

TEACHERS' ACCOUNTS OF LANGUAGE VARIATIONS *

(Relatos de Professores sobre Variações Linguísticas Não-Padrão)

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ABSTRACT: This paper focuses on teachers' stigmatizing perspectives of their students' nonstandard varieties of Portuguese. Theoretically, the study was grounded on Personal Construct Psychology, Perspective Transformation in Teacher Education, Transformative Bidialectalism and Critical Language Awareness. The objectives were to jointly access and assess the teachers' implicit theories about nonstandard language and to verify to what extent these theories affected their classroom pedagogy. My research questions turned to how the participating teachers understood nonstandard language; and to how their understandings are reflected on their language teaching. The viewing of the teachers' videotaped classes and Repertory Grid activities inspired reflective conversations with the two teacher participants on their language and classroom experiences. These conversations were audio-recorded, transcribed and their analysis followed the thematizing approach of Hermeneutic Phenomenology. The study revealed teachers' implicit theories about language variation defining pedagogies based on deficit and standard grammar perspectives. These pedagogies are in constant interaction with the teachers' lived experiences, the contextual restrictions of schools and the limitations of teacher education programs.

RESUMO: O presente trabalho trata das perspectivas estigmatizantes que duas professoras de língua portuguesa trazem em relação às variações linguísticas não-padrão de seus alunos. Teoricamente, meu estudo se embasa na Psicologia dos Construtos Pessoais, Transformação de Perspectivas na Educação de Professores, Bi-dialetalismo Transformador e Sensibilidade Crítica à Linguagem. Meus objetivos foram acessar e ponderar sobre as teorias implícitas das professoras

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sobre linguagem não-padrão e verificar como tais teorias afetam suas pedagogias. Suas aulas foram gravadas em vídeo e atividades com Mapas do Repertório de seus conceitos sobre língua portuguesa foram gravadas em áudio, transcritas e analisadas segundo a abordagem tematizante da Fenomenologia Hermenêutica. O estudo mostra que as teorias implícitas das duas professoras sobre variação lingüística definem suas posturas pedagógicas com base no déficit lingüístico e na gramática. Tais posturas estão em constante tensão com a experiência vivida dos professores no campo da linguagem e da pedagogia, com as restrições das instituições escolares e com falhas de suas formações universitárias.

Key Words: Teachers' beliefs, Teacher reflection; Language variation; Personal construe; First language.

Palavras-Chave: Crenças de professores; Reflexão de professores; Variação lingüística; Construtos pessoais; Língua materna.

0. Introduction

Soares (1989) lists the manner in which Portuguese is taught as one of the causes of high dropout and academic failure rates among working class children in Brazilian public schools. She claims that pedagogical practices common in the Brazilian official school system are frequently based on the linguistic deficit approach, an approach that considers the language of the low income class children as deficient, with poor vocabulary, short incomplete and monosyllabic phrases, and confusing syntax.

Although Soares (1989) criticizes the adoption of this deficit view of language, her expert analysis still arises out of a deficit perspective on teachers' work in the classroom. Soares (1989) claims that pedagogical practices (of teachers) ignore the relationship between language and social class and the recent sociolinguistic and sociological research findings concerning this relationship. For her, teachers' pedagogy does not acknowledge the legitimacy of linguistic varieties. Rather, it

emphasizes the standard dialect¹ to which only the upper classes have access. In addition, such traditional pedagogy "*ignores the multiple economic, social, cultural, political and ideological determinants of which schools and linguistic varieties are products*" (Soares, 1989:77).

Teachers' stigmatizing attitude to nonstandard language varieties can be presented as a consequence of teacher pre-service and in-service education. There are potentially serious psychological and political outcomes of prejudiced attitudes in relation to students' nonstandard varieties of language. By devaluing children's language through a pedagogy centered on the standard variety, teachers devalue the children themselves. This pedagogy also places children in a doubtful position in relation to their families and cultures. They start to believe that they do not know how to talk outside their stigmatized communities and, as a consequence, they feel excluded from social participation (PCELP, SE/CENP, 1992:22).

An initial assumption towards a course of action to deal with teachers' attitude and pedagogy towards nonstandard varieties in the classroom is that the components on which teachers base their language classroom pedagogy need to be accessed and assessed through professional development programs that foster teachers' critical reflection on language. I have chosen to access and assess these components through a process of *teachers' joint reflection*² aimed at answering the following research questions:

- *How do the participating teachers understand nonstandard language?*
- *How are these understandings reflected on their own language teaching?*

¹ Standard dialect: the prestigious language variety used by the economically privileged classes, the media, and the school system. The standard dialect is codified in the grammars and it is used as criterion for judging other dialects (Soares, 1989:82-83).

Non-standard dialect: any dialect different from the standard and spoken by low income social groups. For the purposes of the Brazilian context where Soares' studies were conducted, the criterion used for both of these definitions is the economic.

² Despite the fact that the two teachers were participating in my study and that I was committed to following a doctoral research agenda through my research questions, what is referred to as joint reflection on this paper is meant to be the one-to-one interactions between me and the participants.

1. Theoretical foundations

1.1 An approach to teachers' beliefs: Personal construct theory

According to Personal Construct Theory (Kelly, 1955; Hunt, 1980, 1987; Diamond, 1991, 1993), people organize their construction of events by producing structures within the framework of which things in the world take shape and assume meaning. This is done in very personal, but systematic and hierarchical ways of grouping elements into "construction systems" (p.50, 56). Kelly (1955) defines "construing" in the following manner:

By construing we mean "placing an interpretation" (...) In construing, the person notes features [qualities] in a series of elements which characterize some of the elements and are particularly uncharacteristic of others. Thus he erects constructs of similarity and contrast. Both the similarity and the contrast are inherent in the same construct. (p.50-51)

These notions of "similarity and contrast", in turn, are seen in personal construct psychology in terms of likenesses and differences which the person encounters in his/her experiences in the world. Similarities and contrasts are essential features and they constitute a dimension of all personal constructs (p.71). Kelly's example illustrates these contrasting notions:

We cannot understand what he [sic] means by 'respect' unless we know what he sees as relevantly opposed to 'respect'" (p.71).

In personal construct psychology, then, what is excluded as irrelevant is just as important as what is included as relevant in the construing and grouping of the constructs.

Finally, Kelly's (1955) three key and inter-related notions of "construct", "construing" and "similarity versus contrast" function as bases in the definition of an instrument, the *Repertory Grid*. The *Rep Grid*, as it is commonly referred to, is used for discovering the qualities of a person's constructs and the principles of inclusiveness and grouping used by him/her in the construing process of constructs. In this study, I

have used the *Rep Grid* to focus on the teachers' constructs of standard and nonstandard language.

1.2. An approach to teacher education: Perspective transformation in teacher education

For Diamond (1991), *Perspective Transformation in Teacher Education* is concerned with providing means through which teachers can become more critically aware of their values, thinking and practices. Such an awareness can, in turn, enhance their ability to deal with professional difficulties and problems (p.16), such as, in this case, the use of nonstandard varieties of Portuguese in the Brazilian public school system.

