# Reflections about the Voices Contributing to the Constitution of the Literacy Teacher's Professional Subjectivity / *Reflexões sobre as vozes contribuintes para a constituição da subjetividade profissional do docente alfabetizador*

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ABSTRACT

The anxiety about the literacy process is constant among literacy educators, either because the various theories come through the academic and bibliographic discourse, or because the educational policies adopt them. This article aims at discussing, through the utterances of literacy teachers, which voices are contributing to their professional subjectivity, determining what makes up the theoretical basis of their pedagogical practice. Data collection was performed by filming the activities carried out in an extension course, edited and then analyzed based on Bakhtinian concepts of language and dialogism. The utterances reveal their teaching beliefs and uncertainties about the appropriate literacy methods, learned in a fragmented and superficial way. It is through the process of understanding a language concept as interlocution, focusing on the subject and his/her history, that the literacy teacher may surpass fads and strengthens himself/herself as the individual responsible for the critical appropriation of reading and writing as taught in school.

KEYWORDS: Teaching and learning; Language; Teacher Training and Development

RESUMO

*A angústia com relação ao processo de alfabetização é uma constante entre alfabetizadores, seja porque várias teorias de ensino e aprendizagem da língua materna são veiculadas pelo discurso acadêmico e bibliográfico, seja porque as políticas educacionais as adotam. Neste artigo, objetiva-se abordar, por meio de enunciados de professores alfabetizadores, quais as diferentes vozes que os constituíram profissionalmente, determinando o que se configura como base teórica em suas práticas pedagógicas. A coleta de dados se realizou por meio de filmagens das atividades desenvolvidas em um curso de extensão, as quais, depois de editadas, foram analisadas com base nos pressupostos bakhtinianos de linguagem e dialogia. Os enunciados docentes revelam suas crenças e incertezas sobre os métodos de alfabetizar, apropriados de maneira fragmentada e superficial. É na compreensão de uma concepção de linguagem como interlocução, focalizando sujeito e história, que o professor alfabetizador poderá superar modismos e se fortalecer enquanto responsável pelo ensino crítico da leitura e da escrita escolarizada.*

*PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Ensino-aprendizagem; Linguagem; Formação de Professores*

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The expansion of industrialization in the 1970s in Brazil contributed to accelerating the growth of the number of schools, which in the first decade of the 21$^{st}$ century welcomed, theoretically, almost 100% of the school-age children. However, the appropriation of knowledge historically produced by mankind remains the privilege of some students only and not of all the others.

Even knowing that there are no homogeneous classes, there are deadlines in schools, misconceived evaluations, that is, focused much more on the numerical representation of the educational process than in guiding the learning process of students who have not yet learned. Thus, the issue of school failure remains a problem in this country.

Many causal factors may be underlying the situation in which a child in the last years of elementary school, for instance, has the knowledge corresponding to that of the early years. The effective possibilities of promoting learning from those who are not learning at the pace of others are far from what is needed. The Brazilian educational conditions do not guarantee that, in fact, all children learn. In order to do so, we must:

> […] go deep into the school, reviewing our educational policies, our teaching practices, our teacher training/development policies, our teaching methods and pedagogical practices. It is time for a structural revision of the educational system for us to understand the reason why so many children stay years in school and remain illiterate. (SOUZA, 2010, p.65).

According to the concept of illiteracy adopted by IBGE (BRASIL, 2012), the "person able to read and write at least a simple message in his/her own language" is considered literate. However, the global trend, more appropriate to the economic and technological reality nowadays, is to consider functionally illiterate anyone who did not complete at least four elementary school grades and who is not able to read and write to fulfill the demands of everyday life. According to this second criterion, the number of illiterates jumps to more than 30 million Brazilians at the age of 15 or older (PINTO et al., 2000).

So we are forced to ask ourselves: among these illiterates, how many millions of Brazilians have Learning Disabilities[1]? And how many are just victims of educational processes which did not enable them, in fact, to learn, read and write? Moysés (2011) calls our attention to this contradiction, since pathologies involving neurological changes can be observed only in a small percentage of the population.

