

BEING A WOMAN AND A TEACHER: CONFLICTING POWER RELATIONS IN CLASSROOM INTERACTION

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Abstract: In this paper, an analysis is made of the sequences of an interactional text, produced in a classroom event, considering the power relations related to the meanings that are socially constituted in discourse. Such an analysis is carried out under a Bakhtinian theoretical perspective, together with the ethnographic approach and the critical discourse analysis approach. According to this perspective, I consider discourse as dialectically inscribed in events of social life, *i.e.*, producing and being produced by social interactions, which take place in the dynamic process of life. The present analysis highlights the points of tension and conflict emerging in the interaction as a result of issues like unequal power relations and of the social representation of a female teacher as a low powered subject in the Brazilian socio-cultural context.

Key words: critical discourse analysis; classroom interaction; conflict; power; female teacher.

1 INTRODUCTION

In this paper I analyse an interaction text extracted from my research data that were collected in a high school setting where I investigate relations between teachers' readings and the constitution of 'empowered' identities with possible positive effects on pedagogical praxis. The school is located in Rio Claro, a city in the state of São Paulo, Brazil. The school had about two thousand students and eighty-five teachers at the time of the study.

The data were collected during an eight-month period in the year 2000, using the ethnographic procedures: participant observation, tape-recorded interviews with teachers, field notes and a field diary. In my participant observation, I followed the school activities, such as pedagogical meetings, conversations in the teachers' room, students chatting at break times. I also accompanied the teachers-subjects to some of their classes where I was able to take notes and was occasionally allowed to do some tape recording. During the period of the data collection, I lived

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in the area of the city where the school was located, keeping contact with the people and the ordinary life of the community.

In addition, having acted both as a coordinator and as a language teacher in the school for several years before developing my research, I became very acquainted with the school social setting, viewing it “from the inside”. So I draw upon my own professional history as well as my experience as a participant researcher engaged into a political commitment, to reflect about reading, teaching and praxis, presenting the voices of disempowered subjects: public high school teachers in Brazil.

Many theoretical studies have pointed out the reproductive and homogenizing character of education/literacy in the capitalist world (ALTHUSSER, 1971; BOURDIEU, 1992; STREET, 1995); others call for education as a process of resistance to and emancipation from social exclusion, dominance and inequality in this system (FREIRE, 1972, 1985; GIROUX, 1997; SOARES, 1992). As a teacher and a researcher I have advocated a view of education that can engender language and political awareness and produce transformations in social life.

Considering that discourse can never be dissociated from the cultural and socio-historical context of its production, I came to combine the ethnographic and CDA approach in an effort to understand events in terms of the meanings held by social participants. Thus, in order to analyse texts of interactional events it is essential to reconstruct the social setting. According to Erickson (1992), the events under analysis are necessarily inscribed in a variety of social, historical and cultural circumstances related to the life stories of their participants. Thus, in order to analyse an interaction taking place in a specific event, one should take into account the broad constriction and selection circumstances in which this event takes place.

To take into account the social setting means to pay attention to the social interactants' positions, in this case, the teacher and pupils. Thus, I have paid attention to the injunctions, which they are subjected to at school and to the socially constituted power relations, since these are related to the meanings produced in interactional discourse. In this way, discourse and language should be seen neither as transparent, nor as a reflex of interaction conditions and social order. Instead, I consider discourse as dialectically inscribed in events of social life, i.e., producing and being produced by social interactions, which take place in the dynamic process of life.

In this sense, according to Fairclough (1989, 1992), discourse is like a form of social action upon the world, a place for challenge, dispute and struggles

in the construction and reconstruction of power relations and social identities, with the discursive actions being inscribed in specific contexts, which establish the participants' positions. This means that carrying out a critical discourse analysis implies focusing on the connections and causes, which are hidden, invisible, and become naturalized in the discourse of participants' daily life.

In this paper, I analyse the opening sequences of a didactic interactional event (see MATÊNCIO, 1999), more precisely an evening Geography class, which took place at a Brazilian high school. I highlight the points of tension and conflict when the subjects try to establish their social positions, constructing/facing their own identities, their ethical and moral values/beliefs and disputing power relations inside the hierarchic institutional setting.

