


THE PASSIONATE SELF: The activity of teaching English as a foreign language and the affinity with language and profession

O *EU* APAIXONADO: A escolha e o significado da atividade de lecionar línguas e a afinidade com a língua e a profissão

EL *YO* APASIONADO: La actividad de enseñar lengua inglesa (lí) y la afinidad con la lengua y la profesión


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ABSTRACT:

This article is part of the field of studies of Applied Linguistics LA and its object of research is to discuss the self-look of the English Language professional LI and the delineation of their identities, in view of the scenario of post-modern globalization. This is a case study of a qualitative nature in which four teachers from an English school in the city of Gurupi, state of Tocantins, named P1, P2, P3 and P4, were interviewed. The general objective is to get to know the language school professionals and understand how they deal with their own identities as English teachers. The theoretical support for this work was anchored in theorists such as: Bauman (2005), Celani (2006), Leffa (2012), Rajagopalan (2014) among others. The results showed that the participants have an intimate relationship of admiration for the language in addition to demonstrating social and/or ideological issues that permeate the identities of these professionals are topics that are little discussed and relatively new to them, therefore, causing a precarious reflection in its pedagogical praxis.

KEYWORDS: English Language Teacher; Identities; Emotions; Profession.

Introduction

Non-formal education language courses, in Brazil, are spaces designed to teach a Foreign Language (FL) to lead their students to proficiency in a particular language. Therefore, the teachers who work on these courses are individuals recognized by society in general and by their employers for their skills in a language other than their mother tongue.

When we think about the English teacher of non-formal education courses, the focus of this research, we turn our gaze to a professional who is seen from different

perspectives throughout his career, whether good or bad, doubtful, or believed, a fact that can influence negatively or affirmatively in the professional-identity formation of that individual. However, the guiding focus of this research is not just the look of the “other” for this professional, but also the look at oneself, that is, the perception of the construction of this professional image seen from different angles, namely: the look of the participants research, researcher and society, considering the post-modern globalization scenario.

This case study qualitative research, aimed to identify, in linguistic materiality, how teachers who are the study subjects, deal with their own identities as ELT teachers and with the cultural and social responsibility of teaching a foreign language. So that we could discuss the problem raised, we proposed to work with a discursive approach to identities within the applied linguistics (AL) panorama, also based on the concept of postmodernity coined in sociology by Bauman (2000, p. 115).⁷ Works in the area of Applied Linguistics to Language Teaching, such as Leffa (2006), Paiva (2010), Barcelos (2015) and Rajagopalan (2014) gave us theoretical support for this research, as well as helped us with other perspectives and experiences on the subject.

Methodological Course

The current research has been chosen to work with a descriptive bias within a qualitative field approach by understanding reality as complex and constituted by subjects and their subjectivities, as well as by understanding that this type of approach seeks to understand the participant's behavior, studying their particularities and individual experiences. The research was guided by a case study that is justified because it is a methodology that allows deeper investigation of issues, not limited to questions that induce direct and closed answers, stimulating in the way of treating and interpreting the data. Such resource is configured as social investigation, whose dimensions are pointed out by Bauer and Gaskell (2002).

This work contemplates four well-defined phases of research: the first, open and exploratory (with the analysis of the teachers' curricula, their histories, and profiles); the second, more systematic (with exploratory interviews and conversation circles); the third, with the field diary (with records of class observations); and the fourth, with content analysis. In the analysis of a text, the assumptions of Content Analysis (CA) serve as a support to capture its symbolic meaning. This meaning "is not always manifest and its meaning is not unique" (Moraes, 1999, p. 12).

The choice of the language center Centro de Cultura Anglo Americana CCAA (Anglo American Culture Center) for this research was due to its position as one of the

pioneers in the sector of non-formal education language schools and also due to some characteristics, such as the greater number of teachers compared to other language schools' languages in the town. Another important aspect is that the school privileges in its curriculum a sociocultural approach to the language taught, evidenced by activities and events of this nature.

Four (4) participants were selected for the research and the inclusion and exclusion criteria of the teachers was based on the delimitation of time of service as a language LI teacher, that is, those who had the longest service time were prioritized, regardless of if this period of service has also been completed in other schools.