Diamond (1991) identifies three central concepts of *Perspective Transformation in Teacher Education*: meaning perspective, perspective transformation and emancipatory action. Mezirow (1990:xvi) defines *meaning perspective* as "the structure of assumptions that constitutes a frame of reference for interpreting the meaning of experience". Within the individual's structure of assumptions his/her new experiences are assimilated and transformed by past experiences through a process of interpretation. This structure defines criteria for value judgements and provides principles for interpreting that are uncritically acquired through cultural assimilation. *Perspective transformation* refers to the process through which meaning perspectives undergo change. It is the process through which familiar interpretation patterns of one's frame of reference fail and new explanations of old experiences are then searched out, producing a "restructuring of the person's own action-orienting self-understanding" (Diamond,1991:15). For Mezirow (1990), critical reflection refers to one's "assessment of the validity of the presuppositions of one's meaning perspectives, and examination of their sources and consequences" (p. xvi). Finally, *emancipatory action* is the process by which teachers engage in the production of knowledge about themselves and their own practice. The core activities of this process of knowledge production are *transformative learning* and *critical reflection*. *Transformative learning* refers to the reformulation and extension of meaning perspectives to allow more inclusive, discriminating and integrative understanding of one's experience (Kelly, 1955; Diamond, 1991:17; Mezirow, 1990:xvi).

The joint reflection process with teachers on their views of language that is described below is grounded in these principles of transformative teacher education.

1.3. In search of an orienting approach to language education: Transformative bidialectalism and critical language awareness

A transformative bidialectal language education is basically founded on three simultaneous objectives: to value the students' nonstandard language; to work towards their acquisition of the standard language; and to work towards their acquisition of the cultural (legitimate) capital. The belief here is that achieving the first objective increases students' self-confidence and personal value within the culture of their social class. Achievement of the second objective (acquisition of the standard language) and third objective (acquisition of the cultural capital), in turn, provides students with empowering instruments in their struggle against the inequalities of the social structure. Advocates of a transformative bidialectal language education expect that the acquisition of the standard language and the cultural capital by the under-privileged classes removes the privileged and exclusive use of the standard varieties of language from the dominant classes. In transformative pedagogies of language, teachers must supply students with the appropriate classroom environment to challenge the rules that are monopolized by the privileged classes. Transformative pedagogies of language take into account the social forces that distance the cultural capital from the students' culture and make them challenge these forces. Transformative pedagogies refuse students' *adaptation* to the demands of the social structure. These pedagogies work towards students' instrumentalization so that students acquire conditions to participate socially and politically (Soares, 1989:74).

Critical Language Studies (Clark et al., 1990, 1991; Fairclough, 1992), in turn, also provide consistent theoretical support for the transformative education of language teachers and for developing their awareness of their notions of language and of their teaching practice. Critical Language Studies (CLS) presuppose strong connections between the discursive practices of language and the organization of power hierarchies within social relationships. CLS are concerned not only with an operational descriptive knowledge of linguistic practices, but also with a critical awareness of how these practices shape and are shaped by

social relationships and relationships of power. If, in Hawkins' (1984) notion of Language Awareness, language is viewed in terms of a natural order, in Critical Language Awareness (Fairclough, 1992), language is viewed as having a naturalized order. Finally, CLA views learning and knowledge as integrated with practice.

At the level of the transformative bidialectal education suggested by Soares (1989), the CLS mode of critical language analysis and the notion of Critical Language Awareness can orient teacher's understandings of the meaning perspectives that they carry in relation to standard and nonstandard language varieties. CLS theory and Critical Language Awareness have usually been discussed from the perspective of the students' development of critical language awareness (McKenzie, 1992). However, Critical Language Awareness is rarely discussed from the perspective of teachers' development of a critical awareness of language. Corson (1994) also points at the harmful impact of teachers' stereotypes of language over the learning process, performance and identity of students who are speakers of nonstandard varieties. Corson (1994) also stresses the importance of sensitizing teachers about nonstandard varieties of language and suggests pedagogical guidelines for dealing with this issue in the classroom.

If CLS are to be fostered in the classrooms, teachers must become critically aware not only of language but of their pedagogy as well. Therefore, in addition to being interested in the meaning perspectives that my participant teachers brought about language, I am also interested in their responses to the process in which we shared our reflections on their classroom practices through conversations based on a few of their video-taped classes.

2. Method

My interests lay on both the way that my participants made sense of their experiences with language - particularly nonstandard varieties of language; and on how these experiences could be reflected on their language classroom practice. The process of my research design involved offering participants some learning and reflective tools to turn to themselves and ponder over the meanings they held of language and of their teaching experiences. For me, this is a matter of educational research ethics – *not only take, but give, as well.*

My study is a phenomenological inquiry (van Manen, 1990) into my participants' understandings of language and into their responses to a shared reflection process with me on their teaching. Therefore, my study requires a search to uncover and describe the structuring qualities of the ways that my participants experience both language and their teaching practice.

2.1. Site, time spent in the field, and profile of participants and schools³

a) Site

Rio Claro, a 137.000 inhabitant city, located 175 km. from the state capital, São Paulo city (IBGE, 1990). The reasons for choosing Rio Claro as research site were that: (a) the language variety spoken by the city population and its vicinities is a nonstandard variation of Brazilian Portuguese which *resembles* the *caipira* Portuguese (see Rodrigues, 1974 and Bortoni-Ricardo, 1985, about the *caipira* Portuguese and the urbanization of rural dialect speakers, respectively); and (b) there is a significant number of migrant workers and their families coming from the impoverished Northeast of Brazil who speak a variation of Brazilian Portuguese that is stigmatized in the Southern regions of the country.

b) Time Spent in the Field

The gathering of the documentary materials in the first week of September, 1993, and finished in the third week of November of that year (a total of 11 weeks).

c) Profile of the two participants: Elaine and Janaina

Elaine

Elaine is the participant who has been teaching the longest. She received her B.A. degree in English and Portuguese in 1984 and started doing substitute teaching at a technical junior high school that same year. She felt burned out in 1988 and left teaching at the end of that school year. She returned in the beginning of 1989 into adult education,

³ Except for the name of the location where the study was conducted all of the other names are fictitious due to reasons of confidentiality.

claiming that she missed her students. In 1990 Elaine started teaching English and Portuguese at the high school level. Presently, Elaine is teaching only Portuguese at the junior high school level. Elaine was in her mid thirties, and is married.

Janaina

Janaina was 29 years old. She received her B.A. in Portuguese from a night college course in 1986, but did not go into teaching. She claims she felt incapable. Since then, Janaina has been going in and out of teaching with a variety of job experiences in between - clerical work at a realtors firm, saleswoman for a medical equipment company, manager of a small medical products company. Janaina started teaching Portuguese in an adult education evening course, then on to a technical junior high, and a private high school. Presently, she teaches Portuguese at these schools and says she has found out that her real vocation is teaching. She seemed very interested in her professional development as a teacher of Portuguese.

d) Profile of the Schools

"*Petra Geraldo*" (Elaine's school) started the school year in February, 1993 with 681 students and, by the time we started our research, there were 677. It is the school that best fits the profile of the working class schools located in the outskirts. It is interesting the way that the *Plano Diretor* reports the economic and linguistic background of the students' families: "Most of its students come from families that have migrated from the Northeast, therefore, with linguistic and cultural variations that are proper of their original place" (p.4)⁴. The students' families expect them to reach the highest schooling that they can so as to contribute to the family income. According to the document, the constant internal migration (mostly from the Northeast) makes it difficult to keep students enrolled in the same school for very long. Variations of the "*caipira*" Portuguese and the Northeastern Brazilian Portuguese could be heard in Elaine's class.

"*Alvaro Barros*" (Janaina's school) is a technical junior high school. It started the year in February 1993 with 970 students. When we started

⁴ "A maioria é originária de família [sic] nordestinas, portanto, com variações linguísticas e culturais próprias dos lugares de origem." (*Plano Diretor*, p.4)

our research, there were 800 students, most of them males. There were only 12 girls in the whole school; all of them enrolled in the Electronics course. Students come from low middle class; parents value school activities and see the technical school as offering a chance for their children to have a profession independently of the college course they may choose.

2.2. Techniques and procedures for gathering the documentary materials

The basic techniques were:

a) *Repertory Grid (the Rep Grid)* to provoke conversation focused on my participants' understandings of standard and nonstandard language.