2 PRESENTING THE EVENT¹

7:00 pm. The teacher is in the classroom organizing the books, maps and other pedagogical material on her table. She goes to the blackboard, writes the date and the topic – Brazilian Vegetation – to be discussed during the class. This group is composed of 48 students, 20 boys and 28 girls, aged sixteen to eighteen, in their second year of secondary school. Most students are outside the classroom, in the corridor. The classroom is large and there is the door is half opened.

7:10 pm. The teacher walks to the door, waits for a few moments and says to the students who are chatting outside there, in a friendly voice:

T. Come on, everybody, it's about ten past seven... you've already got ten extra minutes... Please, come in now... How is everybody?

S1. (First group of students comes in) Good ev'ing, Miss.

S2. (Second group comes in) Hi, Miss.

¹ Conventions used in transcriptions: 1.Loud voice or emphatic utterances: capital letters; 2.Long pause while speaking: (+); 3. Brief pause: (...); 4. Lengthening of vowel or syllable (:); 5. Incomprehensible utterance: (xxx); 6. Researcher comments: (()); 7. T: teacher; 8. Ss: any students or non-specified students; 9. S1: students of the first group to come into the classroom; 10. S2: students of the second group to come into the classroom; 11. S3: students sitting close to the teacher's table; 12. S4: student outside the classroom, in the corridor; 13. N: student who keeps standing and makes comments about the teacher.

Being a woman and a teacher...

Both groups enter the room choosing a place to sit on the right side, under the windows. The desks are organized in conventional rows. The movement of the desks on the floor produces a loud noise (the protective rubber under the desks has worn out and has not been repaired).

Slowly, the remaining students come into the room, chatting among themselves very loudly, making gestures like 'high-five', a common form of greeting among teenagers. The last group of students to come in talks loudly and makes noise moving the desks close to the door. They keep their eyes on the corridor and communicate with other students who are passing by, calling their names or nicknames. One of these students does not sit down, but keeps leaning on the wall, placing a foot on the desk.

The teacher calls the role (speaking each student's first name), but she has to repeat each name many times, as students do not answer, but rather keep on talking to each other. The traffic noise in the avenue where the school is located also makes it difficult to hear the teacher calling. A few students sitting very close to the teacher's desk help her by noting the presence and absence of their classmates.

The teacher stands up, walks to the blackboard, writes down the pages of the Geography book and then speaks to the students.

T. OK, students, now let's review, I mean, let's come back to our last topic...
The students go on chatting while she speaks to them.
T. Hm... Brazilian vegetation...

The teacher raises her voice in order to be heard above the voices of the students chatting and the noise of traffic, as well. She looks impatient and a little irritated.

T. OK, students, stop talking, that's enough, come on.... Listen to me now, on page 31 here, there is a...
S4. Hey, you! Paraíba! ²

² Paraíba is a nickname given according to the name of the person's birthplace. In Brazil it is quite usual to nickname persons according to their birthplace, particularly to stigmatise persons from the north and northeastern part of the country. Being they poor regions, a great number of their inhabitants migrate to the developed southeastern states in order to escape from the scourge of the dry season and to search for jobs and better life conditions. The state of Sao Paulo, where the data were collected, usually receives a great number of immigrants from north-eastern states.

A student in the corridor, who shouts the nickname of someone inside the classroom, interrupts the teacher. The other students burst into laughter and get agitated in their seats. The teacher turns pale and confused, becomes angry, then walks to the door and shuts it as she talks to the students.

T. It's impossible, definitely impossible, today it is impossible... I'm obliged to close this door..... N, sit down, please? Gosh! I'm trying to start this class, OK?

N. Ops, the teacher's angry, it must be "that time of the month", yeah!

The student holds his standing position, turns to the classmates in his group and speaks to them in a clear and normal voice that can be heard by the teacher and by the students sitting around. Other students sitting nearby burst out in laughter. The teacher looks at the group and walks across the room as she speaks to N.

T. No, definitely I am not, N. In fact, I don't face this problem anymore because I'm not that old, you know, but I've been operated on... which put an end to my reproductive cycle, so I can't, definitely I can't be angry because of my period, OK? Now, will you *please sit down? I really insist on beginning class now.*

She speaks very slowly trying to keep control. The whole group of students is now quiet; N. blushes and sits down. His classmates look at the teacher, then at him and laugh. The teacher waits while they calm down and begins reading. At this moment most of the students listen to the explanation.