Therefore, public policies are needed to enable the teacher not to be  only  a facilitator of the learning process but to actually promote the learning of reading and writing,  which are the basic instruments for a critical social insertion.

Among the several causal factors for this situation, another equally relevant aspect refers to the necessary understanding that literacy taught in the early years of elementary school occurs on the basis of the literacy ideology. Such discourse was created in the 1980s and gained strength in recent decades, especially by pointing to the need for literacy – the teaching and learning of reading and writing – to be acquired by the subjects in such a way that it would enable them to participate in effective social practices requiring their knowledge, without leaving out the acquisition of the graphic-phonetic code of the Portuguese written language. Both goals would be the two sides of an indissoluble process.

This conception made it necessary to understand if the literacy teachers viewed language as a means and product of social interlocution and thus understood that the acquisition of written language, that is, the learning of reading/writing skills and literacy, had to occur right from the beginning of such context. It is understood that such conception/understanding is part of the teacher's subjectivity and produces profound influence on the process of teaching the mother tongue.

However, in order to think about the constitution of the professional subjectivity of the literacy teacher we have to explain what conception of subjectivity underlies the proposed analysis. The human being is born immersed in a speaking context external to him/her, in which the word is present in all acts of human understanding and interpretation of reality, reflecting the social world both interpsychically or

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[1] Some authors consider Learning Disabilities as a condition involving difficulties in reading, writing and mathematics, due to specific neurological disorders, excluding from this concept the intellectual or physical disabilities, or socioeconomic causes or educational discrepancies (HAMMIL et alii, 1981; PINHEIRO, 2002; CORREIA, 2007). Other authors criticize this idea, because they say that scientific research supporting it are inconsistent, and argue that learning difficulties (named so when excluding other causes) are part of the processes of learning and teaching (MOYSÉS and COLLARES, 2010).

intersubjectively. Gradually, such language is acquired by the individual, making it subjective or intrapsychic. Therefore, the individual's word, which used to belong to many other subjects, formed him/her.

As Vološinov[2] states:

> By its very existential nature, the subjective psyche is to be localized somewhere between the organism and the outside world on the *borderline* separating these two spheres of reality. [...] but the encounter is not a physical one: *the organism and the outside world meet here in the sign. [...]* That is why *the inner psyche is not analyzable as a thing but can only be understood and interpreted as a sign* (1986, p.26).

Every sign is a fragment of reality, reflects on and refracts inside the human social relationships; it is flexible, moldable, ideological, representing the evaluative index.

Thus, analyzing the constitution of the professional subjectivity of literacy teachers means that these teachers were formed as people and as professionals, in dialogue with many others. Therefore, based on this conception of subjectivity, this article aims at reflecting on who are those *others* that form the literacy teacher in western Paraná.

Teachers' utterances emerged in the discussion of literacy methods. This theme, however academically outdated, especially when the focus is on teaching language in early childhood classrooms, is recurrent. The false appearance of being a subject mastered by teachers is revealed precisely by the fact that it is the teacher himself/herself in his/her utterances that touches gain on the complexity and the need for discussing the procedures of his/her teaching practice.

The theoretical basis for the approach of elements discussed  here include the Bakhtinian studies in one of the most important fields of Human Sciences, as it is linked to all the others: language. For Vološinov (1986), language always happens in a dialogical process, that is, it involves interlocutors through the word (although human interaction by means of other signs is also recognized) and intentionally reveals the ideological positioning of subjects historically located. According to the author, the

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[2] The questions of authorship of the Bakhtin Circle's works are well known. Differently from what occurs in the English translation of Marxism and the Philosophy of Language, in the Portuguese translation, Bakhtin and Vološinov are listed as the authors.

word is not just a jumble of letters and sounds or signs, but the living expression of active resonances that individuals develop and form in their existence, according to the relationships established in society.

Individuals exchange utterances with each other involving the effective dialogic communication. These utterances engender, beyond the syntactic and lexical-phrasal formulation, historical time, subjects present and absent, the situation, intent and everything else that is possible to identify (or not), which makes that moment of interaction unique and unrepeatable (BAKHTIN, 2004).