The *Rep Grid* (Kelly, 1955) was used with each of the two participants as an instrument to elicit and keep conversation focused on *standard vs. nonstandard* varieties (i.e., standard, educated Portuguese vs. variations of "*caipira*" or Northeastern Portuguese).

In order to elicit my participants' grids about standard and nonstandard language, I supplied them the elements: eight sentences ranging from very literary to very nonstandard forms of Portuguese. The resulting conversation was focused on the participants' reflections on these eight sentences that are supplied below with their translations in English. Seven of the eight sentences were created out of my own language experience as a speaker/writer of Portuguese; one was by a Brazilian poet. Sentences 3 and 5 below are standard educated Portuguese. Although sentence 3 is quite common in European Portuguese, in Brazil, it can be considered archaic. Sentence 2 carries traces of an urban version of the stigmatized "*caipira*" sociolect of the São Paulo farm lands⁵ Bortoni-Ricardo (1985) calls this merging of a sociolect into urban non-standard language as a *rurban variety* (p.58). I would like to stress that wherever I refer to the "*caipira*" sociolect, I am not precluding other nonstandard varieties of Brazilian Portuguese. I have also supplied the participants with examples of nonstandard varieties that can be found in middle class Brazilian Portuguese

⁵ See Amaral ([1920] 1955) for a pioneer study of this nonstandard variety of Brazilian Portuguese. Rodrigues (1974) also provides an extensive account of its morphosyntaxis and phonetics.

(sentence 1, 4 and 8, for example), as well as in working class speech (sentences 6 and 7). For purposes of validation, I requested Dr. Dino Pretti, a university professor, sociolinguist and expert in dialect studies to discuss these eight sentences in an audio-recorded interview. What is meant by validation of the sentences, here, is the verification that they are sentences that can be heard in the common *parole* of people living in the state of São Paulo or seen in their written form. These eight sentences⁶ were:

1. * Esse apartamento venta muito. (*Literally, *"This apartment winds a lot.;" "It is very windy in this apartment."*)
2. * Nois cumemu us ovo cum moio. (*"We ate the eggs with sauce."*)
3. Dar-lhe-ei o dinheiro na semana que vem. (*"I will give you the money next week."*)
4. * Vende-se calçados. (*"Shoes are sold."*)
5. Ora direis ouvir estrelas. (*"Oh, you tell me you listen to the stars."*)
- 6.* As pessoa pobre tem menas possibilidade. (*"Poor people have fewer opportunities."*)
- 7.* A casa do Chico tá atrais dos morro aí. (*"Chico's house is located behind these hills."*)
- 8.* Ô Zé! Trais os ovo pra mim fritá! (*Zé! Bring me the eggs so I can fry them."*)

In the context of *nonstandard language*, for example, if a teacher finds that a nonstandard sentence "*sounds awful*", implicitly and simultaneously, she determines what "*sounds beautiful*". This is to say that the same aspect or the same abstraction (how a sentence sounds for her) determines both what "*sounds awful*" and what "*sounds beautiful*". The concept of "*sounding awful*" can only exist in contrast with "*sounding beautiful*". Presenting the participant teacher with a third element (sentence) and asking her "In what ways two of these sentences

⁶ These sentences are not meant to be accurate phonetic transcriptions. Rather, they intended to serve to my purpose of conveying the nonstandard variation to the participants. When reading the sentences, the teachers immediately recalled the nonstandard variations and their possible speakers. Accurate phonetic transcriptions could even confuse the participants in their task; e.g., [trayzuzovu]. However, the article "os" in sentence 8 should have been transcribed as "us" to keep consistency with its transcription in sentence 2. The word "casa" in sentence 7 was spelled with a "z" on purpose, to provoke the teachers' reflection on controversial issues between oracy and literacy. I appreciate of my reviewers comments on these issues.

are similar and therefore different from the third one?" can facilitate this process of eliciting the opposite pole.

The software *Rep Grid* for Macintosh (CPS, 1990) helped me in this elicitation process. The computer mixed the 8 elements (sentences) and presented only 3 of them at a time to the participant. She, then, looked at the three selected sentences on the computer screen. I, then, asked the eliciting question: "In what ways two of these sentences are similar and therefore different from the third one?" The *Rep Grid* elicitation, then, provoked in the participant a reflective activity. Through this reflection the teacher tried to find out the aspect (the quality, the criterion, the reason, the justification) that made her to pair two sentences and make a third one stand out as different.

What is valuable in this process of reflection is that the two participant teachers provided extensive and spontaneous *think-aloud* behavior as the computer presented them several random sets of three sentences and they outlined the dimensions of their constructs of standard and nonstandard language. As a researcher, I explored this think-aloud behavior by encouraging them to talk with me, as they performed their task and I audio-recorded the process.

b) Joint reflection process on videotaped classes to provoke participants' reflective conversation about their own language classroom pedagogy. These conversations on the videotapes were audio-recorded. The participants' pedagogical choices and actions in the classroom may provide cues to how they account for their students' nonstandard language variations in their classes.

The expression, *joint reflection process*, as I use in this paper, refers to the one-to-one conversations I had with my participants about the transcriptions of the *Rep Grid* activity and the viewing of their videotaped classes. This notion of joint reflection process draws upon the qualities listed by Yonemura (1982) and her notion of reflective conversation. Although differing from regular "chatting" that has no orienting objective, in Yonemura's notion of reflective conversations the topics seem to arise spontaneously and out of the participants' interest. In this study, these conversations were aimed at verifying the participants' pedagogical choices and actions in their classrooms and the underlying principles of these actions and choices that might be related to how they

accounted for nonstandard language. I was interested in accessing the meanings that my participants have of nonstandard language by observing their language teaching experience in their classrooms. Access to these meanings could be provided by their retrospective conversations on their videotaped classes. Therefore, I have assumed that the descriptions provided by my participants are representative of the meaning perspectives they hold about language teaching (see, Ericson & Simon, 1980; Copeland, 1993, about retrospective verbal reports using video, although the tapes used in the present research were meant to trigger conversation with the participants).

In the viewing of the videotapes, I was not concerned with teachers' consciousness. I wanted to know what meanings they could draw from retrospectively observing their own teaching. Polkinghorne (1989) points to the epistemological and methodological problems of phenomenological research in accessing consciousness and alerts researchers as they interpret reports from others describing their experiences. For him,

(...) access to consciousness is problematic, and the data a researcher collects are several times removed from the actual flow of experience. For one thing, the act of reflecting – by researchers on their own or by subjects on their experience – effects a change in awareness. The initial non reflective, direct engagement with the flow of experience (the object of study) is replaced by the self's relocation to a point of observation that is removed from the experience. (...) the verbal and written report is not a duplication of what was seen (...) we have direct awareness of only one consciousness, our own. Care must be taken by researchers as they interpret reports from other describing their experiences. (p.46)

In my study, I have taken advantage of exactly this change of awareness provoked by "the relocation to a point of observation that is removed from the experience". So, at the same time that the video-tapes provided my participants with the opportunity to re-live their classroom experiences from a different perspective; a retrospective one, in which they could acquire a critical and detached perspective from their own classroom practice. Finally, I have also taken into account the fact that

the relationship between teachers' choices and actions in relation to their views of language might not always be linear and consistent.

The audio recordings of the Rep Grid and video viewing activities were transcribed for posteriori analysis.

2.3. Data analysis (descriptions and interpretation)

At a first level, tapes were transcribed and became written texts or the descriptions of my participants' lived experiences (van Manen, 1990). At a second level, interview transcripts were divided into meaningful segments and these, in turn, were organized according to categories that emerged through the transcript interpretation. This work finally produced interpretive memos, which were used as a source of information to write this paper.