3 FOCUSING ON THE EVENT WITHIN THE SCHOOL CONTEXT FROM AN ETHNOGRAPHIC PERSPECTIVE

In order to locate the event in the net of relations in which it is situated, it is necessary to provide some relevant information about the school routine and its working system. In this school, the bell first rings at 6:50 pm, at which time the teachers go to their classrooms located on the upper floor and prepare for the arrival of the students at 7:00 pm when the bell rings again. Only a few students come straight into the classroom, they lean against the walls in the corridor and talk to the other student groups who pass on their way to the other rooms.

There is an agreement established up by the members of the school board: the teachers should tolerate a ten-minute delay for the students' arrival, as most of them have full time jobs during the day. So, at about 7:10 pm, the teachers go to the door and communicate to the students in the corridor that it is time for the class to begin. It is common for the students to insist on delaying more, so the teacher is forced to repeat the order/request for them to enter.

The pedagogical coordinator or the headmaster goes upstairs to check whether there are any students outside the classroom; if there are, usually they are accompanied to the classroom and the responsible teacher is told to keep an eye out for any students in the corridor outside the classroom.

In general, the students' entrance in the classroom is very slow and the teachers have to wait until they take their seats and get ready to listen to them; in the meantime the room is filled with the noise of talking and the disagreeable sound of desks being moved on the uncarpeted floor. The Geography teacher (G.) had told me in an interview about her intention of reorganizing the seats into circles to favour the didactic interaction, but said she had given up on the idea because, since the room was used by different teachers during the day, the desks would need to be reorganized every evening so that there would be more noise and less class time.

The teacher mentioned two things that made her feel quite uncomfortable at work: the constant, loud noise of the desks being moved every 50 minutes, when students move to other classrooms and are ordered to "call the students and put them into the classroom"³ every day instead of them doing it by themselves. She said she considered it humiliating, as if she were begging the students to attend classes they were not interested in. Several teachers reported having felt very upset about some students' rude sayings, such as: "I wish the teacher hadn't come this evening".

Regarding teacher/students conflicts, G. says that, in general, the male teachers had less trouble because the rudest students seemed to avoid confronting them, inhibited by their physical appearance, which suggested a more authoritarian stance, less mild than that of the female teachers. G. reports that the female teachers are more often challenged by rude students.

The interviews with students confirm the same point of view: two girls reported what they called a 'more respectful' or formal treatment by students of

³ The quotations indicate that the subject's speech was reproduced literally.

male teachers than of female teachers, as if the boys felt inhibited in the face of male figures and more comfortable with “aunts” as they were used to calling preschool teachers. According to these students, the female teachers seemed uneasier and certainly more vulnerable to the students’ sexist jokes. “Well, they are our classmates, but I think they exaggerate when they use dirty language to offend the teachers; sometimes they blow- up condoms and let them fly in the classroom, I think they take advantage of the female teachers, having fun when they feel inhibited, uncomfortable like that”.

I consider such an attitude a kind of sexual harassment, as defined according to anthropological and gender and language studies approach: “verbal or physical behaviour which threatens or violates the gender related needs of the recipient” (McMAHILL,C., 2002); it clearly involves power issues, since cultural values and beliefs are strategically used to empower one person by means of disempowering others.

Thus, analysing social practices in the school is very complex, since it involves analysing the social and historical issues in which they are embedded. In this case, the school context, in which the situation is embedded, is related to broad issues like education policy and the public school system. In recent decades, there has been a decrease in public financial support for secondary schools and this has caused a reduction in the number of employees to do the cleaning tasks and to manage the students’ arrival and their movement in the corridor. As a result, these tasks were transferred to the teachers: they have to “control”⁴ the students’ admission to the classrooms and reorganise the desks at the end of each workday.

Bureaucratic tasks have also been transferred to the teachers, apparently because there are not enough office workers. These extra tasks came to be seen as duties, and not performing them properly would be seen as an omission on the part of the teacher. As a result of this policy, the teachers have become overloaded with responsibilities, which occupy much of their work time, compromising their ability to teach.

At the end of evening class period (10:40 pm) there is a period of ten minutes when the teachers get together to receive general notices about the school situation. Then the coordinator and/or the headmaster often reprimand teachers

⁴ The quoted expressions (order, control) show a view of education as a training /tutorial system (education as reproduction and dominancy), in opposition to the Freirian concept of emancipatory education.

for delaying bureaucratic tasks, failing to discipline students, leaving wastepaper and chalk on the floor etc. This kind of procedure is embarrassing and clearly contributes to decreasing the teachers' self-esteem.