For data analysis and discussion procedures, this work included four well-defined research phases: the first, open and exploratory (with the analysis of the teachers' curricula, their histories and profiles); the second, more systematic (with exploratory interviews and conversation circles); the third, with the field diary (with records of class observations); and the fourth, with content analysis.

Literature Review

Identities of English language teachers

Among the various aspects associated with the possible definitions of identities, we can define it as something with its own, different traits, and, at the same time, peculiar to a subject, as it enables a way of identification that goes beyond just differentiating an individual from the other. Barkhuizen (2017) formulates a more inherent and complex aspect pertaining to the ELT teacher's identity. He claims that the teacher who works in the language teaching process finds himself in the midst of a variety of aspects, which are generally contradictory.

This happens because it dynamically and interactively deals with historical contexts, being in this sense, "cognitive, emotional, social, ideological, located both in itself and in the social, material and technological world" (Barkhuizen, 2017, p. 18). The author observes that the teacher's identity process is built on language and through language, as it is a procedure formed by the use of language, making it clear that, when relating to the other, he/she is in constant evolution in the construction of their identities.

When human beings interact with attitudes and speeches, they will also be connected to previous discourses, which will enable the creation and/or recreation of a particular universe with the use of its greatest wealth, which would be language. Therefore, those who assume the role of enunciator inquire and respond at the same time to previous and future utterances, enabling a new reality to be formed in the face

of the reaffirmation of their own identities. Thus, it is observed that the language process is also a process that generates conflicts.

Leffa (2012, p. 377) sensitizes us to the fact that “in order to live together, we then have to bring about a change; either in ourselves or in others. If we are the stronger side, let the other one change; if the other is stronger, we should change”. In other words, according to the author, if I speak the most accessible language, those who do not speak must update themselves, otherwise, it is me who must change, and this can be a generator of conflicts.

Regarding the identities of ELT teachers, it has been a recurrent theme that also involves other issues that go beyond the classroom and the teaching activity, as it also involves the valuation of the profession. Celani (2006, p. 32) complements that “we still have to face a situation in which this activity, teaching, is still seen, even by the government, as a simple occupation, or even as a side job, that is, a subsidiary job”.

Teaching languages in regular schools today can be considered a strenuous exercise and sometimes undervalued. It is understood that, given the many obstacles faced by teachers, as well as the neglect of public policies towards language education, these educators are not properly valued. Over time, language classes have been reduced, and professionals in the area have been looking for other ways to be carried out both professionally and financially, and with that, the teaching of ELT has been gradually disseminated in non-formal learning courses.

The identity formations of language professionals is a widely discussed topic, however it is necessary to ratify that talking about these identity constructions will never be redundant, since, in the liquid modernity of Bauman (2005), contemporary subjects are susceptible to changes and constant transformations. historical, that is, the identities of the teachers also undergo transformations and provide the emergence of a subject who will “be”.

This subject can be idealized by the professional himself/herself while still in the training phase or be a subject constructed in practice and that demystifies the idealized image. As mentioned by Barcelos (2001, p. 72), through “ideas, opinions, and assumptions that students and teachers have about the teaching/learning processes of languages and that they formulate based on their own experiences”, a model that perhaps is difficult to be achieved, which leads some professionals not to give themselves the chance to test and go through the various possibilities of (re)cognition and (re)construction of their profession's identity (Costa, 2014).

Therefore, carrying out investigations on identities, the teaching of ELT and the identities of teachers is necessary not only to understand the meaning of the term

identities within this sphere, but also to understand the process that begins in pre-service training and follows throughout his professional career. With this, students, as well as teachers, will be able to act by themselves in a critical, dialogic, and reflective way, being able to carry out their own speeches and not simply reproduce them.

In order to follow our investigative trail about this language professional, we analyzed some works on scholars of ELT teaching, which we quote Celani (2006, p. 34) who, in his research entitled *Teaching foreign languages: occupation or profession*, presents the ELT teacher as a graduate with skills to handle knowledge in a defined way, presenting a reflective practice, built along an open process of continuous development.