One of the research questions (*How do the participating teachers understand nonstandard language?*) focuses on the content of my participants' experiences with language. The other question (*How are these understandings reflected on their own language teaching?*) focuses on their pedagogy. Once I engaged in conversation with the transcribed texts, the research questions guided me in the process of thematization. For van Manen (1990), a *theme* is an element which occurs frequently in the text, "*a motif, formula or device*" (p.78). As this process of looking for themes in the texts of the interview transcripts evolved, I needed to have what Borbules (1993) refers to as "*inclusive and critical*" orientations (p.111) towards what my participants said in their texts. My *inclusive orientation* refers to my attempt to understand what led the participating teachers to have the positions that they proclaim in the texts; that is, their beliefs, feelings and experiences underlying their positions regarding standard and nonstandard Portuguese. My *critical orientation*, in turn, refers to a more skeptical, questioning attitude regarding these issues, a researcher's attitude that refers to the judgement of the objective accuracy of the participants' positions, their inconsistencies and the tensions provoked by such inconsistencies.

3. Results: My participants' views of language

3.1. Janaina

Janaina's way of seeing language is between *oracy* and *literacy*. The interesting point here, however, is to characterize how her view on language is dichotomized. *Oracy* and *literacy* determine the more open orientation and questioning attitude she seems to hold towards the treatment of language varieties. The following excerpt suggests such an orientation:

JN: É que... olha...[] também não estou preocupada com essas coisas certas erradas. Não me preocupa mesmo, tá? O que eu penso, João, sabe... meu pensamento vai sempre por aí...sabe... esse negócio que as pessoas FALAM, entendeu? Por que SEM concordância? Sabe... eu acho que "vende-se calçados"⁷... por exemplo, são erros mas...né? São erros...

J: Seria...huh... o falar é mais importante pra você. Seu negócio é o jeito que as pessoas falam,.. tá, né?

JN: Isso, é por aí, entendeu. Eu acho, assim, se você tem a preocupação, tá... "vende-se calçados" seria uma linguagem dirigida a um público mais específico, tá, que é uma coisa que você vai colocar numa placa - escrito, sabe, eu acho que deve haver uma preocupação maior em ter... você entende?

J: Porque ela está em público?

JN: Isso, porque é escrita, porque ela aparece. Porque é uma linguagem escrita, não é uma transcrição da linguagem oral...sabe, é uma coisa que aparece... [Card ID: 10941; Source: stack "JeaniRep1A"]⁸

⁷ The standard form should be "Vendem-se calçados", where the verb must be conjugated in the plural form to agree with the object which is also in the plural.

⁸ JN: (...) I don't bother about this being right or wrong. I don't really worry about that. What I think, you know... this is the way my thoughts go: the fact that people TALK, right? Why do they do it WITHOUT noun-verb agreements? "Vende-se calçados." [literally, "Shoes are sold.], for instance. I believe that this is a mistake and more so... they are mistakes... [pause]

J: Hum... would that be because talking is more important to you? Your business is the way that people talk? Is that it?

JN: Yeah, that's it. Understand? I believe that, if you are careful, you know... "Shoes are sold" would be a kind of language that is targeted to a more specific public. It's something you would put on a sign, it's written, you know. I believe that there should be more emphasis on having... you know? [Card ID:10941; Source: "JeaniRep1A"]

Janaina treats the case of the sentence as a "*mistake*". This reveals a deficit/standard view orientation in her judgement of language variety as presented in the Rep Grid sentence. Nevertheless, the aspect of her oracy/literacy dichotomy revealed here is how she considers written forms of language as requiring "*mais cuidado*"⁹. This is because she feels written forms of language are targeted to a "*specific public*" (a specific speech community). Since she believes the sentence "*Shoes are sold*" will most probably be used in its written form ("*put on a sign*"), it will also become public.

Janaina is more lenient in passing judgements on spoken language ("*I don't bother about these either right or wrong things.*"). When considering widely used forms of language that are not correct in terms of standard grammar (such as in the case of the sentence in the above excerpt), she tends to accept them:

JN: (...) você tem essa primeira coisa, você sai pensando assim: *puxa vida, mas são tantas as pessoas que têm esse tipo de linguagem* (...) [Card ID: 13061; Source: stack "JeniRep1A"]

JN: Sabe porque eu acho que é acima? Porque eu acho que é muito mais próximo do que as pessoas falam, entende? *Eu acabo considerando...* [Card ID: 9802; Source: stack "JeniRep1A"]¹⁰

Such permissiveness, however, is not shown where literacy is concerned. Indulgence, then, is replaced by *concern, attention and more care*, yielding to issues of historicity, legitimacy and the authority of the written word (" (...) what is published and not published." Card ID:1250, Source:jenirep1A]). For Janaina, the written word is something that is shown to others and "*cannot be a transcription*" of the oral language. This illustrates her notion of *transcribed language*.

⁹ Literally, "more care", "more precision". Janaina used this expression many times throughout the Rep Grid activity.

¹⁰ JN: (...) your first move is to think this way: Shucks, but there are so many people that have this kind of language (...) [Card ID:13061;Source: "JeniRep1A"] JN: I would rank this sentence above, because I think it is much closer to the way people talk, you know. I end up accepting it... [Card ID: 9802; Source: "JeniRep1A"]

JN: Isso, porque é escrita, porque ela aparece. Porque é uma linguagem escrita, não é uma transcrição da linguagem oral...sabe, é uma coisa que aparece... [Card ID: 11194; Source: stack "JeaniRep1A"]¹¹

Therefore, *transcribed* language, for Janaina, provides the written representations of oral forms of language. These written representations of oral forms pertain to "*popular*" oral language used by individuals who seem to be on their way to a standard form of literacy. "*Popular*" language, in its written form, becomes a "*transcribed*" language with no focus on grammar; i.e., standard grammar:

JN: (...) eu observo que elas [as 8 sentenças] são a linguagem popular. É uma transcrição de uma linguagem oral... Não existe nenhuma preocupação gramatical. É a transcrição da linguagem oral. [Card ID: 7751; Source: jrlang]¹²

At one instance of the Rep Grid activity, Janaina explicitly expressed her views on the legitimacy and authority of the printed word through a joke she made. When she sees a literary sentence presented during the Grid activity (a sentence by the Brazilian poet Olavo Bilac), she recognizes the author of the sentence and makes the following comment when ranking the sentence:

JN: Realmente, nada que eu observo. A primeira [sentença] é de Olavo Bilac, não é? *Mais ele do que eu prá falar que está certo!* [ri] [Card ID: 4913; Source: stack "JeaniRep1A"]¹³

Literature, as a form of the printed word, seems to be considered the epitome of the most correct, most standard form of language. However, the reflection process initiated through our conversation triggered Janaina to reflect on her own understanding of literature. She recalls a

¹¹ JN: That's it, because it's written, because it can be seen, because it's a written language. It cannot be a transcription of the oral language, you know. It's something you see... [Card ID:11194;Source: "JeaniRep1A"]

¹² JN: (...) they [the 8 sentences] are a popular language. That's a transcription of the oral language. There's no focus on grammar. It's the transcription of the oral language. [Card ID:7751; Source:jrlang]

¹³ JN: I can see no problems there. The first sentence is by Olavo Bilac, isn't it? He' has more authority to say that it's correct than I do. [laughs] [CardID:4913; Source:JeaniRep1A]

representation of the *caipira*, *Chico Bento*, by Brazilian cartoonist, Mauricio, and questions her view on literature as the epitome of standard language. She recognizes that non-standard language can also be found in the printed word; even in literary.