According to the school statutes, students are forbidden to wear caps. This is another rule, which is supposed to be "controlled" by teachers, though it is subject to much controversy since several teachers do not agree with it. The majority of the students show resistant attitudes because the cap seems to represent an important role related to their teenage identity. Thus, this prohibition causes many conflicts between students and teachers, as well as between students and coordinator/headmaster. Occasionally, teachers are criticized for not adequately "controlling" compliance with this rule.

Informal conversation with students allowed me to observe their great dissatisfaction concerning the deprived conditions of public high schools: broken and non-functioning light bulbs and damaged fans. Students tend to reject many rules, but they simultaneously criticize the complacency regarding serious transgressions, such as students' fights, bombs exploding in school bathrooms, demolishing desks and pedagogical material, writing on the walls and desks, ceaseless disrespectful attitudes towards teachers.

The school space is embedded in a set of multiple social problems originating in the broader society which it is part of. Ethnographic observation provided me with a means to look beyond the classroom situation into the broader context of the school as an institution, which constructs meanings and features into the particular event under analysis, making it possible to view the discursive meanings from a critical perspective, as well as the hidden and naturalized connections.

4 ANALYSIS

In order to analyse this interaction event I consider the wider social context in which the classroom is inserted and how it is constituted by overlapping and embedded sub-contexts.

Firstly, Brazilian society is overwhelmed by deep social inequalities, full of contradictory ideological conceptions: subjects are valued upon their physical (sex, colour, ethnicity) and social (political position, social class, occupation, literacy

degree) characteristics. This fact engenders the emergence of much prejudice/discrimination. But at the same time, solidarity and political correctness principles are expected of people and valued in this multicultural and multi-ethnic society.

Secondly, the institutional context of public schools, reflecting the society in which it is embedded, presents a set of specific rules and has been facing social disrepute/discredit due to bad conditions caused by the scarcity of financial resources. There is also disbelief that education can promote equal opportunity, because people seem to realize somewhat that economically privileged classes are successful regardless of their schooling or literacy abilities. Finally, dark clouds of dissatisfaction and strong tension among the interactants touch the microcosmos of a classroom, the scene of this interaction event.

Social contradiction and dissatisfaction come from outside and are deepened inside school, engendering a hostile environment, adverse to the construction of a successful interaction in the teaching-learning process. On the one hand, the teacher deals with both disadvantages: being a woman,⁵ subjected to constant pressures in a sexist society, and being a teacher⁶, professionally undervalued. This status does not change in the workplace, where she has to teach while strangled by a subsystem of rules and duties, which prevent her from promoting changes in current pedagogical practices. The way she is expected to cooperate with such an institutional order impacts negatively on her teaching work. Even the material conditions for teaching – such as the intense traffic noise and the noise of desks on the floor, the interference of students passing in the corridor, the lack of fans and missing light bulbs - all contribute to prevent the establishment of an environment suitable for the opening sequences of the didactic interaction event.

⁵ I argue that women from sexist societies, as the Brazilian one, are pressured by over-duties: they are expected to be devoted mothers, loving wives, responsible for managing domestic activities that are part of family life (cleaning, cooking, having clothes properly washed and ironed); in general, these tasks are not shared by their partners. In addition, most women have jobs, which play an important role in the family's income.

⁶ I argue that a teacher is under-valued in her profession because in a capitalist society a low salary job like teaching is disreputed. Several teachers report it and many students say: "many of us earn better salaries than teachers". In addition, teachers are criticized by Brazilian media for going on strikes and have their competence questioned due to the existence of bad quality teaching courses. However, media gives no voice to the teachers so that they can talk about their working conditions and it doesn't refer to the entities, which benefit from bad quality courses.

On the other hand, the students, low middle-class teenagers incorporate the values of the society in which they live, moving between antagonistic adhesion and resistance to the discredited public school of which they are part. Attempts to challenge the authority of their teacher, who is a socio-economically disadvantaged woman, may be seen as a way of reproducing the identity of difference or superiority in a society that values the strong and the winners. In addition, rejections and aggressive behaviour act as a manner to protect themselves from institutional agents whose rules (prohibition of wearing caps, for instance) combine to embargo their social group identity in school activities that have often constituted a silencing and domesticating exercise.