However, we also considered other biases about this professional, pointing out a finding that involves him, as this professional has his/her space invaded from all sides. According to Celani (2006), anyone can be a teacher, reaching the absurdity of proposals from the authorities that professionals from other areas, or none at all, take over teaching whose subjects lack teachers.

It is necessary to emphasize that the ideals of educational institutions in which universities are included were also impacted by the instability that the post-modern world presents. It is valid to question whether the university locus is really capable of developing all the aspects necessary for a good training of ELT teachers to the point of distinguishing them from other teachers in training.

Therefore, we wonder if the ELT teacher who takes the Literature course is the certainty of a professional with all the skills to practice teaching this language, which, in a liquid modern era, is surrounded by so many uncertainties and dualities. In the conception of Leffa (2006, p. 231), thinking that a professional in Literature can be trained on university benches is an illusion, necessary or not: "It will be necessary insofar as the teacher trainer will need this illusion to continue to your work". Possibly there is neither time nor conditions for this at the university. "The formation of a true reflective, critical, trustworthy professional, capable of demonstrating competence and confidence in what they do, is a work of many years, which only begins when the student leaves university". (Leffa, 2006, p. 361).

National/world identities nowadays are plural due to the advent of globalization itself and, according to Bauman (2005, p. 32), "in the brave new world of fleeting opportunities and fragile security, old-style, rigid and non-negotiable identities, they just don't work". Brazilian identity, like any other identity, cannot be understood as an immutable or always identical essence.

According to Leffa (2012, p. 56), an example of this is realizing that, in the past, the ideal of Brazilianness was to get as close as possible to European standards in order to

elevate the country to the cultural levels of Europe. "Later, the need to praise a newly freed country, eager to develop its potential and assert itself before other nations would have been the causes that gave rise to Brazilianness" (Leffa, 2012, p. 56).

Professional identity is an aspect that is associated with individual trajectories, involving socio-historical contexts of the subject who works as an educator, it is a continuous and subjective evolution, a process of construction and reconstruction within the scope of teaching, given the multiplicity of images and self-images that the educator has the profession and himself/herself.

Therefore, Day (2004) states that, when I don't know myself, I am not able to know my students, that is, I see them through a dark glass, therefore, if I don't see them well, I can't teach well. According to him "when I don't know myself, I am not able to know my school subject, not at the deep levels that are grounded in personal meaning" (Day, 2004, p. 12). We understand that the ELT teacher's identity processes, according to Day (2004), involve factors about "who he/she is and what he/she is". In this sense, the aim is to understand the meaning of work for the same and the meaning of the attributions that others give it, that is, what society imagines that the ELT teacher is responsible for.

Conclusively, in this outline of conceptions about the identities of ELT teachers, it is relevant to emphasize that the psychological and sociological factors that make up these identities, such as beliefs, emotions, and discourses, should not be disregarded in the training curriculum documents, as we are dealing with people and actions that directly impact other people. Therefore, the process of constructing identities, both individually and in groups, takes place on a comprehensive understanding that involves knowledge of life and practices.

Results and Discussion

As explained by Moita Lopes (2006, p. 20), "those who teach English must critically place themselves in relation to the dominant discourse that represents the internationalization of English as an asset, a passport to the first world". Those who teach English cannot fail to consider the relationship between their work and the expansion of the language, critically evaluating the implications of their practice in the production and reproduction of social inequalities. We add one more reflection: those who teach English cannot help but wonder if they are collaborating to perpetuate the domination of some over others. Moita Lopes (2006, p. 20) also emphasizes that "those who work with teaching English cannot reduce it to socio-psychological motivational issues, to methodological issues, to linguistic issues".

In this section, we will focus on discussions aimed at these professionals who move through the reality exposed above with the responsibility to communicate and teach the other's language, but with the task of emancipating themselves from social ties that, in some cases, overlap a language to another, as well as one people over another. In the course of this work, we reflected on issues that raised the ELT teacher to a level of status and recognition in society, however, it should be noted that there are not only positive points in this imaginary. There are also situations in which the teacher is discriminated against and devalued, as being part of a less influential and less politicized class.