Janaina seemed to be in a transitional phase: a time of tension between the prescriptiveness of normative grammar and her perception of the language use to which she is exposed in the daily life of her classroom practice. Although confusing and full of contradictions, I see this transitional phase from one way of understanding language to another as something positive. If, on the one hand, her perception on language is influenced by deficit/standard views of language variation; on the other hand, the data that she gathers on daily use of language contradicts such views. At one point of our analysis, she mentions that judging language by the amount of errors in it is ridiculous. At another point, she recognizes non-standard/stigmatized dialectal forms in her own language use, as well as in that of people close to her social background. This recognition contradicts the prescriptive views she holds which she acquired as a result of both language and teacher education.

JN: Então, aqui eu considero... "as pessoa pobre tem menos possibilidade", pessoas até próximas a mim, entende? Tá? Não professores, mas pessoas do meu convívio normal, tá, em casa... [Card ID: 15416; Source: jrlang]¹⁴

Although Janaina claims that an error approach to language evaluation is "*ridiculous*" [Card 6330; Source: jrlang], many of her judgements in the Rep Grid activity were based on normative grammar rules (e.g., noun, verb, subject, adverb agreement, spelling, number and gender). These rules are clearly expressed throughout the transcripts. Normative grammar, standard views of language and the quantity of errors characterize her distinction between oracy and literacy, for example:

¹⁴ JN: (...) So, here I think about... "Poor people have fewer possibilities" ¹⁴ [a very non-standard sentence]. I see it as spoken by people who are close to me, you know? Not teachers, but people I meet every day, people at home. [Card ID:15416; Source:jrlang]

JN: (...) Eu acho que é mais sério escrever "vende-se calçados" ["shoes are sold"] do que dizê-lo. [Card ID: 7268; Source: jrlang]¹⁵

I believe that normative grammar also regulates and defines the hierarchy on which Janaina bases her language judgements. She does not acknowledge my opinion, however. Janaina claims it is neither a question of hierarchy nor of importance when considering how she judges language.

J: Então prá você existe uma coisa hierárquica entre oralidade e linguagem escrita, vamos dizer?

JN: Não, não é bem hierárquica... sabe, eu não vejo assim como uma coisa mais principal ou menos, nem é questão de importância. Porque eu acho, assim, se eu estou vendo esses problemas gramaticais, sem concordância, concordância, sabe, ortografia... entendeu? Então, por exemplo, [] eu acho mais grave escrever "vende-se calçados" ...

J: ... do que falar...

JN: ...tá...do que fal... exato... [Card ID: 7268; Source: jrlang]¹⁶

However, later in the Rep Grid activity, she falls into a contradictory mode which shows that normative grammar, as well as the speech community in which language is spoken, do play an important role in her language judgements:

JN: Por isso que eu coloco " a casa tá atrais dos morro", eu não vejo uma coisa importante, depois que ele escreveu casa com "z", né? "Tá", eu não acho... o menos importante é o estar "morrosss" no plural, sabe... eu não acho importante. Eu acho que é importante "nois cumemu os ovo" , o "ovo" estar no

¹⁵ JN: (...) I believe it's more serious to spell "vende-se calçados" ["shoes are sold"], than to say it. [Card ID:7268; Source:jrlang]

¹⁶ J: So, for you there is something hierarchical between oracy and the written language, let's say?

JN: No, it's not quite hierarchical. I do not see it as a question of being more or less important. When I think about grammar problems, agreement or spelling, then, I believe that writing "shoes are sold" is more serious...

J: ... than saying it, right...

JN: Exactly, than saying it... [Card ID:7268; Source:jrlang]

singular... você entende, dentro dessa frase aqui. Isso eu acho importante. [Card ID: 7268; Source: jrlang]¹⁷

The relevant point in the above excerpt is the fact that, for Janaina, language functions as an icon of its speakers. The non-standard sentence "we ate the eggs with sauce" is typical of one which suggests and portrays an illiterate speech community, a community where non-standard speech is spoken, one such as where the "illiterate hillbillies" of the rural areas of Rio Claro live. Language, in this case, works as a badge, an icon of its speech community.

Later on in the Rep Grid activity, Janaina talks about "concern for language" again. She begins by saying that care should be taken not to fall into exaggeration. When asked to make her concept of "concern for language" more explicit, I sense that she is ambiguous in what she believes to be exaggeration, and prescriptive/standard views of language. This is the way she talks about "concern for language":

J: O que é ter um cuidado melhor?

JN: Olha, em gera... *tentar seguir o padrão de linguagem jornalística: concisão, sem erros... evitando mesmo prá propagar... Eu acho que deveria ser... porque é uma linguagem jornalística. Eu acho que tem que ter um padrão, independente de ser no norte, no sul, tem que ter esse padrão que a TELEVISÃO tem que seguir. Se eu estou escrevendo um texto só para o Jornal Nacional eu vou ter o cuidado de fazer a mesma coisa.* [Card ID: 16664; Source: jrlang]¹⁸

For me, the essence of the above transcripts is that "concern for language" means paying attention to the standard/normative views of

¹⁷ JN: That's why I ranked "the house is behind the hills" [literal translation] as something less important, after he misspelled "house" with a "z" [casa/caza]. I see "hills" in the plural form as less important. I don't think it's important. The important thing is to have the word "egg" in the plural form in sentence "we ate the eggs with sauce" That's what I think is important! [Card ID: 7268; Source: jrlang]

¹⁸ J: What do you mean by "concern"?

JN: To follow the standards of journalistic language: conciseness, no mistakes... avoiding mistakes so that they won't be spread... I believe it should be... because it's a journalistic language. I believe there should be a standard, independently of being from the North or South. There must be a standard, which the television has to follow. [Card ID: 16664; Source: jrlang]

language; and that TV, as vehicle of the media, plays an important role in disseminating forms of language.

Despite being influenced by more progressive views on language variation, Janaina's deficit/standard views seem to prevail in the way she understands language and language learning. The discrepancy between what she professes and the way she actually understands language is probably the result of Janaina's transition process of abandoning traditional models of language which previously guided her. I see here a teacher questioning her old models and comparing what she learned at teachers college with her own language learning and teaching experiences.

Janaina has dichotomous understandings of language. The dichotomies reflect ideas based on oracy and literacy, and on deficit and standard views of language. Janaina's notions of the authority and legitimacy of the written/published (or literary) language as opposed to what she names as "*popular language*" ("*transcribed language*" in its written form) are linked to her dichotomous view of oracy and literacy. Her understanding of language variation is heavily based on views of deficits and standard which are regulated by the prescriptiveness of normative grammars. For her, language functions as an icon, a representation of its users portraying them and their speaking communities. Janaina's notion of "*concern for language*" is well illustrated when she suggests the spoken and written media are vehicles for the dissemination of standard forms of language. In this sense, newspapers and television should use language "*with care*" since they are legitimate and authoritative ways of spreading its standard forms.

Janaina's views of language are based on clarity, concern for and avoidance of ambiguity. These notions are linked to a teleological perspective from which she understands language comprehension. She draws upon this perspective to define her teaching objectives as well as her notions of knowledge about language and language learning. In regards to her teleological view of verbal communication, Janaina accepts only a part of this conduit model of message emission/reception. This is because she also considers prior knowledge held by the sender and/or receiver of the message as well as the context in which communication occurs. For Janaina, neither the sender nor the receiver is seen as empty vessels; and the context in which communication occurs

defines the continuum perspective from which she considers and evaluates meaning and ambiguity in language. Janaina presents these contradictory views of language as she evaluates the eight element sentences during the Rep Grid elicitation. I believe this to be a sign of an on-going process of transformation of perspective, which she was already undergoing when we started our joint reflection process (see excerpt, p.13).

