for the didactic, for the intentional, guided by a given direction. At this point, we find the immediate character of the action that will manifest itself in the teaching of school content, with implications for formative learning. This is the place, then, for the so-called curriculum content.

In an associated way, the object of study, in this research, requires a teaching conception that better supports the investigation of linguistic variation as school content in the classroom. Therefore, the starting point is to consider teaching as a social practice (LIBÂNEO, 2011). According to this, we are considering teaching as a set of actions developed by specific subjects that aim to meet certain needs and expectations. Among many characteristics of social practice, we highlight, for the purposes of this investigation, in discussion with this concept of Didactics, its procedural dimension, as said by Signorini (2007), among other authors representing this vision of Applied Linguistics. School education is a social practice, not only because it constitutes a set of actions, but also because it is a dynamic, multiple and contingent process. Among the contingencies, certainly, the one with the greatest impact is the emergency, as it is always a vector of social transformation, with teachers, as a tool, the didacticization or transformation of scientific or academic knowledge into knowledge to be taught, as a tool through official guidelines and teaching materials.

Returning to the conception of teaching from the pedagogical and didactic point of view, we will have as main categories, which manners the practice, the objectives and the contents, from which methods, procedures, activities, selected materials and assessment tools are elaborated. The point of contact is, in the case of our study, the content, as a macro category that supra orders the activities. And to explicit better, let us take Sacristán (1998). For the author, the term *content*, when referring to teaching, can come loaded with an intellectualist meaning that refers to resume academic knowledge or a wider meaning that encompasses behaviours, values, attitudes, thinking and knowledge skills. Starting from a similar distinction, Zabala (1998) also draws attention to the meanings of the term. For him, *the content* was normally used to express what should be learned, in an almost exclusive relationship to refer to the knowledge of classic subjects or disciplines and to those that express themselves through names, concepts, principles, statements and theorems. Subsequently, teaching content is understood in a restricted way to the cognitive aspect because the perspective is that of knowledge as an apprehension of something exposed as a knowable object. For the author, it is important to think about the question of *what should be learned?* For this reason, in addition to the contributions of the disciplinary knowledge objects, accumulated by scientific knowledge or by school tradition, it is necessary to learn contents that enable the development of motor skills, interpersonal relationships and social inclusion.

Given the impossibility, in this research, of dismantling this discussion into its many and multiple topics, we sever to highlight the important relationship between teaching content and knowledge, which, in this case, refers to linguistic knowledge, in a wider way, and, strictly speaking, linguistic variation. As Fichtner (2012) affirms, considering that knowledge is pre-established in the curriculum, in teaching plans, in textbooks, it seems obvious to say that we know what *knowledge is*. From this questioning, the author shows us with two important processes of relationship with the knowledge that occurs in situations that can be considered as

learning and, therefore, with implications for the practice of teaching and the didacticization of knowledge itself. They are the processes of *appropriation* and *objectification*, in discussion with Leontiev's ideas (1978, as in Fichtner). What is important to highlight, in this case, is the sense of *appropriation* in relation to knowledge as a process of learning from historical and social experiences, materialized in some way. This materialization is called *objectification*. For the author, following this perspective, the objective forms of knowledge, which, for us, would be, approximately, those that can refer to linguistic variation, are the result of the activities of the subjects, have their materiality, but are inseparable from them.

Evidently on a path to characterize *linguistic variation* as a school teaching object, we have, then, an object of social practice, corresponding to one of the components of this practice, built under specific conditions; in a predetermined way, historically, and also reconstructed according to the socio-political contingencies to which the education system is subjected.

As teaching content, returning to the didactic question, we have, thus, two great teachable forms of content: the objective forms and the subjective forms (FICHTNER, 2012). Bringing it to the scope of our investigation, we can associate the classificatory knowledge of regional speeches, for example, with the objectification of knowledge and the values, feelings, opinions, beliefs and attitudes generated from the perceptions of this object as subjective forms. But these forms become real teaching objects in didactic situations that as such need to be defined as social spaces in which the means are ensured for the "teaching mediation of objectives, contents, methods, in view of the conscious assimilation of knowledge" (LIBÂNEO, 2011, p. 132-133), involving, in an articulated way immediate ends (to *know what linguistic variation is*) and mediators (to *know what are the implications of the use of certain expressions/words by certain speakers*).

Linguistic variation, therefore, is, due to its complex and reflective nature, a curricular content that demands a much more formative exploration, since it allows to assemble scientific knowledge about language, its properties, contradictions and social connections. We can define it as settled content, as proposed by Libâneo (2011) in his critical-social approach to content. From a methodological point of view, in this perspective, linguistic variation is a content to be inserted into the active study through assimilation, analysis and synthesis activities. Assimilation will allow contact with scientific knowledge and be experienced through the analysis of concrete facts of linguistic uses and adapted through synthesis for the construction of new knowledge when developing critical capacity and forming convictions.