Cox and Assis-Peterson (2001) point out that in Brazil there is a movement towards a critical pedagogy, mainly with teachers involved with the mother tongue. However, the same does not happen to ELT teachers, who remain on the sidelines of this movement "being countless times labeled as alienated, uncritical, apolitical, reactionaries, right-wing supporters, agents of American imperialism [...]. Among politicized intellectuals, the English teacher is suspected of having sold his soul to the devil" (Cox, Assis-Peterson, 2001, p. 7).

We intend with this work to identify the relationship of these teachers with ELT and how the choice for the profession was made. We understand that the 4 (four) participants showed an intimate relationship of admiration for the language when affirming their passion for it and presenting a primarily affective bond, to a greater or lesser degree. Some of the excerpts symbolized this affective connection with the language even before they taught, when they highlighted passion as the main element in the participants' speech, which allowed us to judge an affective relationship between the teachers and their object of work.

We took from the interviews some excerpts that symbolize the feeling of these teachers in relation to ELT even before they taught, that is, an affective memory that binds them to the language from a very early age, even before they thought of deciding on a profession: "*passion moved by this language*" (P2); "*obviously my passion is language*" (P1); "*since I liked ELT so much, I remember my teacher perfectly*" (P3); "*In my class I think she was the only one who liked English*" (P4).

It is common sense that contact with a Foreign Language (FL) enables contacts with various cultures, civilizations and different values that constitute the subjects of ELT teachers today based on "discourses and statements ideologically marked in their historicity of linguistic pluralities and multiple identities in the world globalized" (Rajagopalan, 2005, p. 58). We then thought about how this contact, whatever the stage of life, can change our emotions in relation to this language.

Taking the words of Rajagopalan (2005, p. 69): “whoever learns a new language is redefining himself /herself as a new person”. That is, identities are built step by step, it is not something given or static, they are in constant movement and language accompany these changes as they have social characteristics.

We also questioned whether the affective connection with the language was a determining factor in choosing the profession. We understand that the four participants demonstrated admiration for the language from an early age, which led us to understand that, given this situation, the identity that first formed in the interviewees was that of a language speaker, an identity formed by affective issues and a taste for the language.

It is possible to see above what the interviews show us about these aspects:

P1: So, I was like this: “guys, but it's very interesting...”. It just seemed like I wanted more, I didn't want the little words he used anymore. I wanted him to talk, I wanted him to talk to me like anyone else who was speaking Portuguese. And from there I fell in love. That's because I was in fifth grade, which at that time was still called fifth grade, right?

P2: Yes... Ah I have a memory in my head too, of a passion that was developed for English in my childhood.

Q3: Exactly. So, I listened, and I didn't know if the pronunciation was correct or not, I thought it was beautiful. “Oh, how beautiful, guys, as she speaks beautifully, look at the pronunciation”.

P4: I remember a lot about my regular schoolteacher, which was a public school that didn't have... it wasn't a class “that class”, she didn't master the language as much, but I was passionate, so I loved those classes.

However, the choice of profession and the identity formation of these ELT teachers were being developed and constructed from situations that we can call commonplace in the trajectory of those who work in open courses, namely: (a) the indication by the school management due to stand out as a student or to be invited to work, with his prominence as a speaker, (b) taste and interest in the language, (c) need to work and earn a financial income until the desired profession is achieved, as in the case of a of our participants who are preparing to work in the area of Law as soon as they finish their undergraduate course.

We have brought the following utterances that explain the situation presented above:

“P1: Definitely, I've always been passionate about the language, and I stood out when I was a student [...], I've always dedicated myself, I've always studied. I think that's why I was hired by the schools”.

“P2: That's when I started to develop a different perspective of teaching, right. Because I had a passion for the language and I had a passion for the culture, that had an impact, right, as we didn't even talk about being part of my identity, but I had never had the experience of teaching itself.

That's when I started to make the connection, right, between the passion for the language and teaching".