For Janaina, knowing the rules of language and using them are distinctive abilities. She sees a gap between both of them, just as she sees a gap between oral and written performances by students. Janaina talks about students "*retaining the grammar concepts*" (that is, "normative grammar"). However, this does not mean they will use whatever they retain about knowledge of language in their own language performance. Her perspective on language learning is founded in assimilative and cumulative views of knowledge transmission from teacher (a knowledge holder) to student (an empty vessel). This deficit approach is not fully espoused by her, though, since she sees her students as "*talkative persons*". This means that they are somehow able to use language for communication. In this sense, another dichotomous distinction between "*general oral expression*" (used for chatting) and "*content oral expression*" (used for discussing the content of classroom texts and assignments) helps her to organize her perspective of student learning. This distinction also accommodates the tension caused by the gap she sees between students' oral and written performances.

3.2. Elaine

It is difficult to explicate the operation of Elaine's understandings of language and language varieties without associating them to the general milieu of her school environment and language policy. Several aspects of this milieu have an impact on her understandings of language and standard and nonstandard language. A few of these aspects are: time management of classes, large number of students, her views regarding usefulness of the school language curriculum, deficiencies in her professional development, and the authoritarian aspects of the workplace. Because of the focus of this paper, I have structured my response to the research questions.

From the analysis of the conversations on the Rep Grid and the videotaped classes, I could notice that Elaine's work with language in the classroom is based on a deficit approach. She prefers working from the point of view of looking for students' mistakes, their deficiencies and their lack of grammatical content. Quite explicitly in the analysis of the first video-taped class, the Rep Grid elicitation transcripts show a teacher who works from a right versus wrong perspective, and from a point of view of standard language variation ("correct" standard pronunciation and grammar). These viewpoints of language define her choice of pedagogical materials and the emphasis she places on aspects of standard language which, she believes, will eradicate "the errors" of the language that her students bring with them to school from their homes. Her work operates from the premise that her students do not know how to talk properly. This is illustrated from the following excerpt where Elaine talks about the faults in the textbook she has chosen. The excerpt also suggests the criteria used by Elaine in her choice of the textbook which she adopts for her teaching. The textbook she uses matches her views based on errors or deviations from standard forms of the language:

J: Que você acha que um livro didático deveria ter assim, o que está faltando nesse livro didático, por exemplo, que falta nesse?

E: Huh... [pensando] Ele pega, pega muito na parte de gramática... oração subordinadas, análise sintática, sujeito, predicado...

J: E o que você queria mais de linguagem e tal...

E: *Eu queria mais assim, vamos supor, os erros vamos supor... erros. Quais são os erros mais cometidos, né, e... vamos procurar corrigir essas falhas, como um livro... como... [FIM DO LADO A DA FITA] um livro bom, excelente, é que você não estava aqui. Então...*

J: Esse livro teria que... então... ter mais... huh...

E: Por exemplo, *aquele negócio que eu comentei com você "rouba" - não é /rôba/ é /rouba/, não é /estóra/ é /estoura/, então, quer dizer... os alunos aproveitam... "Ah, nunca vi isso!!!", "Que bonitinho, aprendeu falar!" [rī] [Card ID: 4365; Source: stack "langteaching"]¹⁹*

¹⁹ J: Do you think a class textbook should be this way? What's missing in this textbook, for instance, what's missing in this one? (Cont.)

Elaine's choice of working from this deficit, standard grammar perspective forces her to deal with a few problems. These problems include traces of her own non-standard accent (her own linguistic history she brings to her teaching), the negotiation of access to the speech communities (the gangs) within the school, and the rejection/ deep lack of interest in grammar on the part of her students and on her own part. These three problems are respectively exemplified in the three groups of excerpts below. These three groups of excerpts respectively illustrate Elaine's uncritical awareness of her own regional non-standard accent, and that of her students, the deficit perspective from which she views the language of the gangs, and the tension that this deficit perspective of language poses when choosing the content to be taught:

E: (...) Bom, a leitura do Anderson, é... ele é assim: medo, insegurança... da muito soquinho, a *pronúncia, tipo assim bem... Piracibano, né? Não só dele como a minha também.*
[Card ID: 4476; Source: stack "emilvid1A"]

"Por que eu explico as gírias, né?" Huh.... por quê? Porque eu explico as gírias. Porque é muito grande o uso de gírias na escola. É grande demais. Praticamente, os alunos lá conversam em gíria, conversa só na base de gírias... né? Por quê? Porque é o grupo deles. De repente que é? A professora não vai entender o que eu estou falando. Então, eu também tenho que entrar na deles, né? Como no caso que eu citei prá vocês: "farinha", né? Depois que eu fiquei anos trabalhando no centro da cidade, voltei prá periferia e não sabia o que era

(Cont.)

E: Huh... [thinking] It covers, it covers a lot of grammar... subordinated phrases, syntactical analysis, subject, predicate...

J: And what would you rather have as far as language is concerned and so...

E: I wished I had more, let's see, errors, let's suppose...: errors. The most frequent errors, you know... and let's try to solve these faults, a book like... like... [END OF SIDE A OF TAPE] [...]

A good book, an excellent book, but you were not here. So...

J: So, this book needed to... so we need more... huh....

E: For example, that problem I mentioned to you "rouba" [literally, "to steal", first vowel pronounced /o/]. It's not "rôba" [as in /ɔ/], it's rouba, it's not "estôra" [as in /ɔ/] [literally, to explode], but it's "estoura" [/o/]. So, I mean... the students learn something... "Oh, I've never seen such thing!!!" "How cute, you've learned how to talk!" [Laughs] [Card ID: 4365; Source: stack "langteaching"]

"farinha". Depois que eu fiquei descobrin... que eu... que eu descobri que era cocaína. "Olha a farinha, a farinha!" Quer dizer, eu então, *o que eu estou fazendo? Estou descendo um pouco ao nível deles... de falar, né?* [Card ID: 4980; Source: stack "langteaching"]

E: Então... mas é... FAZER a análise, né? *A análise, né... que eles não gostam.* [Card ID: 9897; Source: stack "emilvid2"]

Eles querem assim, teatro, jornais, vídeos, e... o que está escrito lá nas folhas... prá que eu estar ensinando isso, né? Que eu vou fazer com isso/ Certo? [Card ID: 9348; Source: stack "emilvid2"]²⁰

For Elaine, language works as capital. Language defines one's presentation of self and one's role in the social context. Her deficit approach to language places her students in the position of deprived of such capital who must learn how to speak and write the language "correctly" (and that means the standard form) within the different areas of knowledge.

E: Escuta, eu acho o seguinte: huh...suponhamos, fazer o aluno falar o Português corretamente, [] de seu trabalho corretamente, mas também em outras áreas, não somente na

²⁰ E: (...) Well, Anderson's reading is... it's like this: fear, lack of self-confidence... he stammers, his pronunciation is like... someone from Piracicaba [a neighboring city where a similar stigmatized dialect is spoken], right? Not only his pronunciation but mine as well. [Card ID: 4476; Source: "emilvid1A"]

E: I said: "It's slang," I said. And what is that? It's one of their groups, you know? Each of these groups has its own slang, right? The teachers have theirs, students have others, etc...[Card ID: 2415; Source: stack "langteaching"]

"Why do I teach slang, right?" Huh... why? Why do I teach them slang? Because the use of slang in school is very common. It's so common. Actually, the students at this school interact through slang, their conversations are based on all sorts of slang... (...) So, I must get closer to them, you know? (...) So, what am I doing? I am coming down to their level... the way they talk, right? [Card ID: 4980; Source: "langteaching"]

E: The problem is doing the analysis, you know? [syntactical analysis] It is the analysis that they don't like. [Card ID: 9897; Source: stack "emilvid2"]

E: They are interested in theater, newspapers, videos, and... in what it's written there on the sheets... what's the purpose of teaching all this, you know? What am I going to do with that? [Card ID: 9348; Source: stack "emilvid2"]

matéria Português. [Card ID: 5373; Source: stack "langteaching"]²¹

The impression I have is that Elaine aims at a language education that will provide her students with what they do not have, i.e., the standard forms of Portuguese and the standard linguistic capital which will provide them with social prestige. That means the standard forms of Portuguese.