Understanding language from this perspective implies to corroborate the idea that the subjects actively respond to everything that causes resonance to them, since the words are laden with ideological sense, once "we never say or hear *words,* we say and hear what is true or false*,* good or bad, important or unimportant, pleasant or unpleasant, and so on" (VOLOŠINOV, 1986, p.70).

Based on these considerations, we shall present the teachers' utterances that show us the power of the other, the presence of the other, when revealing their beliefs and uncertainties about the methods of teaching reading and writing skills.

**Research procedure**

This is a qualitative approach research, considering that, among its features, the researcher is constantly producing a kind of dialogue with the subject, because it is important to understand what the subjects experience, how they interpret their experiences and how they structure the social world in which they live (BOGDAN and BICKLEN, 1994).

As stated by Bakhtin (2004, p.91), "it is impossible to determine one's position without correlating it with other positions". Utterances are always answers to other utterances.

This dialogue was possible through an extension course involving 20 literacy teachers of municipal schools in the cities of Cascavel and Santa Helena, located in

western Paraná, who volunteered to participate[3]. The course was about literacy, and relied on the collective study of the text of Soares' "Letramento e Alfabetização: as múltiplas facetas" (2004), in which the author discusses the process of "uninvention"/reinvention of teaching reading and writing and the invention of literacy, understanding "invention" as the discovery of the phenomenon. The extension course, recorded (audio and video) on a DVD, generated 16 hours of footage. The verbal aspects, revealing what was said and not said, the intersected lines, overlapping voices, gestures and silences were captured. However, in this paper, the process of segmentation of the *corpus* followed the screening of verbal utterances in which subjects expressed themselves about their practices, beliefs and theoretical conceptions regarding literacy, even at the risk of leaving out some components of their utterances. These were transcribed and, in the process of editing the tracks, selected for the analysis presented here; incomprehensible parts, truncations and word repetitions and overlapping voices were suppressed. In the transcript, the following signs were used: (...) to indicate suppression and [ ] to indicate the researchers' comments.

From this transcript and based on the Bakhtinian assumptions of dialogism and language – understanding that in any process of dialogue there are dialogues with human subjectivity, i.e. making the "word of the *other*" the word of the "I" – we proceeded to analyze the data collected. The teachers' utterances that revealed what other voices mixed with the certainties and uncertainties about the pedagogical practices used in the teaching literacy were identified and discussed.

The strongly interrelated way we treated the data based on these assumptions is consistent with our conception of language: a process of dialogue between subjects that are dialogically interacting with others.

In order to discuss these different voices that mixed with the literacy teachers' voices, guiding their teaching practices, we looked for traditions, works, authors and institutions in their utterances.

Tradition is understood here as what is perpetuated in the space and history for a long time. "In each epoch, in each social circle […] there are always authoritative utterances that set the tone – artistic, scientific, and journalistic works on which one

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[3] Extension course entitled "Literacy in the early years of elementary school: concepts, limits and perspectives", taught by one of the authors as part of his doctoral thesis, Sept 24 to Sept 27, 2007, with a total 20 hours out of which 4 hours were related to reading the fundamental text.

relies, to which one refers, which are cited, imitated, and followed" (BAKHTIN, 2004, p.88).

**The teacher's voice: models, certainties and uncertainties**

During the course, when observing peer discussions about the difficulties of teaching the mother tongue, a teacher expressed himself as follows:

LI: *(...) I realize the anxiety of each one, the intent of each one, this powerlessness we feel in the face of such difficulty inside the classroom, and we often have our feet and hands tied. (...) There is a lot of theory out there, which is very easy to make and can be the guideline for courses* [stating] *that the student is dumb, that the teacher lacks motivation and cannot teach. Maybe there are these ideas, but I do not see things* [like that]. *Because we're always searching! It may even be that many times we do not succeed in reaching our goal. So I'm not escaping from my own responsibility; we all have our share, don't we? We do! But I think this, this guilt, I cannot accept, we cannot inflict on ourselves. For us* [sic], *for other courses* [that we have attended].