"P3: So, I was tempted, but I said: "no, teacher? That's it. I never was, I never thought of being, dammit!" Then, I became interested, really enjoying, "look how cool, how cool the subject". And then, when it started in the first PIBID group... it came up (as a volunteer from) PIBID, then, as I don't work out there (inaudible). I said: "Ah, so this is an opportunity for us to really see this in the classroom, how it will work". And it was. Then I started doing those internships in the PIBID program, in the classrooms of schools.

"P4: Okay. Yeah... (laughs). It was, like, a little bit of pressure too... from my mother. Because that way, I loved English, I loved watching the movies, I wanted to travel the world and stuff. But my mother, she thought a lot like this: "Wow, I paid for a course, and you need to use it now. "And back at Fisk, the owner had already commented to me about this possibility. She had already told me: "you don't feel like teaching, do you?". I said that I had never thought about it, I said maybe. And it was like that! I was 17 at the time".

We believe, then, from this perspective, that the choice of these teachers for the profession was made in the following terms: (a) admiration for the language and willingness to teach it; (b) invitation to teach due to prominence as a student or speaker; (c) relate experiences between living with the language and the process of teaching it. We noticed, according to the participants' assessment panorama, that, at times, ELT teachers from non-formal learning courses are called 'chosen by the profession'. These professionals are introduced to this profession through the circumstances and the gaze of the other, who perceives in him/her the intimacy with the language and, perhaps, for this reason, there is a certain predisposition to teach it. We understand that this may be a common mark among ELT teachers of non-formal learning courses, but this factor is not, however, a rule. We noticed similarities in the speech of the interviewees with the taste and admiration for the language, with prominence in the classroom or in society as an English Language speaker and an invitation to teach.

Another concern when working with the interviewed teachers was to look for the existence or not of a social and cultural conscience when teaching. We noticed during the interviews also during the conversation circles that this issue is not widely reflected by them. We noticed, at first, that, when we talk about social issues, what comes to light are conjectures that refer to travel and cultural insertion through them. During the conversation round, this fact caught our attention due to the following statements by P1 and P2:

P2: I think that P1 has more contact with the social issue, which I didn't even say, I think I spoke in the interview, the social issue in the environment in which we are inserted there is very elite. So, those students, the level of those students, is already a little high, they already have a different knowledge of the world.

P1: Sometimes you don't even worry about it, right. And for us to impact a student, like you mentioned, who already has access...

P2: [Who travels... P1: It's very difficult...

P2: He's already traveled more than me ((laughter))...

We understand that the view of the teachers involved in these discourses may be linked to the speech of Cox and Assis-Peterson (2017, p. 2), in which the authors argue that this Foreign Language (FL) hegemony, which was rooted in the colonial period, is promoted, and supported by through material or institutional structures and also through ideological arguments that relate language teaching in the world and capitalist purposes. We observed that, according to the speeches presented, the ideas of teaching a Foreign Language (FL) are aimed at enabling the individual to ascend socially through language and be able to travel, see the world, in short, enjoy the language to ratify their social and financial status.

Final Considerations

In this work, far from ending the discussions, we are fundamentally concerned with the ELT teacher who works for non-formal learning courses and the intricacies through which these professionals go through, in order to define their identities, if in a postmodern era it is pertinent to speak in defining identities, since we understand that identities are fluctuating and subject to change at any time depending on our social life and our experiences.

We analyzed the trajectory of four teachers of the CCAA non-formal learning course in the town of Gurupi/TO and, throughout their narratives, we noticed an interweaving in their stories that converged at times to similar characteristics, such as the affective connection with the language and the way in which they started in the career of teaching ELT.

Given the narratives that were, at times, constructed by such similar discursive threads, we were able, in addition to acting as researchers, to see ourselves as an integral part of this research, since we understood that it would be impossible to divest myself of my own experiences, beliefs and identities as ELT teacher and speaker of the "other's" language. In each participant's speech, there are fragments that were once part of our identity constructions about and in teaching in ELT.

It is essential for the ELT teacher to recognize, self-evaluate and reflect on these contexts in their academic training phase, because during this tour through the memories and histories of these teachers, it was highlighted how unfinished are the identities of the ELT teacher. We also identified a movement of coming and going and

also of uncertainties, that is, of constant transformations they went through and continue to go through: a fragmented, liquid and fluid identity construction process.