In short, what is expected is an understanding of linguistic variation beyond its formal classification, contemplating a knowledge of its use depending on who, where, why, for whom and the effects for the constitution of the social representation of groups and the people who compose them. From the teaching point of view, a didactic direction is expected through activities that are not limited to classificatory teaching based only on variation.

METHODOLOGICAL PATH

The research was carried out at a regular elementary school in the city of Campina Grande, State of Paraíba, in the Integrated Citizen School (ECI) modality. As the issued linguistic variation is officially a curriculum content of the sophomore year of high school of a public school, we strategically selected this class, compound of 36 students for the analysis.

For the gathering and generation of data from the class, six classes of Portuguese language, provided by a teacher, were observed in the first semester of 2019. The classes, each lasting forty-five minutes, were audio-recorded, followed by their transcript, counting four hours and thirty minutes. In addition, we used the field diary to record significant events on the teaching of linguistic variation. We also collect written exercises from students in the class and the teaching material used by the teacher.

From the data set that constitutes the *corpus* of analysis, in the six classes that were observed we noticed recurrences of activities, being 1 about reading, 4 about textual production and 6 about exposition. In these six classes, the general content of Variation Linguistics is given through topics, namely, regionalism, foreignness, slang, neologism and internetese (a term used for linguistic variations through the Internet). This was the classification chosen by the teacher for teaching content. These topics were passed through the described activities: oral exposure, reading and textual production. Below, we summarize in Table 1 the course of the six classes observed:

Table 1 – Course of observed classes

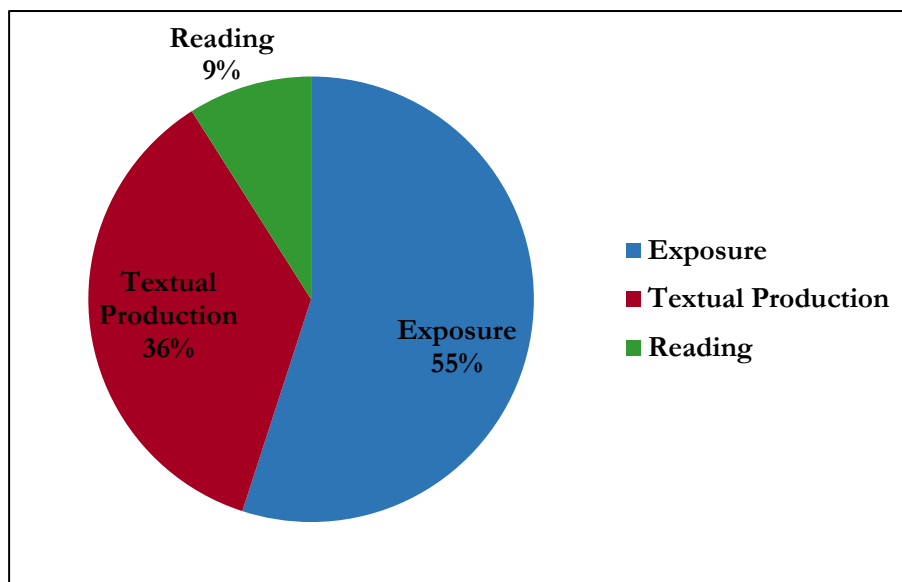
OCCURRENCE	OBSERVED ACTIVITIES
Class 1: beginning of the subject about linguistic variation	1. Oral exposure; 2. Reading a humorous text in joke genre; 3. Presentation production
Class 2: video presentation	1. Continuation of the previous class and video presentation; 2. Oral presentation; 3. Production presentation
Class 3: presentations	1. Presentation of role-plays by students; 2. Oral presentation by the teacher
Class 4: classification of linguistic variation	1. Oral presentation by the teacher assisted by slides on the concept and classifications of LV
Class 5: classification of linguistic variation	1. Oral presentation of the teacher assisted by slides about the concept and classifications of LV
Class 6: conclusion of linguistic variation content	1. Production of a presentation by students; 2. Oral presentation by the teacher

Source: Prepared by the authors.

In the first class, a humorous text in joke genre presented by the teacher, without adaptations, was read from the textbook *Our Language: Codes, Languages and their Technologies*. In the second class, there was an exhibition of a video that brought together reports and interviews, easily found on Youtube channel entitled *Regional Linguistic Variations*. In the third class, occurred by the part of students, presentations involving m linguistic variations. Following in fourth and fifth observed classes, they focused on the concept and classifications of linguistic variations. Finally, the subject ends in the sixth class, again with the students' presentation and the teacher's reflections. The transcription of the classes occurred according to the methodology of analysis of the conversation proposed by Marcuschi (2010), with adaptations such as (::)for oral stretching (...) pauses, ([]) taking shifts, capital letters for ememthers, etc. Next, we analyze these activities and how was the construction of knowledge about linguistic variation through the activities observed in the classroom and their implications.