In this event, the teacher struggles for overcoming the stigma of the teachers' social devaluation and the stigma of women's disempowerment (a woman as a 'lowered' subject). In a society marked by sexual and socio-economical discrimination, she struggles to validate the teacher's role as the one who has achieved academic and scientific knowledge, who is the primary speaker and the manager of communicative process in the classroom. The student struggles to construct his self-image as a daring young man who defies authority and breaks the rules, who resists the school process of domination. Despite this, teacher and students may be considered quite similar concerning the aspect of presenting low self-esteem.

An interaction is a socio-discursive event and a place for the (re)construction of subjective and social reality: meanings, social relationships and identities are shaped according to the reciprocal images constructed during the interaction event and according to the institutional setting constructed for the discursive actions.

This interaction event is marked by tension involving the subjects' struggle to demarcate their roles and their identities within the social institution in order to construct and contest the power relations inscribed in the social world to which the school belongs. Thus, I considered appropriate to divide it into three parts, focusing on the tense moments manifested in the discursive event between teacher and student.

Below follows a schematic table that is presented in two versions (table 1 and 2): the second one is an English translation intended to guide the reader, and the first is the original data, the object of my analysis, in the original Portuguese spoken by the teacher and students.

i) 1st. tense moment - Students' unwillingness to enter the classroom (table lines 1 to 5).

The teacher (G.) goes to the door in order to call the students into the classroom (see action line 4 in the table), though she feels particularly uncomfortable in doing so (as she had told me in the interview). This way of thinking and how she feels are reflected in verbal action in line 4; in fact the teacher does not order the students to come inside the classroom; these verbal sequences as a speech act constitute an invitation/request, not an order ("*Vamos, pessoal, por favor / Come on, everybody, please*") due to the use of a polite expression (*por favor / please*) and to the addition of a polite greeting formula in the end of the utterance ("*Tudo bem com vocês?/How is everybody?*").

I view it as the modalization of an order by the use of polite expressions. There is also a decrease in the asymmetry which characterizes standard classroom interaction discourse in the way G. addresses the students as interlocutors, asking for their participation and sympathy, trying to decrease the formal distance between the student and teacher. Therefore, politeness is used to modalize the utterances in order to mitigate a speech act that could be potentially threatening to both her and the interlocutor's faces (BROWN and LEVINSON, 1978). An order becomes an invitation/request. G. avoids being authoritarian and tries avoiding conflict as well.

Also, her comment about the time for class to begin is not a categorical assertion, it is modalized by the indefiniteness in time expressions: "*já são mais de 7 e 10*" ("*it's already ten past seven*" - line 4). In addition, G. presents a reason/justification (*já dei os 10 minutos de tolerância/ you've already got ten extra minutes*), almost apologizing for requiring them to enter instead of saying, "You must come in; it's time to begin class". In this way, she is negotiating their agreement to enter with a friendly and mild tone of voice.

Considering the teacher's ethos, I can say that not only the verbal behaviour, but the voice tone and facial expression, way of talking by looking straight into the addressee's eyes, gestures and the whole body performance combine to signal G's position as a non-authoritarian teacher, one who aims at constructing a democratic relationship with her students. But at the same time, she exhibits the uncomfortable and constrained feeling of a subject who has to follow an institutional rule she really does not support and presents a defensive attitude, explicitly trying to avoid conflict. In this sense, the students seem empowered because they show their

feelings clearly: they refuse to enter the classroom voluntarily after the ten extra minutes are up, breaking the school rule, whilst G. is forced to persuade students to attend classes even if she does not want to; this attitude, to some extent, puts her in the position of a less powerful subject in the social relationship.

At the same time, however, I consider that when G. changes an order into a request to persuade unwilling students to attend her class, she makes a political concession which signals the discursive construction of a democratic style, since according to Bourdieu's argument (1977, p. 95-218, *apud* FAIRCLOUGH), "the concessions of politeness are always political concessions".