E: (...) no caso de você ser convidado para dar uma palestra, para ler algo em voz alta para uma platéia, você tem que ler bem, né? Tem que ressaltar certas palavras etc. [Card ID: 5912; Source: stack "emilvid1A"]²²

Despite Elaine's being aware of the few dialectal features of her own Portuguese, she sees herself as an expert and studious person of the Portuguese language. However, she also seems to come from an environment where the non-standard forms are spoken. In the excerpt that follows, Elaine mentions her mother as a non-standard dialect speaker. The excerpt provides an illustration of how Elaine sees non-standard language and her self-relation to it:

E: Olha, [lendo as sentenças na tela do computador] "as pessoas tem *menas* possibilidade"²³, prá esse tipo de frase ai, eu dou... 60%. Porque esse "*menas*" aí... eu vou falar... eta... minha mãe fala "*menas*" aí... É *menas*? É *menas* aquela "*menas*", tinha *menas* pessoa em tal lugar, *menas* gente,

²¹ E: Listen, this is what I think: huh... let's suppose, make the student speak the Portuguese language correctly, [] of their work correctly, but also, in other areas, not only in Portuguese. [Card ID: 5373; Source: stack "langteaching"]

²² E: (...)In case you are invited to give a lecture on something, to read something aloud in public, you had better READ it well, you know? You should EMPHASIZE certain words, etc... [Card ID: 5912; Source: stack "emilvid1A"]

²³ The speaker is making the feminine form of a quantifier. This is typical of non-standard speakers. The original excerpt in Portuguese is the following: E: Olha, "as pessoas tem *menas* possibilidade", prá esse tipo de frase ai, eu dou... 60%. Porque esse "*menas*" aí... eu vou falar... eta... minha mãe fala "*menas*" aí... É "*menas*"? É "*menas*". aquela "*menas*", tinha "*menas*" pessoa em tal lugar, "*menas*" gente, alunos, virgem.. huh... quase que nao existe! Entao, eu dou... 60% [Source: Rep Grid, TransElaine]

alunos, virgem.. huh... quase que não existe! Então, eu dou...
60%. [Source: Rep Grid, Transelaine]²⁴

Given her personal history, her social background and the way she presents her mother as a nonstandard speaker, Elaine's own desires in relation to standard Portuguese reflect the hierarchical focus of her perspectives when she constitutes her self-image of expert as a language teacher. For Elaine, standard language seems to provide authority to climb the social ladder and to obtain more power to stamp out or "to police" error.

The transcripts of our conversation provide insights into Elaine's views of how to work with dialectal issues in the class. I could, then, see a hesitant teacher in regards to the value of adopting a bidialectal approach in the teaching of her mother tongue. Elaine does not consider it as an approach that can value the language that students bring with them from home. She does not see bidialectalism as something that can empower students to keep the language of their identity. In addition, she does not seem to see the acquisition of the standard forms as an instrument for social participation. The deficit perspective, from which Elaine sees language, makes her consider bidialectalism as permissive ("Should I correct that?"). These views prevent her from considering the procedures of a bidialectal pedagogy:

E: *Ai, agora, ficou minha dúvida também? Será que eu corrijo isso?* [O que] estou vendo em redação, alguma coisa? [Card ID: 5779; Source: stack "emilvid2"]²⁵

During our joint reflection process on the second videotaped class, Elaine associates such permissiveness with students' dialects to what she thought was her way of policing students to talk in the right standard forms. Again, I see a hesitant teacher in regards to the value of bidialectalism and language varieties:

²⁴ E: Look, [reading the sentence of the computer screen aloud] "People have fewer possibilities..." I'll give 60% to this kind of phrase. Because that "fewer" there, you know... Gee... My Goodness! My mother talks like that, she uses this "fewer" here... There were fewer people in such a place, fewer people, students... Gosh!... Yuck!... Can't believe it! So, I give it... 60%. [Source: Rep Grid, TransElaine]

²⁵ E: Now, I have a doubt too. Should I correct that [What] I see in the compositions? [Card ID: 5779; Source: stack "emilvid2"]

E: ... que mais, também, que eu pude observar lá? Dando, assim, uma assessoria, né, rápida! *Eu não fiquei policiando, falando [], não tá certo isso? Não tá certo, tá errado. Já não fiquei falando tanto, assim, né? Já foi mais assim: OPINIÃO DELES, né? Opinião deles mesmo. Então, faz questionar bastante, né? Porque não tem errado, acha que tudo é certo, acha que...* [Card ID: 10439; Source: stack "emilvid2"]²⁶

Finally, Elaine believes that it will be hard for her to accept the fact that students can "talk wrongly" in class. For her, she says, this will take a long time. She claims that the students themselves do not accept this bidialectal perspective, and she uses this rejection to validate her own. In the following excerpt, I can perceive such rejection, as well as the questioning effect that our research process had over her *either/or* conception of a bidialectal language education:

E: Em relação, né, o que eu falo: certo ou errado, padrão e não padrão. EU acho assim... EU pessoalmente, acho que eu vou DEMORAR... porque até agora assim eu tô falando: "É certo ou é errado?" Eu vou DEMORAR, acho que prá aceitar ... isso, né? Huh... "Falar errado!" Então, os alunos vão espantar, né?

J: Você não aceita isso?

E: Não, não aceito ainda.

J: Você não acha válida essa idéia?

J: Não... não acho, mas agora você está fazendo olhar... sobre... sob OUTROS olhos, né? Huh... pode até falar... porque às vezes a menina... eles "Ah!", não admitem, né? Quer dizer, é um negócio, assim, difícil, a LONGO PRAZO, eu vou ter que tirar, né? Esse negócio de certo x errado. "Não... huh!!!" Né? [Card ID: 5472; Source: stack "emilvid2"]²⁷

²⁶ E: huh... what else could I notice there? I was giving a fast help, right! I didn't police them [] "Isn't that right? No, it's right, it's wrong." I did not keep talking like that, right? I sort of tended to THEIR OPINION, you know? Their very own opinion. It put me in a very questioning position, you know? Because there is no such a thing as wrong thing, everything can be right that... [Card ID: 10439; Source: stack "emilvid2"]

²⁷ E: Regarding that business: right or wrong, standard or non-standard. This is the way I see it... I PERSONALLY believe that I am going to TAKE A LONG TIME... till now I am asking: "Is it right or it is wrong?" I am going TO TAKE A LONG TIME to accept it... I mean, you know, huh... "To talk wrongly!" The students are going to get surprised, you know?

(Cont.)

(Cont.)

I believe that the above excerpt epitomizes Elaine's concepts of standard and non-standard language, of her students as non-standard speakers, and her aversion to a bidialectal language education model.

4. Comments

4.1. The Research Questions: How do the participating teachers understand language and their own language teaching?; and How are these understandings reflected on their own language teaching?

Being the focus of my participants' teaching, the non-standard variety of Portuguese spoken by Janaina's and Elaine's students bears features that are characteristic of the nonstandard variety of Brazilian Portuguese spoken and written by people living in the interior regions of the state of São Paulo. This variety did not carry all of the characteristics of the "*caipira*" Portuguese spoken in the area I conducted my research, but closely resembled it. My three participants were exposed to, and had to deal with, the same nonstandard variety. Even their speech carried a few traces of it, but not as many as their students'. Despite their individual differences, Elaine and Janaina seemed to construe standard language in the way defined by Corson (1994), that is, as "*something to aspire to*" (p.273). Their way of viewing standard language seems evaluative and normative. These characteristics are particularly evident in Elaine's persistent way of understanding language in terms of right versus wrong, a dominant perspective that defines the basis of Elaine's teaching (e.g., with its focus on correctness).