One can see from the utterance the obvious anxiety explicit in that situation, not just of the teacher who talks, but the other teachers as well, despite the efforts they make, they  fail to teach literacy, teach students to read and write the way they would like to or how they understand what students should learn. LI does not accept this discomfort and argues that other teachers present also cannot accept to be blamed for the literacy failures. Especially because those participating represent the group of teachers who study and seek to understand the current processes of teaching better and that are willing to review their beliefs, by questioning or reaffirming them.

Nevertheless, if it can be interpreted as a demonstration that the literacy teacher is not detached from what has been established as a guide for their teaching practices, the utterance "it is very easy to make theory" reveals the fragility of their understanding of what a literacy theory is, how complex it is to elaborate it as well as the separation

between theory and practice. We believe that deep knowledge of a literacy theory requires that we understand what language conception it refers to.

This weakness is also revealed when the teacher says "not knowing which way to go, which theory to follow". In other words, the answer to why we teach and/or why the student learns what we teach, as stated by Geraldi (1985), would direct the teaching practice in the classroom, based on a theoretical framework that encompassed the conception of an interlocutive interactionist language defended by Bakhtin.

To the Russian author, the language is dialogic and a process that occurs in the interaction of social and historically located subjects, which implies an interlocutor, who the speaker relates to according to intentionality. We do not speak by means of graphemes and phonemes, but by units of meaning, which cause resonances in both subjects, i.e. the one that hears and the one that speaks. As the teacher has no such conceptual clarity that the subject forms and is formed by language, we see the anxiety in his speech, as can be inferred when CA adds:

> CA: (...)*, what do I want to achieve with this activity, this path that I'm following? (...) I see the anxiety here, mine, of* [teacher's city]*; (...) there were countries that also got lost as we got lost. We no longer know which way to go, how to teach reading and writing, now it's the textual genres, we don't talk about graphemes, phonemes anymore; we'll just talk about what? And how will the children learn? We'll just give them things and they learn by themselves? (...) This turmoil we go through and we do not know where we're going? We do not have criteria, the kids, some learn on their own, others do not learn and they go ahead, just being pushed ahead. So, I think so, we really need criteria: from the Department of Education, from the school, from the teacher and I ask, "What I do want with it? Where will this take my child? Or I'll do it just to pass the time? Every time we read* [a theoretical text]*, we have a view, every time we work with a child* (...)*.*

On the one hand, the CA's discourse reveals that the anxieties of literacy teachers come from many theories disseminated by scholars and specialists in education, which often prescribe (or are read as prescribers) what the teacher is

supposed to develop. His words highlight the idea that their *modus operandi* needs to be changed instantly, because there is a new way of conceiving literacy, writing, the teaching and learning of language, circulating in various spheres that promote education. As if humans were "condemned" to be conducted by theories, forgetting that they derive, or at least it is expected that they result from a complex systematic and rigorous analysis – therefore scientific – of data formulated of a given reality. Or maybe teachers, in this dialogic movement, feel at a loss when they see the result of their action in the classroom, when faced with a student who has not learned.

Another possibility of analysis of CA's discourse allows us to infer that teachers are not lost at all. What happens is that they end up understanding teaching the way they believe it should be, and the point of conflict is that this way does not always identify with the "prescription".

The uncertainty of which way to go, present in CA's speech, "I think so, we really need criteria" seems to suggest the need to establish parameters about "how" teaching must take place. This is not a simple "follow the model" situation , but the fact that there should be a reference point may represent, in principle, an aid to the teacher that needs to do something and nobody can explain "how" to him/her. The big complaint is the lack of standards for teaching, which is evident starting with the process of educating teachers, in which one can see disconnection between theory and practice, which is revealed in the lack of understanding of the pedagogical praxis, as MG explains in his speech:

MG: (...) *college gives you all the theoretical part,* [then] *it throws you into the classroom and you say 'what now?'* [one teacher adds: *how do I do it?*] *MG: there is no such a parameter: do it this way ... or not! Do it that way* (...).

What MG demonstrates to be unaware of is that all language is ideological, occurs through flexible signs, non-static and that takes shape according to the speaker's needs in relation to his/her social auditorium: its other (VOLOŠINOV, 1986). In view of MG's utterance, we do not exploit the ideological and flexible dimensions of language; the language is not explored as movement and therefore the possibilities for their learning are limited and their teaching likewise.