Table 1:

AÇÕES NÃO-VERBAIS	AÇÕES VERBAIS
1. Dentro da classe a professora organiza seu material.	
2. A professora escreve na lousa anotando o tópico a ser trabalhado na aula.	
3. Alguns alunos entram na sala. Conversam alto.	As. (xxx) ((conversam entre si))
4. A professora vai até a porta e chama os alunos.	P. Vamos, pessoal, já são mais de sete e dez... ((o tom de voz é amável e cordial)) por favor... já dei os dez minutos de tolerância... entrem (+) tudo bem com vocês?
5. Entram os dois primeiros grupos de alunos.	As1. Boa-noite, fessora. As2. Oi, professora
6. Os alunos distribuem-se e ocupam seus lugares produzindo forte ruído das carteiras.	
7. Entram aos poucos os demais alunos, trocando cumprimentos ruidosos. Forte barulho das carteiras.	As. (xxx) ((conversam entre si em voz alta))
8. Entra o último grupo de alunos. Ocupam as carteiras do fundo da sala. Um deles não se senta; fica apoiado no braço da carteira.	As. (xxx) ((conversam em voz alta))
9. Alunos do fundo acenam e dirigem-se a outros que transitam pelo corredor.	As. (xxx) ((trocam cumprimentos ruidosos com os que passam pelo corredor))
10. A professora faz a chamada. Forte ruído de tráfego	
11. Duas alunas sentadas na frente participam da atividade verificando as ausências.	As3. (xxx) ((conversam com a professora))
12. A professora levanta-se e escreve na lousa instruções sobre as páginas do livro. Barulho de tráfego. Barulho de conversa dos alunos.	P. Olha, gente, vamos então retomar nosso assunto, certo? ((alunos conversam entre si, enquanto ela fala)) ã... VEGETAÇÃO BRASILEIRA... já chega de conversa, pessoal, prestem atenção, na p.31 temos...
13. Um aluno de fora se dirige aos de dentro da sala.	A4. Ô, Paraíba!
14. Alunos da classe riem.	
15. A professora manifesta irritação, vai até a porta, fechando-a.	P. Tá demais hoje... Assim não dá... vou ter de fechar essa porta. N., SENTE-SE, estou tentando começar a aula, né?
16. O aluno N. permanece em pé e volta-se para os colegas mais próximos.	A.N. Xi... A professora tá brava... Ela tá de chico!
17. A professora encaminha-se de volta para a frente da sala enquanto fala com N.	P. não ESTOU, não, N., aliás, eu não tenho mais isso, não por causa da idade, não sou tão velha assim... É que eu sofri uma in-ter-ven-ção cirúrgica, sabe, portanto eu não PODERIA estar brava por isso(+) agora, queira fazer o favor de sentar-se, sim, pois eu estou REALMENTE tentando começar a aula. (toda a fala é executada em tom de voz normal, controlada, aparentando naturalidade e calma)
18. Aluno N. se senta.	
19. Alunos riem. Professora inicia a leitura.	

Table 2 - Schematic table for the analysis of interaction:

NON-VERBAL ACTIONS	VERBAL ACTIONS
1. (7 pm) The teacher is inside the classroom taking notes and organising her pedagogical material.	
2. The teacher writes on the blackboard the topic to be discussed during that class.	
3. A few students come into the classroom, talking loudly.	S (xxx) ((talking among themselves))
4. (7:10 pm) The teacher goes to the door and calls the students to come inside the classroom.	T. Come on, everybody, it's about ten past seven... ((the tone of her voice is mild and friendly) you've already got ten extra minutes. please come in (+) how is everybody?
5. The two first student groups come in.	S1. Good ev'ng, Miss S2. Hi, Miss
6. They scatter over the room and take their seats producing loud noises when the desks are moved.	
7. The other students begin entering the room slowly in groups of four or five, exchanging noisy greetings. Loud noise of desks being moved.	Ss. (xxx) ((talking among themselves loudly))
8. The last group of students comes in. They occupy the desks in the back of the room. One of them does not sit down; he stands leaning against the wall with his foot on the desk.	Ss. (xxx) ((talking among themselves loudly))
9. Students sitting in the back of the classroom wave and speak addressing other students who are going through the corridor.	Ss. (xxx) ((in a loud voice addressing other students who were passing outside the classroom))
10. The teacher calls the role. This activity is disturbed by the loud noise of traffic in the street outside the room.	T. (Calling their names)
11. Two of the students who are sitting in the front row of desks participate and help the teacher by observing and noting the absences.	S3. (xxx) ((Talking to the teacher))
12. The teacher stands up, goes to the blackboard and writes instructions about the book pages that might be followed in her exposition. Traffic noise from the street. Noise of the students' chat.	T. OK, students ... now let's review... I mean let's come back to our last topic ((the students go on chatting while she talks to them)) hum ... BRAZILIAN VEGETATION... OK, students, stop talking, that's enough... come on... listen to me... now... at page 31 here there is a:
13. A student from outside walking through the corridor addresses someone inside the classroom.	S4. Hey you, PARAIBA!
14. The students inside the classroom begin laughing.	Ss. (xxx) ((laughing))
15. The teacher stops talking, turns impatiently, goes to the door and shuts it.	T. It's impossible, definitely im possible... today it's impossible... I'm obliged to close this door. N., SIT DOWN, will you? Oh, I'm trying to start this class, ok?
16. The student holds his standing position, turns to the classmates who are sitting nearby and speaks to them in a clear and normal tone of voice.	N. Ops... the teacher's angry... it must be "that time of the month", yeah!
17. Students nearby start laughing. The teacher turns her head and walks straight to the front of the room while she speaks addressing N.	T. No, definitely I am NOT, N. In fact I don't face this problem anymore, I'm not that old you know but I've been operated on... which put an end to my reproductive cycle, so I CAN'T, definitely I can't be angry because of my period, ok? (+) Now, will you PLEASE sit down? I really insist on beginning class now. (The tone of her voice seems calm and controlled)
18. N. sits down while his classmates laugh at him.	
19. The teacher begins reading.	

ii) 2nd tense moment - The teacher's difficulty in setting up the preliminary contacts for opening the interaction event (lines 6 to 15).

The unfavourable material conditions like the traffic noise, the noise produced by desks being pulled over the floor and the uproar of students in the corridor are intensified by the students' unwillingness to join the class, as they do not answer the role and continue talking loudly even after the teacher takes the interactional turn.

She is supposed to be the primary agent and to play the leading role, controlling turns in the classroom interaction, but this position is neutralized by the students' attitude of ignoring her utterances when she introduces the class activities.

G. addresses the students as interlocutors, asks for their participation and continually tries to lessen the asymmetry of classroom discourse. This can be perceived by observing the language usage in verb sequences of line 12: verbs in the first person plural (*vamos/ let's*) and the use of the first person plural possessive (*nosso/ our*) indicating the speaker's inclusion in the action, that is, the action being shared by speaker and hearer. There is also the expression "*olha*", whose function in the Portuguese language is equivalent to "*I mean*" in English; it is a discourse marker which prefaces explanation of intention and clarification of information and focuses attention on the speaker's orientation to her own talking functioning as a rhetorical device to attract the hearer's attention (SCHIFFRIN, 1987, p. 311)

The linguistic features in this verbal action signal the maintenance of an ethos of a non-authoritarian teacher, engaged in constructing a democratic communicative relationship in the classroom. However, G.'s efforts seem unsuccessful and she becomes frustrated and irritated. She raises her voice and struggles to recover the position of primary speaker in the classroom interaction, reprimanding the students more severely ("*chega de conversa / stop talking, prestem atencao/ listen to me*"), only to be rudely interrupted by a student passing by in the corridor (S4, line 13).

Tension rises to a higher degree at this moment. The teacher is interrupted when the student in the corridor shouts in order to attract students' attention inside the classroom with a clearly prejudiced utterance (*O, Paraíba/Hey you, Paraíba*" - line 13). Such attitudes are quite common among the students and signal the existence of a large network of pejorative sayings and nicknames used at school to ridicule people. The students begin laughing at the boy called "Paraíba" (line 14) and the teacher's posture and verbal actions reveal her disturbance and opposition to this attitude.

The verbal sequences of line 15 signal a change in the illocutionary force in relation to the precedent ones: i) the modality is objective, strong and categorical, G. makes statements ("*tá demais/ assim não dá!*") using a voice inflexion and body posture which reveal her determination; ii) low politeness produces an opposite effect in comparison with the former utterances – a request becomes an order

(*N.*, *SENTE-SE/N.*, *SIT DOWN*) - the voice is raised and the order is enunciated sharply in the imperative mood.

Thus, the linguistic features of line 15, unlike those described in line 4 and line 12, present high affinity statements linked to low politeness, signalling the movement of the teacher into a more powerful position.