THE (RE)CONSTRUCTION OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT LINGUISTIC VARIATION IN THE CLASSROOM

To demonstrate the results related to the question presented for this study, we start this item of analysis by showing a quantitative view of the types of activities that were performed during the observed classes. For that, consider the Graph 1 that we illustrate below:



Source: Prepared by the authors.

Graph 1 – Classroom activities

As we see, the teaching activities were carried out within three poles: oral presentation, textual production and reading. The activities of oral exposure are those carried out by the teacher for explaining and explanation content. The textual production activities were designed at research, preparation and presentations made by students. Finally, the reading activities were intended for students to study the content, through the interpretation and analysis of a text. In the graph, we can see that the first variable, taken for *exposition*, occupies most of the graph, being responsible for 55% of all classes, in sequence, the *textual production* with 36% and lastly and in less recurrence, *reading*, with 9%.

Regarding to activities that demanded more concentration, those of exposure, the greatest occurrences were concentrated in orality through the explanations the teacher made, such as the presentation of concepts. Also, after the students' participation, the teacher orally recovers key information about the content, as we can see in the fragment (1) that we show below:

- (1) **Teacher:** *that's it..pay attention..every region of Brazil, each piece of territorial extension in Brazil has its own unique way of speaking. That's what you have just done here, right? the difference between who is from the Northeast and who is from Rio de Janeiro, right? who is from the southeast region, right? the "mó" "coé" the "uncle" ... here the "oxe" "oxente" .. so each group has its peculiar way of communicating right? it will depend a lot, it will change from region to region. Then back to the last class I asked a question. Does it also change from city to city? [...]*
(Class 4)

In the example of the fragment (1), we verify the exposition activities in which the teacher intermediates the knowledge, reclaiming and reaffirming (*that's it..pay attention...*) a variationist sociolinguistic concept (*each piece of territorial extension in Brazil has its peculiar way of speaking*) and providing examples. As we also see in this demonstration, the knowledge about variation was organized by the students in an activity previously accomplished (*That's what you have just done here, right?*). This seems to prove the focus of the study in this sociolinguistic perspective, by the regional classification. Proof of this is that in the future she continues in her exposition, corroborating this knowledge, reformulating her speech, guided by the same concept (*each group has its peculiar way of communicating ... it will depend a lot, it will change from region to region*). It is also worth highlighting the teacher's proposal when presenting, as a suggestion of activity to the students, a questioning (*Back to the last class I asked a question..*). This action reveals her effort to propose activities beyond the mere

exhibition of content, such as the one suggested in the question: *Does it also change from city to city?* However, the issue seems to remain focused on knowledge of regional variation, at the diatopic level.

Although the example above could allow the study of content by social aspects, in addition to the linguistic form, as cultural, ideological and historical, the activities barely explore and systematize the subject as knowledge or knowledge to be learned, that is, they are not reflected in the form of activities. On the other hand, examples (2) and (3), below, help us to understand how the teacher pursues to expand the content for these aspects:

- (2) **Teacher:** *so .. it depends a lot on the history... on the customs of that society, isn't it? from that region .. remember when I said "Brazil is a very large country in territorial extension"? this also influences right? and the people who live here who came since the beginning when everything started. Then with them comes their customs and characteristics. Do you also remember when I gave an example of the North Koreans and the Chinese who are all over Campina Grande?*

Student 7: *yes*

(Class 4)

- (3) **Teacher:** *they have his peculiar way. We have ours. even because:: João Pessoa is an older city*

Student 4: *[it is the capital*

Teacher: *besides being the capital it is older in comparison to Campina Grande..then Campina Grande is a city younger than João Pessoa .. so whoever is from João Pessoa will probably talk in a dragging way .. about who is from Campina Grande. teacher, how do I notice this? Talking. Dialogues. You will find they have a different way of speaking than you do. Perhaps the accent is different. [...]*

(Class 4)

Fragments (2) and (3) exemplify how the teacher pursues to relate the content to historical and cultural aspects. For this, she explains the historical formation of the Brazilian people, and once again places the discussion on the geographical aspect, but now in the municipal proximity of her students. This can be seen in the fragments when she says: *"it depends a lot on history ... the people who live here who arrived here, or even, besides being the capital, it is older in comparison to Campina Grande"*. The effort can be seen in (2) when references are made to customs and characteristics that can be associated with the concepts of culture and representation. This is seen in the fragments when he says *"... with them comes their customs and their characteristics ... it depends a lot on history ... on customs"*. In this way, these speeches of the teacher replace the content in relation to the importance of culture in the constitution of society, as a cultural heritage. This perspective could provide an opportunity for problematization that would make students notice the world, the moral and evaluative judgements, behaviours and attitudes that we are involved in, as it is the customs and characteristics that contribute to the construction of social representation, in which meanings are produced and shared among members of a culture.