Even when there are continuing education courses, these courses do not always involve a conception of a living and interlocutive language, therefore a non-dissociated conception of theory from practice. This was the case of western Paraná teachers' preparation for effective use of the constructivist proposal in the early 1980s, according to the studies of Emilia Ferreiro and Ana Teberosky. The "how to do" that teachers expect is not always explained:

> *NI: (...) I did, at the very beginning of my career, I took a course for about three days,* [Constructivism]*, but look, we were delighted because we had little reading, and, oh my, the principles were wonderful. (...) it scared us, we had a two-week course: morning, afternoon and evening (...) we did not go out of there with one proposal for an activity. It was theory, theory, theory, you know, persuasion, and everything, showing that it all had to come from the child, the child's text, but there was no proposal, 'you will create the activity', 'you will', but imagine....*

What can be understood as a consistent methodological attitude from the point of view of the constructivist process, with the teacher accompanying the hypotheses of construction of written language raised by the child and the knowledge derived thereof, eventually materialized as problems: teacher resistance and supervision of educational sectors, which, while reflections of the political context of the mid-1970s, got intertwined.

The resistance stemmed from the need for models, since the new proposal had not been experienced by them in practice as students or teachers. If the social function of this new methodology was not explicit in the relationships engendered in continuing education courses, again the same gap is observed in the undergraduate courses: the unresolved indissolubility between theory and practice.

The supervision of the educational sectors, aggravated by the political model during which the Erasmo Piloto method in Paraná had adopted, sought to control even the words that the teacher should say while teaching. This situation formed the teacher-subject at that time, because he/she lived such professional practices historically. Thus, when faced with an opposing model, these subjects, who learned to follow rules and

models, being watched over by the system, at the heart of their actions in the classroom, found themselves lost. This problem got worse with the flood of theories that followed the political opening. According to Mortatti (2000), it is in the 1980s that theoretical models of Soviet authors such as Luria, Vygotski and Bakhtin began arriving in Brazil.

While understanding that the implementation of a method does not occur dissociated from educational policies, it is clear that some teachers, when alluding to the different methods, focus the discussions more on administrative and political aspects of such implementations than on content and insecurities experienced to "get to know" new methods. The change of focus in this direction was constant in the course taught. This seems to justify why, despite mentioning several courses, addressing the different teaching methods, the understanding teachers demonstrated fell on the "how" those methods had been implemented and not on the "theoretical/methodological essence" of such methods and the way they unfolded.

*NI: Everything was forbidden. They* [supervisors] *would come and go from the education agency[4]. They could not stand seeing a poster on the wall* [the alphabet, syllabic families, the complex syllables, and especially its organization, revealing a sequence of letters/syllables from the easiest to the most difficult, although that facility or difficulty was imaginary]*; we could do nothing! But we still taught how to read and write.* [...] *There was some sort of resistance, because there was that problem of passing a child who could not read, a law that they had approved. Then all this became too much, and there was almost demotivation.*

The fact that, even in adverse conditions, "the teacher could teach how to read and write" reveals that teachers were imbued with some certainty that guided their teaching, certainly due to the support received from their peers, a kind of shared resistance, opposition to what was instructed for them "to do". It was still a traditional method and with the technicist traces for a proposal in which nothing would be established beforehand, because they should take pedagogical advantage of the knowledge of children in relation to writing.

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[4] Regional Center of Education: an agency of the Ministry of Education - SEED / Paraná, which coordinates the public education in a given region of the state.

In the fragment "problem of approving a child who could not read," NI raises a question that goes beyond the limits of this article. However, it should be said that the teacher was referring to the basic cycle[5], which was another difficult moment for the teaching profession, which occurred concurrently with the arrival of Constructivism in literacy, according to teachers.