In their speeches, these teachers managed to bring out tones of insecurity, ignorance and even some frustration. But they also brought desires, joys, admiration and sensations that would be hard to describe because it is impossible to assess them given the complexity of human emotions and the way they present themselves even if it is between the lines of their speeches. The fact is that these speeches, even if unconscious, present the various voices that constitute their identities.

In the words of the teachers, we understand that P1, P2, P3 and P4 carry with them identity conflicts that underlie the voices and looks that participate in their constructions as ELT teachers. We observe, in this mixture, the voices of judgment and idealization about the ELT teacher, voices of academic training, which sometimes fails, voices of their beliefs, the plastered voices of work manuals, but also the voice of their self-speaker of ELT that echoes each time they 'undress' all the other voices and 'appear' as if in a movement of subversion.

According to the research results, we realize that the identity issues of these teachers who teach at non-formal learning courses go through paths that range from the assertion of their own individuality, as language professionals, to the search for schools that look for trained professionals within the pattern desired by them. They are, in this way, inserted in the culture of the method, for which, the good teacher is the one who applies it correctly. However, these teachers, at the same time that they have their reservations about the use of the methodology and all this 'plasterization' presented here, believe in its effectiveness for the fulfilment of their classes.

For all the aspects presented, we believe that the results of this research can contribute productively to the discussions around the identity formations of LI teachers, both in non-formal learning courses and in other workspaces, since the discussions suggested here focus on their look at important identity issues related to this teacher, who represents a class that raises questions about his training and performance, as well as his/her abilities and influences in a globalized society.

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RESUMO:

Este artigo se insere no campo de estudos da Linguística Aplicada LA e tem como objeto de pesquisa discutir o auto-olhar do profissional de Língua Inglesa LI e o delineamento de suas identidades, tendo em vista o cenário da globalização pós-moderna. Trata-se de um estudo de caso de natureza qualitativa no qual foram entrevistadas quatro professoras de uma escola de inglês da cidade de Gurupi, estado do Tocantins, nomeadas como P1, P2, P3 e P4. O objetivo geral é conhecer o profissional de escolas de idiomas e compreender como elas lidam com as próprias identidades de professoras de LI. O suporte teórico para este trabalho foi ancorado em teóricos como: Bauman (2005), Celani (2006), Leffa (2012), Rajagopalan (2014) entre outros. Os resultados demonstraram que as participantes apresentam uma relação íntima de admiração pela língua além de demonstrarem questões sociais e/ou ideológicas que permeiam suas identidades dessas profissionais são temas pouco discutidos e relativamente novos para elas, por conseguinte, causando uma precária reflexão em suas práxis pedagógica.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Professor de Língua Inglesa; Identidades; Emoções; Profissão.

RESUMEN:

Este artículo se enmarca en el campo de la Lingüística Aplicada y tiene como objetivo discutir la autorreflexión del profesional de la Lengua Inglesa (ELT), o sea, la delimitación de sus identidades, considerando el escenario de la globalización posmoderna. Se trata de un estudio de caso de carácter cualitativo en el que fueron entrevistados cuatro docentes nombrado como P1, P2, P3 y P4, de una escuela de inglés de la localidad de Gurupi, en el estado de Tocantins. El objetivo general es conocer a los profesionales de las escuelas de idiomas, así como comprender cómo se enfrentan a sus propias identidades como profesores de ELT y a la responsabilidad cultural y social de enseñar una lengua extranjera. El sustento teórico de este trabajo estuvo anclado en teóricos como: Bauman (2005), Celani (2006), Leffa (2012), Rajagopalan (2014) entre otros. Los resultados mostraron que los participantes tenían una íntima relación de admiración por el lenguaje, y que las cuestiones sociales y/o ideológicas que permean las identidades de estos profesionales son temas poco discutidos y relativamente nuevos para ellos, por lo tanto, provocando una precaria reflexión en su praxis pedagógica.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Profesor de Idioma Inglés; Identidades; Emociones; Profesión.