We recognize that in making this relation of linguistic variation and culture, the teacher enriches the presentation of the content, leaving the logic of the traditional school merely centred on the sociolinguistic variation. In fact, she pursues to bring the content close to the local reality of her students *"do you also remember when I gave an example of the North Koreans and the Chinese who are all over Campina Grande?"*, Making the covered content also current today and favouring the expansion of students' daily experience.

Still, in the activities of oral exposition, we verified that the teacher uses other strategies, as is the case of moving the speech to the students. The following examples demonstrate how the teacher asks students for help so they can participate with her, according to the examples (4) and (5) which are a fragment and slide used in class:

- (4) **Teacher:** *so I want someone to read it for me.*

Student 4: *[ME*

Teacher: *What is the general concept of variations? read it.*

Student 4: *linguistic varieties. the phenomenon of changes in the official language of a country through historical, social and regional variations*

(Class 4)

(5)



Source: Researches archives.

Figure 1 – Slide prepared by the teacher¹

As we have seen, the teacher uses a didactic action that offers students possibilities for participation “so I want someone to read it to me or what is the general concept of variations? read it”. We believe that this posture favours the dynamization of classes and makes the teacher not only hold the word in the exposition, in a centralized way but through the participation of the students, they become collaborative. From a conceptual point of view, we also realize that exposure to the concept of linguistic variation is comprehensive, simplified and is based on a sociolinguistic variationist approach. consequently, even facing all the activities in the classroom and the students’ involvement with questions, which seem to expand knowledge for cultural and representation aspects, the conclusions for systematizing the content remain in the knowledge about the view of formal linguistics.

Advancing to the second pole of activities developed, those related to textual production. For their analysis, in this article, we will take for example a task suggested by the teacher. We bring to exemplify the case of the production of a glossary by the students. Fragment (6) and (7) expose this activity developed in the classroom:

(6) **Teacher:** *I would like at least one person who was responsible for the glossary to come here..do / .. say a few words. introduce a few words. What’s up?*

[...]

Teacher: *Come, Kelly?*

Student 1: *I did it here. then I don’t know if it’s okay*

Teacher: *so come here [...] come on ((clapping)) let’s hear some words that our colleague Kelly researched about it, ok? Come on? Come on? Let’s listen? Come on. First*

Student 3: *“Trout”. “Bro”*

¹ Linguistic varieties: *the phenomenon of changes in the official language of a country through historical, social and regional variations*

Teacher: ["trout". what is "trout"?

Student 1: a trout is a person.

Student 3: "man".

Student 1: yeah: man. partner

Student 3: yes, man as a partner.

Student 10: [it's bro.

Teacher: "Man" "partner"

Student 3: "uai"

Teacher: "UAI" from last class? "uai"?

Student 1: it is from Minas [...]

(Class 3)

(7) **Student 1:** we were left with some expressions .. you are going to recognize some, aren't you?

Student 4: yeah

Student 1: When we are anxious, we say "oxente"

Student 4: "eita, danosse" ["oh, very bad"]²

Student 1: button of ()

Student 3: huh?

Teacher: what?

Student 1: sound button is "pitoco"

Teacher: sound button is pitoco

Student 4: "look at Maria..vôte" ["gosh"].

Student 1: confusion is "vôte"

Student 4: Laughing at others is "mangar" ["make fun of"]

Student 1: the new girl is "boyzinha" ["baby, girl, sweetie"]

Student 3: all that is good is "massa" ["cool, nice"]

Student 1: tighten is "arrochar" ["hold tight"] [...]

(Class 5)