When trying to understand the difficulties and resistance mentioned by the teacher about this new conception of teaching and learning, NI's teaching experience of 24 years brings into play other motives in relation to his/her pre-service education, vehemently reiterated by other colleagues: *"Do you know why* [the resistance]*? I had just graduated from secondary school to be a teacher, a three-year course. We'd learned the Erasmo Piloto method from beginning to end".*

The reference to the Erasmo Piloto Method is explained by the fact that western Paraná, as part of the economic and political purposes of the federal government, given the project of the Itaipu Dam construction in the 1970s, promoted a diagnostic socioeconomic-educational survey in the cities of Cascavel, Toledo and Foz do Iguaçu. The diagnosis was intended to implement the Multinational Special Project of Education MEC/OAS, in order to strengthen the educational infrastructure of the region. It would be necessary to reduce the impacts and social problems generated by the economic transformations and construction of major projects.

Regionally, the teaching materials produced for literacy followed the method developed by Professor Erasmo Piloto, already circulating in regular schools. According to that diagnosis, one of the reasons for educational failure was due to the fact of having "unqualified and untrained teachers for teaching (54% in urban areas and 80% in rural areas) [who] worked with the early education levels" (EMER, 1991, p.299-300).

Thus, "the choice for Erasmo Pilotto [sic] method had to do especially with the fact that it required little theoretical knowledge of specific domains that more experienced and trained teachers would already have" (EMER, 1991, p.297). The first training experience, attended by 91 literacy teachers, occurred in Toledo in 1976. In 1982, a total of 6,778 teachers had been trained (EMER, 1991).

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[5] Basic Cycle is a curricular proposal formulated according to the Law of Guidelines and Foundations (LDB) for Education (1996), which advocated that each state would be free to decide "the way of assessing students, with and without flunking" (CAGLIARI, 1998, p.31st). The State of Paraná was one of the states that chose to have the cycle system without failing the student between 1st and 2nd grades of Elementary School for 8 years.

It was a rigid method, in which the teacher-student interaction was seen as stimulus-response within the behaviorist conception underlying it. The syllabic families were presented in standardized sequence and the very questions that the teacher asked should be memorized and used in the established order, as shown by NO's speech, *"the Erasmo Piloto, five questions that you could not change* (NI interrupts: *"Not even the order!"*): *what do you have in your hand? I do not remember anymore.* [...] *"Then, there was the preparation, it was all, 'it was wonderful'. You erased the board like this* [gesture with his left hand, from top to bottom, as if with an eraser in his hand].

What should be noted here is the fact that when teaching the "how" to teachers, the theoretical framework related to that "how" came in second place or was even omitted. There was a shift from the real need for theory-practice comprehension, as it is apparent in the comment below, which already reveals the transition from the technicist perspective to Constructivism, highlighting the need for finding something that directed the teaching and promoted student learning:

*NI: Then we came out excited that everyone would learn to read. In the first year when I started teaching, I saw that there was none of that. Hence "Emilia Ferreiro" convinced me otherwise. So I jumped right into it (...).*

NO complains in the previous fragments about "having to follow certain educational guidelines strictly" but, on the other hand, he was delighted about his autonomy which was reserved for the time of passing or flunking the student, as expressed in the same utterance. This data allows us to make an analysis as follows: the teacher wants and expects someone to talk, discuss, reflect on his/her job and profession, but not to the extent that this other individual imposes openly or legally what to do, although we know that, according to Bakhtin (2004), it is the other that gets our actions going. Thus, although many others have formed us, it seems that we 'decide' which others we want to be or should be guided by. Consider the following:

*NO: Our student was 'zero', the teacher was the authority to pass a student, we had to follow* [to the letter] *not today, you have help ... from ...* (NI: "From the supervisor") [NO interrupts NI, saying] *(...), I say this way about the traditional*

*way at that time, it was traditional to the extreme. Today, there is freedom / (...)*
*I want to say that leaving the Erasmo Piloto method behind, in which you had*
*five little questions, was 'a', 'b', 'c', 'd', 'e',  I do not know, you could not* [change
order] (*... you had to do it right! that's what I was talking about, for us it was a*
*little more difficult to understand (...).*

NO refers to "freedom" existing today, reflected in the expression of others that
"today it is different." These utterances added to those of NI's and MG's portrays the
movement that seems to constitute the practice of teachers, according to their utterances.
This is the restriction that people in general – but especially teachers – suffered in the
period in which a proposed technicist education was established in Brazil, particularly
in Paraná, to standardize teaching literacy called the Erasmo Piloto method.