Both participants considered spoken language as connected to the social group that speaks it. However, this connection between language and speech community affects their pedagogies and understanding of language in different ways. Elaine understands her students as belonging to a different social class. She construes her own understanding of the language spoken by her students as compared to how she construes

J: You don't accept that?

E: No, not yet.

J: You don't think this idea is a valid one?

E: No... I don't think so, but now you are making me to see... with... with different eyes, you know? Huh... one can even talk... because that girl sometimes... they say "Oh!", they don't accept that, right? [Card ID: 5472; Source: stack "emilvid2"]

standard language; that is, as "*something excellent*" or "*the best there is*" (Corson, 1994:273).

Similarly, Janaina seemed to have mixed feelings about her students' nonstandard language. Although Janaina is of the (prescriptive) belief that standard forms of language are to be aspired to in her classes (her notion of *care with the language*), she notices that even educated people find using nonstandard forms acceptable in daily colloquial use. This linguistic data, available to Janaina in her school and social environment, triggers her reflection on her judgements based on prescriptiveness and grammatical accuracy. In her transcripts, Janaina construes different dialects as icons of the speech community to which speakers belong. She construes an understanding of "care with language" on basis of normativity. Just like her understandings of pedagogy, the ways Janaina construes standard versus nonstandard forms of language seemed to be consolidating. Janaina is still looking for alternative ways to deal with language in her classes.

A teacher's personal constructs of language are important for teachers to approach students' nonstandard varieties of language from Soares' (1989) bidialectal perspective; that is, a perspective that is both empowering and educational. Teachers' understandings of language must carry both openness to and an attitude towards alternative perspectives of language that reject prescriptive and deficit bases. Teachers whose ways of construing language are heavily based on accuracy or correctness, such as Elaine's, might be more resilient to adopting a bidialectal view of language education in their classes. Views based on deficits, accuracy, and correctness try only to eradicate students' nonstandard language.

For Elaine, a nonstandard language variation is incorrect. As a consequence, her construct of language variation contributes to her understanding of teaching as deficit correction, and repairing her students' language. Therefore, Elaine's ways of construing language, students and language pedagogy distances her from Soares' (1989) proposed bidialectal education. Like Elaine, Janaina also distances herself from Soares' proposal, but for a different reason: her constructs of language, students and teaching are not defined enough to accommodate a bidialectal approach. Furthermore, Elaine's constructs are incompatible with Soares' (1989) approach to nonstandard language varieties because they are based on a deficit view of language. Elaine construes her

students as deprived of "*the capital*" of standard language ("*... no caso de você ser convidado para dar uma palestra, para ler algo em voz alta para uma platéia, você tem que ler bem, né?*" Card ID:5912) required to act in "*the market*" (Bourdieu, 1977). Elaine sees bidialectalism as permissiveness, as "*nothing is wrong, everything can be right*". These ways of construing language typically characterize a deficit approach to language pedagogy, and are incompatible with bidialectal education. They make Elaine's pedagogical possibility of a transformative view of bidialectal language education even more distant.

Janaina's pedagogy and her construct of the teacher's role draw heavily on her experiences as a language student: normative grammar and the teacher as *transmitting* language content. However, from the start of the research process, Janaina herself claimed to be on the way to making changes, and already voiced dissatisfaction with her teaching. Both Janaina's dissatisfaction with her professional development, and her consequent curiosity and will to learn alternative ways to construe language and pedagogy led her to be part of my research. In this sense, already at the beginning of the research process, Janaina had started looking for different perspectives on language and teaching to make up for what she called her "deficient" teacher education.

Imagine that the bidialectal approach had been funneled onto Janaina's professional knowledge landscape by means of a competency-based teacher education approach. Janaina would encounter problems dealing with bidialectalism in class. Based on my reflective experience with Janaina, I perceive that she construes her role as a teacher as the one who has to "*pass on grammar*" to her students (e.g., she asks them to "bounce back" what they have learned from the conduit process). However, her acceptance of bidialectalism would not be so difficult as in the case of Elaine. This is because, through our reflective conversations on her classroom practice and understandings of language, I perceived that Janaina felt unhappy about her teaching and herself as a teacher (see excerpt below). The first condition that favored her transformation was that her professional and pedagogical situation was off-balance. I see imbalance as characterized by the teacher's perception of a lack of content and pedagogical knowledge, accompanied by feelings of unhappiness and personal and professional dissatisfaction. Segments of the transcripts showed that Janaina felt she lacked content and pedagogical knowledge, and was dissatisfied with the way things were

going in her teaching milieu and in her pedagogy. Such feelings are, I believe, a frequent source of emotional and professional stress. The following excerpt illustrates Janaina's feelings:

JN: (...) Porque... eu já estava passando por um processo dis... de discussão quando você chegou, João. *Estava tudo muito mal, tinha que haver alguma saída, algum lugar para ir...*

J: Um processo de discussão com quem?

JN: Comigo mesma!

J: Com você mesma?

J: Comigo mesma. Um processo de reflexão. Eu tinha que encontrar alguma coisa que me desse a possibilidade de mudança...minha atitude. Primeiro eu achava que meu problema era falta de conteúdo. Daí eu preparava minhas aulas, eu sabia tudo, eu verificava tudo, tinha o conteúdo e nunca [conseguia resultado]. Eu achava: "Não é só conteúdo. Tem alguma coisa a ver com a dinâmica com meus alunos." (...)[Card ID: 2944; Source: jeanivid2]²⁸

Both Janaina and Elaine accounted for students' nonstandard varieties from a deficit perspective. However, their reasons for adopting this deficit view differ. Janaina, for example, adheres to the view of teachers as providers of grammatical knowledge, and is not able to see constructs of language from other perspectives. Janaina, however, seems open to new ways of understanding language as long as they can effectively help her solve classroom problems. Unlike Janaina, Elaine is the most distant from adopting a bidialectal approach, or even something similar. I believe Elaine has to undergo a greater change in her way of construing language, students and pedagogy before there can be any possibility of her considering nonstandard varieties of language from bidialectal perspectives. First, Elaine must free herself of the tight, impermeable constructs she holds of standard grammar and right versus

²⁸ JN: (...) Because... I was already undergoing a process of dis... discussion when you came, João. Things were awfully bad, there had to be some way out, somewhere to go...

J: A process of discussion with whom?

JN: With myself!

J: Yourself?

JN: Myself. A process of reflection. I had to find something that could give me the possibility to change... my attitude. First I thought that [bad feeling] was due to my lack of content. Then, I prepared my classes, I knew everything, I checked everything, I had the content and never [got any results]. I thought: "It's not only content. It has something to do with the dynamics between me and my students." [Card ID: 2944; Source: jeanivid2]

wrong language. Probably, Elaine needs a working partner, a collaborating colleague, who feels more confident.

Finally, this study made me aware of the distance between my participants' ways of construing language, students and pedagogy, and these principles of bidialectal education. From the perspective of transformative teacher education, I can now better grasp these constructs, and anticipate how my two participants would take up bidialectal education. A competency-based teacher education program with inventory-like specifications of principles, content and skills, as described by Diamond (1991), would present a series of requirements to teachers as to how to proceed from a bidialectal education perspective. I have chosen a different, inside-out approach. I have begun with how the practitioner construes language, their students and pedagogy.

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