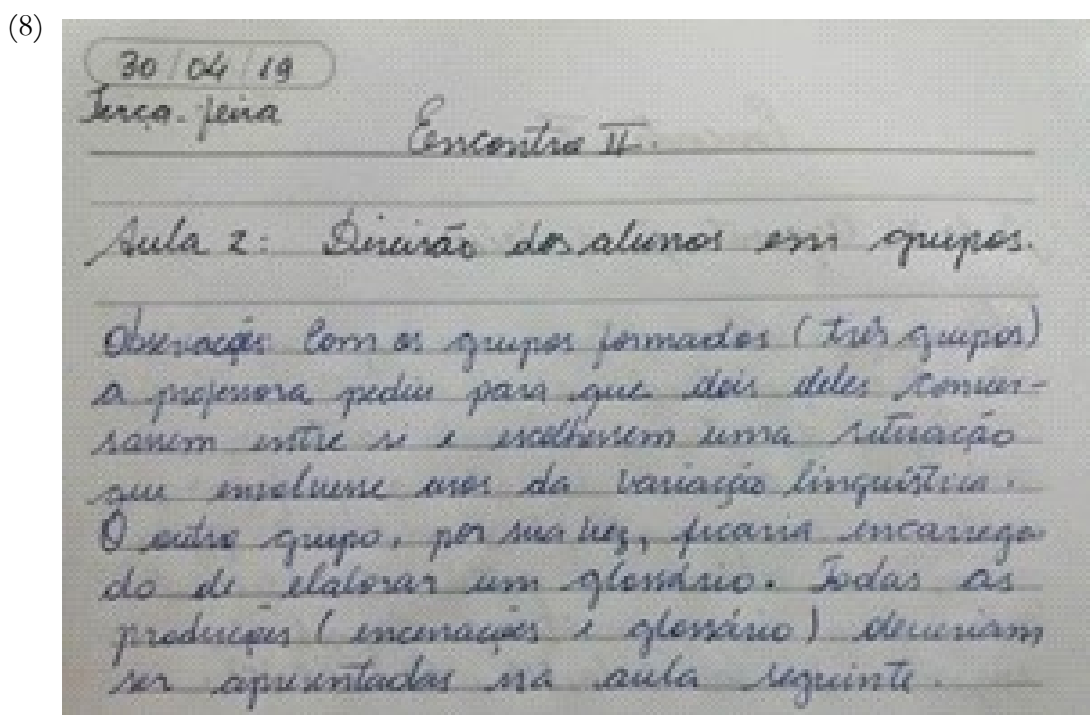
As we can see, the activity collaborated with the textual production of a glossary. This strategy allows a small dictionary that clarifies common-used terms, especially in a certain area or region. This is verified in (6) when the teacher says: "let's hear some words that our colleague Kelly researched about itt, ok?... Come on? First". Or even, when the student introduces his/her argument saying in (7): "we got some expressions ... you are going to recognize some, aren't you?". And the list follows. We understand that this textual production favours in parallelism as if a word meant "this" or "that", as the fragment (6) exemplifies, in which we have: "a trout is a person (...) bro. partner" and in (7) "the sound button is "pitoco" (...) "tighten is "Arrochar". All of these words build a formal list and limited meanings. For this reason, we consider that more than a list of words, the fragments exemplify a classificatory and sequential order, it would be relevant to show that these variants are social, historical and also cultural constructions of the language and that a word carries different meanings by value or prestige the speakers attributed in.

We realized that if the proposal does not generate this reflection, it may come close to a teaching reproduction of variation and language that for a long time focused on popular speaking variant models, classified in regional glossaries and linguistic diagrams of Brazilian states. This consequence suggests that a

² All translations of speeches in class are approximate and are in square brackets after the original speech.

given variant may only belong to a certain group or region and not the result of cultural construction. This is the case when the teacher asks in the fragment (6): “*uai, from last class?*” And the student replies: “*it is from Minas Gerais*”, or even when the student exposes to his/her colleagues (7): “*When we are anxious we say oxente*”. Summarizing, though there is an activity that requires student involvement, research and analysis, the result is a cold list and limited meanings that adapts to the following knowledge: the language of the Northeast is one, the one from Minas Gerais is another one, without generating the implications of use as meaning, that are within a culture and representation of its users.

Another activity related to text production that we bring to this was a sketch done by students. It is a quick role-play performance, usually humorous, which was also motivated by the teacher and was presented in several classes after explaining the content. The examples (8) and (9) below, taken from the diary, demonstrates how these sketches were created:



Source: Field diary.

Figure 2 – Class 2: division of the students in groups³

- (9) **Teacher: okay ...** Now, I want you to ... to form four groups. come on. I want a group for regionalism. a slang group. foreignism ... and one for neologism
(Class 5)

In example (8) the division into groups occurred so before the sketch students could talk to each other about what would be presented (*talk to each other ... situation that involved uses of linguistic variation*). Thus, it was not a ready-made staging, but for that it started from the reflection and production of the group itself. Example (9) shows that these groups had only the theme (*a group for regionalism. A group for slang. Foreignism ... and one for neologism*) so among them they could elaborate what would be presented. In this line of thought, we

³ Notes: with the groups already formed (three groups) the teacher asked two of them to dialogue with each other and choose one situation which uses were evolved about linguist variations. The other group, in turn, would be responsible to elaborate a glossary. All of the productions (role-plays and glossary) should be presented in the next class.

consider that more than collaborative students in the classes, the proposed activity can favour the participation of students through the active study of the content. This strategic activity is relevant because it can lead to develop critical consciousness and form convictions in a critical-social perspective of the contents.

Another observation is that on the sketches and these activities determined by the teacher demanded opportune joint moments by her side to be displayed, as shown in the fragment (10) and (11) below:

- (10) **Teacher:** *before I pass to foreignness: in order to do not have a break we talk about regionalism..about slangs .. the guys will present .. the guys will present. .. pay attention. ..and then I will continue. .. keep on thinking about the groups ::: okay?*
(Class 5)
- (11) **Teacher:** *come on, group two ... let's see what this group has done ... while the guys present the others watch ... in silence ... let's go? One ((clapping)) two ::: one.two.three. shshsh.....*
(Class 6)

Fragment (9) exemplifies how, when preparing for the sketch, a moment deserves special observation. That is why the teacher calls, claps and asks for silence so that the class can follow what will be presented. This is what we see when the teacher asks for attention: “*The boys will present. pay attention or while the boys present the others watch*”. Still, the teacher helps the groups, when synchronizing the act of beginning of each sketch “*let's go? one... two ::: three?*” so that the group can tune in with each other and start the presentation.