The ideology present at the technicist school gave priority to a school that aimed
at preparing productive and efficient Brazilians. This ideology occurred in the political
atmosphere of the military intervention in the nation, at a time that nationality,
patriotism and the ideals of progress and order were extolled.

There is no denying that these marks are very explicit in the training of teachers,
not only deriving from the school, but the social structure as a whole, in the 1960s.
There was a kind of "military training" that helped educate these teachers. The
experiences and how to act in their pedagogical practices are nothing more than the
refractory and personal way, re-elaborated from the moments of that training.

Every language reflects, because it comes to the subject and makes sense to him,
and refracts, because that sense is not absorbed by the interlocutor the way it was
created, and again it refracts because that interlocutor, when becoming the speaker,
returns it in some manner.

In this regard, a male teacher, participating in our course, revealed in his
utterance:

*LI: we men who serve in the army, (...) they have a teaching practice inside, (...)*
*they transform everything you've learned until the moment you go in there. (...)*
*You become a submissive person in there with them, right: you have to respect*
*hierarchy and discipline. And I often (...) I observe myself and I see how I tend*

*to be strict, I tend to follow this idea of hierarchy, this discipline in the classroom (...).*

Although not expressing "what for", LI wants to maintain an atmosphere of "hierarchy", "discipline" in the classroom, revealing his own "features" that do not go away when the role of teacher is played. Maybe we can even say he is confusing the teacher's authority with authoritarianism.

For us, teacher authority is established in a dialogic teaching relationship where three elements converge: the mastery of school content taught; the student's consideration as an active and responsive subject and the consideration of the student's prior knowledge. Therefore, it differs substantially from authoritarianism.

To understand the student as an active responsive subject involves accepting that from the moment that there is an utterance, a response from the speaker who presents himself is anticipated, either with silence, or with indiscipline. Hence, Bakhtin (2004, p.68) asserts that "any understanding is imbued with response".

If we turn to the theoretical parameters guiding the current teaching practice, the teachers' utterances demonstrate another perspective, but not a less disturbing one as seen by part of literacy teachers: teaching through a text. Let us see what teachers say when referring to the current literacy work, comparing it with the literacy work of the last century: the traditional way[6]:

*CA: (...) that is the difference today. We have to provide knowledge (...). The text, we have to present the text to the child, and work the smaller words with him/her and even point out the phonemes and graphemes so that child can learn the words, but with meaning, not in a loose manner.*

Before we discuss the teacher's perspective in teaching how to read and write through a text, we would like to highlight the teacher's utterance "we have to provide knowledge", which reveals a teaching conception in which the teacher is imbued only

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[6] The reference we make to the traditional way is in the sense of the teacher's work according to the synthetic, analytical and mixed methods used more intensively for up to more than half of the last century. The book of Branca Alves de Lima, *Caminho Suave*, is an example of the evidence of what we say, given the number of reprints (over a hundred) and the fact that it has been on the market since 1948, according to studies by Mortatti (2000).

with the task of teaching which was instituted. Smolka (2001) distinguishes "task of teaching" from the "learning relationship". "The educational relationship seems to be in social interactions. However, the task of teaching is instituted by the school; it becomes profession (or mission)" (SMOLKA, 2001, p.31), when there is acquisition of knowledge by teaching, restricting the possibilities of learning, in that it conceals and distorts the pedagogical relationship. As the author explains the "task of teaching" breaks up with the "educational relationship" and it creates the "illusion" that the teacher can "provide" knowledge. In this sense, it is as if knowledge were the property of the teacher, something s/he will "give", so it is unilateral, static, not part of an "educational relationship" in which the intention that the other can acquire knowledge predominates, i.e. a pedagogical relationship based on dialogic perspective of language.

Based on the CA's utterance, we can also consider that there are new speeches, but practices remain the same. For example: language teaching practices are through texts, but innovation is limited to the use of the new features, the text (Possenti, 1996). Perhaps this occurs due to a limited understanding of text or even due to the relationship between textual linguistic elements and language in use, real, interactive, making it difficult to have "a generalization on the notion of text, which can transcend the purely formal elements (...)" (FARACO and CASTRO, 1999, p.183).