This moment deserves special attention not only for what will be presented in the sketches itself but because it will be mainly in it where it will be possible to see how the content of the variation is interpreted by the students from their experiences. Thus, at this time it is disclosed the symbolic representations built by them around the meaning of linguistic variation. Below, examples (12) and (13) present two of these sketches from two different groups, but they chose the same representation, soccer:

- (12) **Student 8:** *well, pass the ball around “uncle”, are you untuned in, bro?*
Student 8: *: well, pass the ball around “uncle”, are you untuned in, bro?*
Student 5: *what's up “minor”. pass the ball*
Student 8: *shoot, bro: make the goal “uncle”*
Student 5: *oh, goalkeeper, grab the ball/shoot, the guy lost the ball: again::*
[...]
(Class 3)
- (13) **Student 8:** *oh .. what's up “minor”. let's play some soccer today ‘uncle’?*
Student 5: *Where? Where's the match going to be?*
Student 8: *let's go. let's go to the square and have a drink, man?*
Student 5: *at Hubs?*
Student 8: *yes ... it can be mant ... when we finish we can have a beer too*
Student 5: *are we going together?*
Student 8: *yeab ::: can be*
Student 5: *then we have to teach her how to hit a ball..because she is newbie*
Student 8: *what's up “minor: just get here:: get here, look:: get here:: her is the goalpost and catch the ((bad word)) ball::*
[...]
(Class 3)

As we can see, the sketches of the fragments above describe questions related to the sport, the first being an act of a soccer game in (12) “*pass the ball ... make the goal..take the ball*” and in the other making an appointment to play soccer in (13) “*we're going to play some soccer today ... Where's the match going to be? then we go together?*”. We emphasize the typical languages of soccer “*pass the ball ‘uncle’... are you untuned in... grab the ball/guy*” and that is usually permeated with informal uses and that show more inflated spirits, typical of the sports

environment, using slang and even bad words “*hey ... hitting a ball ... newbie ... catching the ((bad word)) ball*”. We highlight that both groups chose the same theme with the representation of Rio de Janeiro soccer.

It is worth mentioning that the sketch brings together, by choice, the classificatory aspects of variation (regionalism, slang and neologism) studied in the classroom. However, more than the choice of Rio de Janeiro as an example to be shown in these classifications, the class did not generate the problematization of the representations that passed through this choice. Naming just a few, we can mention: a) what does it mean choosing soccer as a social representation of the linguistic variations? b) wouldn't slang and neologisms surpass popular groups if they were also present in more affluent groups? c) what is the implication of choosing Rio de Janeiro, the national protagonist of major soccer clubs in the sketches? d) as the load cultural pass-through decades that “Brazil is the country of soccer” becomes latent in society and in language.

On the other hand, following the perspective that the student is not merely a content receiver, but active participant in the process, we recognize that these textual production activities, especially the sketches, opened possibilities for students, from their way of expressing themselves, they had in their classes a space in the culture they are in, being able to express their thinking, understanding of the world, the real world around them and the contents they are studying as well. consequently, learning becomes significant for a student's life. However, we pondered by recognizing that the activities allow reflection, but also allows the result of maintaining the same linguistic form on “a group that speaks that way” without taking into consideration how this representation is seen socially.

Finally, in this pole of activities, we would like to highlight the fragment (14) below, which occurred between the moments of oral exposure and textual production. In it, when focusing on northeastern varieties, the teacher instigates students to identify which variety it was:

(14) **Teacher:** *Is this language from::?*

All: *Northeast::*

Student 3: *it is the best of all*

Teacher: *is it the best?*

All: *yes :::*

Teacher: *why is it the best?*

All: *Because it's ours.*

Teacher: *it's ours:: because it's ours:*

((students citing examples among themselves))

Teacher: *come on, can we move on? Can we? Do you have any more examples? ... foreignism:: we are now entering foreignism .. and it comes from*

[...]

(Class 5)

We can see in the example above the comment about the Northeastern language. In the fragment, the feeling of student 3 is highlighted when perceiving the northeastern variety as part of the content of the class and makes it external and it is feeling “*it is the best of all*” as if, due to the fact of being northeastern, it should be a cultural reaffirmation of the linguistic varieties that has been represented. This is also evident and strengthens with the teacher asking: “*is it the best?*” And the positive response from all there is a reaffirmation on (*yes*), as part of their identities “*because it is ours*”. The same answer given by students is reused by the teacher “*it is ours. because it is ours*” without, however, clarifying what linguistically represents “being Northeastern”, nor the value judgments that permeate using such varieties. Unfortunately, generating a rupture in the possibility of discussion, the teacher asks if she can proceed with the content “*can we move on? Can we? Do you have any more examples?*” And introduces the new topic “*we are now entering foreignism .. and it comes from ...*” compromising a synthesis for the construction of new knowledge and developing the critical capacity of students to form convictions. This occurrence lightens a warning about the danger of stimulating postures

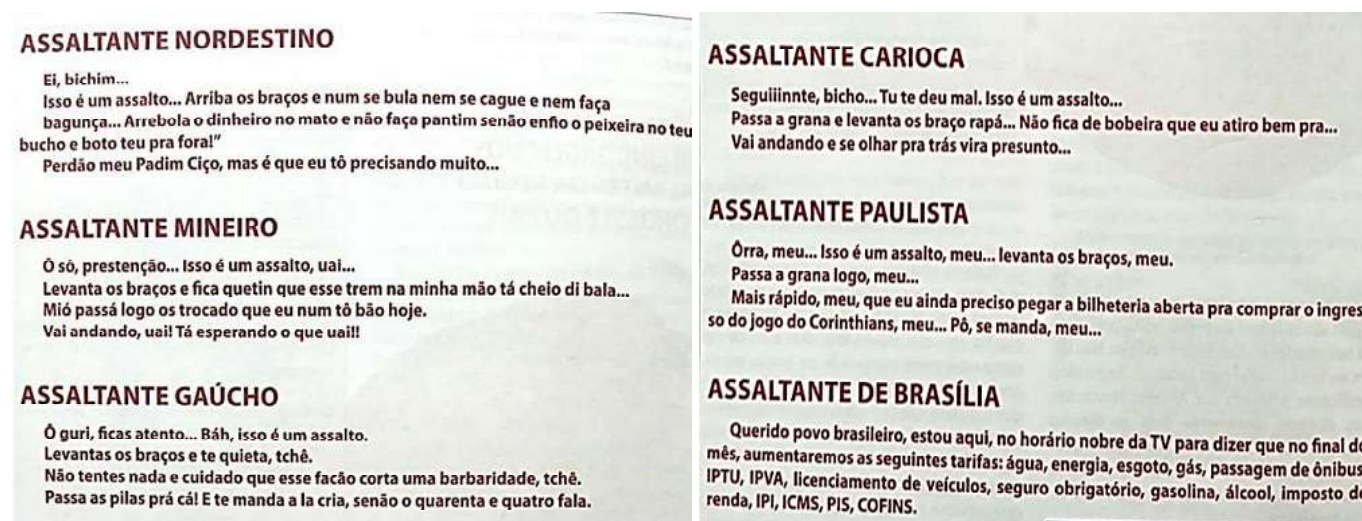
that motivate the question of linguistic superiority, genesis of the prejudice about languages. If per the linguistic criteria we have language as a set of varieties and there is not a superior one to another, on the other hand, external to linguistic criteria, it appears that the social practices, historical and cultural, the language passed and still goes through damaging hierarchies that can, in the power relationship, be questioned and (re)(un)built, having in the representations a path for such discussions.

This will only be possible if the teacher seeks to promote activities and critical reflections in his classes, about the different uses of the language and its effects.

The third pole of observed activities and which we highlight were focused on reading, as they obtain the smallest proportion, less than 10%, we do not develop hard in this article, both because they are a minority in the observed classes and because there is repetition in the aspect of the approach: diatopic scope of variationist sociolinguistics.

However, regarding to this activity, we would like to highlight the one given by means of a printed text taken from the teacher's book. The text is also easily found on the internet and shows situations of mugging in different regions of the country: Northeast, Minas Gerais, Rio Grande do Sul, Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo and Brasília and how their residents react. Right below, it follows the images of the extracted text of the teacher's manual, as we demonstrated:

(15)



Source: Lopes (2010).

Figure 3 – Mugging texts in locations in the country. Lesson 14⁴

⁴ Approximated translation:

NORTHEASTERN MUGGER. Hey man, this is a mugging, put your hand up and don't move neither poop or mess up, throw the money on the floor and don't do anything if so I'll stab you with a knife, right in your stomach and make it to come out! Forgive me, saint father cicero, but I am in really need.

MINAS GERAIS' MUGGER. Hey, pay attention, this is a mugging, uai, put your hands up and be quiet cause this is gun is fully loaded, it's better you give me the money fast because I'm not good today. Go and walk, man, what are you waiting for?

RIO GRANDE DO SUL'S MUGGER. Hey boy, pay attention, this is a mugging. put your hands up and be quiet, don't try anything and be careful cause this machete cuts a lot. give me the money and go away if so the gun will talk to.

RIO DE JANEIRO'S MUGGER. listen, man. You went wrong, this is a mugging. Give me the money and put your hands up, don't be wandering because I shoot (bad word) well. Go and walk, if you look back you will bite the dust.

SAO PAULO'S MUGGER. oh, man. this is a mugging, man. Give me the money fast, man, hurry up, man, I need to get the ticket office opened to buy the match ticket for corinthians match, man, get out, man.