There is also a kind of dialogue with reduced conception of teaching reading and writing through the text. It is the teaching conception that, because of extreme concern with teaching to read and write "through the text," makes some teachers to "deduce" that simply by putting the student in touch with various texts is enough to learn their intrinsic relationships, the internal mechanisms operating between letters, sounds, syllabic families and their senses. Although CA mentions the term "meaning" when referring to the text, this meaning reduces itself to the inner meaning of the text rather than the dialogic practice through the text, now understood only as a link in the unbroken chain of social relationships.

The child needs to understand these relationships, and for that, they need to be taught, which can and should occur through meaningful units in meaningful contexts, which, at the limit of its importance, show the social relationships that engender their contexts of use. Again, it stresses the need for conceptualizing more clearly what a text

is. And on this conceptual basis, we agree with Faraco and Castro (1999, p.190), it is defined and characterized by Bakhtin's concept of utterance. For him,

> One does not exchange sentences any more than one exchanges words (in the strict linguistic sense) or phrases. One exchanges utterances that are constructed by language units: words, phrases and sentences. And an utterance can be constructed both from one sentence and from one word, so to speak, from one speech unit (mainly a rejoinder in dialogue), but this does not transform a language unit into a unit of speech communication (2004, p.75).

We understand text, oral or written, as discursive communication – an utterance – an interlocutive action that happens in the context of social relationships and therefore, covering interests, intentions, responses. Organized with socially shared words/signs, characterized by more or less stabilized compositional types, aims at achieving goals with an interlocutor, physically present or not. In this sense, the text includes these living relationships, this social "game".

## Final Considerations

The teachers' utterances revealed that a great deal is produced academically as theory which, without much or any questioning by educators, becomes part of the teaching practices and takes on airs of absolute necessity. However, we wonder if this happens much more because of its novelty character than because of reflection to achieve better results in the appropriation of the written language by the student.

Nonetheless, if the dialogues established between the teacher and others constitute their subjectivity, i.e. if the inner psyche of teachers can only be analyzed as signs appropriated and expressed by them, we wonder who would be these others that constituted the plurivocality with its conflicts and tensions, and made themselves explicit or not in the teachers' utterances.

The *others* they met along their life story and somehow echoed in their plurivocality in the teaching practice are meetings with other people, institutions, theories, scholars, traditions, cultures, from many different instruments, which constitute this history. And from which it is possible to capture what was refracted by the subjects in their utterances: knowledge, myths, rituals, ideologies, likes and dislikes.

Therefore, if we understand that the teaching practice is almost acephalous because theories are detached from it, it is important to reflect on the processes of teacher education and continuing teacher development.

Without neglecting the certainties and suspicions reported by teachers through other voices that manifest themselves *constituting* their knowledge and their practice as literacy teachers, one can affirm that their utterances often proved to be contradictory. By referring to others present in the process of learning of these teachers, one can observe that the models of literacy spring up and teachers seize them, not as concepts of language, literacy, education and society, but simply as "models about how to do it" mechanizing them, seizing them in a fragmented and decontextualized manner.

Bakhtin provides the elements to go beyond the teacher's utterances, which reveal anxiety about the procedures that should guide the teaching literacy process when language is taken from its actual use, crystallizing it. It is necessary to understand the living language, interlocutive, intentionally produced and acquired in the social interaction. Thus, a socio-historically contextualized pedagogic work, in which theory and practice are substantiated both dialectically and dialogically.

Concepts such as subject, education, and literacy, essential in the process of language appropriation, involve a cultural tradition of great temporality. However, it is through the understanding of a conception of language as dialogue, which focuses on subject and history, that the literacy teacher can overcome fads and strengthen him/herself as a socially responsible individual for the crucial task of enabling the critical appropriation of educated reading and writing.

The challenge in pre-service teacher education courses for literacy teachers is to set aside an approach of written language only as a system of normative forms, that is, a result of abstract analysis of language. The trainer of trainers can assist in establishing literacy by linking theory and practice in an inseparable manner, giving new meaning to knowledge historically located and dated, which emerges in teachers' utterances that underlie and permeate the teacher education process.

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