BRASILIA'S MUGGER. Dear Brazilian people, I am here, at prime time on tv, to say that at the final of the month we will increase the followings taxes: water, energy, sewer, gas, bus ticket, IPTU, IPVA, vehicle licenses, compulsory insurance, gasoline, alcohol, house taxes, IPI, ICMS, PIS, COFINS.

After individual reading done by the students, some of them were willing to voluntarily read the situations aloud in front of the classroom. These situations, as we can see, are loaded with regional variants such as “*bichim*” to exemplify northeastern speaking, “*sô*” for Minas Gerais speech, “*bab*” for a gaucho, “*rapá*” to quote carioca, and “*ôrra*” pointing out the Paulista. However, when considering the Brasília’s burglar there is an expectation break like a joke of itself, going back to a character that looks like a Politician And the “*Dear Brazilian people ...*”. It appears in the fragment without showing clear variants and as a burglar of another nature “*we will increase the following taxes ...*”.

In the activity, we highlight the occurrence of the reproduction of knowledge variationist when adopts the linguistic variety under diatopic. This reproduction, expressed in the text, disregards the scope of multiple cultures and diverse representations that weave multiple speeches within the same region. It also misses the uneven form of the representativeness of the states of the country, since it presents: in the South region as an example, a person from Rio Grande do Sul is speaking; in the Southeast three examples, people from São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Minas Gerais; in the midwest, a politician from Brasília, but none of the nine states from Northeast is contemplated, coming down to name all the languages in a single block type, “Northeast” as if it was a homogeneous linguistic varieties of this region. Nevertheless, the text still produces the removal of the North region, since no example is mentioned. In this sense, among many possibilities, the text allows the questioning of what the symbolic effects and functions of the text representations, which are historically constructed, making linguistic variation as a content of a critical nature and not merely classificatory and blank of the speeches of a language.

We also mention how the humorous text reinforces stereotypes that linguistic variation is something “funny”, “comical” and that certain regions choose and/or behave in a certain way. In another way, we consider that the social representations of each example of the text could provide opportunities for discussions with possibilities of problematizing the content, without the activity falling into the view of linguistic variation as a reason for laughs, joke, but rather a factor of the social identity of its speakers, because the meaning of the variant forms is the result of the subject’s identity process in its relationship with language, in different social practices.

Finally, if through linguistic science we understand that the language is a set of varieties without superiority to each other, on the other hand, we recognize that although there is no hierarchy among the linguistic criteria, the same does not happen in social, historical and cultural practices. On the contrary, because they are external criteria to the language, these hierarchies occur in a power relationship and can be questioned and (re) (un) built.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

We have seen so far, as the study content that linguistic variation requires consideration of aspects that turn to the perception of social representations arising from its use and point out the need for investigation of the construction methods of knowledge about this subject in school practices. In view of our research question and focusing on the activities developed in the classroom, we found that the subject favours to have a dynamism in the way of working it. For this reason, we present the various forms of its treatment, among which, we highlight the activities of exhibition, textual production of glossaries, sketches and reading.

As analysed, the content to the linguistic variation, from the perspective of theory, needs to go beyond the assessments commonly known, because they are insufficient. It is the case of the classificatory knowledge of regional speeches, for example, which can contemplate an objectification of knowledge and the values, feelings, opinions, beliefs and attitudes, created from the perceptions of this object as subjective forms, permeated through representations.

From the point of methodological view, it deserves to be put under active study by assimilation activities, analysis and synthesis. Regarding to this, we perceive that the activities generate points of reflection and seem to lead to the construction of knowledge, through group work, research etc., certainly because it is a high school class that leads to more reflection and not a reproduction of knowledge. However, sometimes there is a reproduction, within the sociolinguistic limits of variation, especially at the diatopic level, without leading to an in-depth reflection of the cultural and representational factors that form our linguistic identity. Thus, it does tiny for the (re)construction of new knowledge to develop critical capacity and form convictions.

Summing up, the activities were permeated in many moments of perceptions that mineiro, carioca, nor destiny or another regional group, speak in a certain way, without reinforcing the cultural and representational factors of the social variations of these same groups, it deserves attention because there are taken forms “better” or “worse” from a linguistic point of view, but these forms bow to the power relations that give prestige to some variations and stigmatize others in situational contexts in which the student is found. Therefore, although the examples could allow the study of the content by social aspects, in addition to the linguistic form, as cultural, ideological and historical, the activities were little explored and systematized the subject as knowledge or knowledge to be learned in these directions.

For acknowledges a linguistic variation as one phenomenological social and cultural, particularly performing any language, we consider that the study has great importance, including in sophomore year of high school. The activities may not favour an excellent opportunity to develop in the students the critical skills and firm beliefs in a critical-social perspective of content, such as the linguistic variation related to cultural aspects and representation. Reinforce the need for beyond its formal classification, including knowledge of their use in terms of who, where, why, to whom, and the effects for the establishment of the social representation of groups and individuals that comprise it.

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