There is no longer the presence of any expression indicating action shared by speaker and hearer. Nevertheless, the occurrence of the phatic expression “*né*” (similar to *isn't it/ok* in English) in the last sentence of this sequence still reveals the former commitment of G. to establishing a more participatory and symmetrical distribution of interactional roles between the interactants. The discursive actions lead to the ongoing construction of a democratic and non-authoritarian teacher's ethos, although the teacher is still the one who takes/keeps a leading position (conducting the teaching-learning process) in the didactic event.

iii) 3rd moment – The tension climax: confrontation between student and teacher (lines 16 to 19).

The student's joke relating menstruation period to irritability may be seen as an attempt to disqualify the teacher's professional competence, as G. comes to be seen as subjected to hormone fluctuations, which might lead her to become impatient or angry. According to women's studies, such views and ways of thinking are taken from a medical/scientific discourse produced within a patriarchal capitalist ideology in which sexual politics attributes “women's emotions and behaviour to hormonal fluctuations rather than economic, political and social causes” (GANNON, L., 1998, p. 285). In this sense, Brazilian society may be said to have developed a kind of affable sexism (similar to its affable racism) in which the female teacher is usually viewed as an indulgent “aunt”⁷.

This device aims to disregard the intellectual aspect of teaching by considering it as only a childminding, and mainly, female job. Looking at biological sex difference this way is a subtle manner of disqualifying women as professionals: “the ‘raging hormones’ of the menstrual cycle are used as an excuse to disqualify women as competition in the workplace and reinforce their status as semi-invalids” (op. cit., p. 286)

⁷ The Brazilian educator Paulo Freire criticized this way by which students call their teachers (“aunts”) in elementary schools as a way of disregarding their professional value.

In order to assert his adult masculine identity, attaining the qualities his social group attributes to males, such as audacity and bravery, the student N. made his comment intending to ridicule G. by pointing out her doubly unfavourable status: being a woman and a teacher, a less powerfully positioned subject in socio-political and economical relations. N. acts as if he were superior to her, although he himself belongs to a low socio-economical class and to a low-schooling group.

The verbal sequences of line 16 show a low politeness utterance; the assertions about the teacher's anger being due to her period are not mitigated with politeness forms and their illocutionary force is that of 'mockery' or insult. The student says something about the teacher without addressing her directly, but in a voice tone that is intended to be heard; he makes a categorical assertion "*a professora tá brava/ the teacher is angry*". It is an objective modality, for he does not say 'I **think** she is angry'.

He uses interjections (*xi!*) and presents a voice inflexion or intonation pattern and body posture that signal irreverence growing to mockery as he says the last sentence, "*ela 'tá de chico*" / "*she is at that time of the month*". In fact, the student makes a biased assumption; he is committed to a proposition, which means that the teacher's irritation was a mental/emotional disorder related to her menstrual cycle, reproducing the ideological voice of biological determinism discourse.

Thus, by using low politeness and categorically modalized statements, the student tries to take a more powerful position in the sociopolitical relations at stake in the interaction. By means of his verbal actions and body expressions (standing, leaning against the wall, his foot on the desk), he projects the subjectivity and the ethos approved by the social group he is immersed in: an irreverent young man who questions the school rules and gets respect from his peers by exposing what would be considered the teacher's disadvantageous position.

The teacher's speech of line 17, as she feels threatened in her socio-professional position, could be seen as a reaction to save face, to reassert her place as the primary agent in the didactic event and the authoritative voice in the classroom. It is interesting to observe that, at the same time during that speech, G. inserts a short negative statement about being an aged person (*Não sou tão velha assim / I'm not that old, you know*) as a way of excluding herself from another stigmatised group, the aged.

G. strongly denies the correlation between her anger and hormonal fluctuation by offering an explanation related to her personal life. In these statements, she mentions a health problem (having been operated) relating it to an explanation based on biological/scientific knowledge (it affected her reproductive cycle). It is a discursive rhetorical device used to highlight the asymmetrical knowledge between the interactants, i.e., as a way of revealing her belonging to a higher literacy community than the student's, and using it as a way to grant her more political power in the classroom relationship.

The speech act of denial (first eight sentences in line 17) is performed by categorical modality; negative statements are stressed by repetition of a negation adverb (*não ESTOU não/ no, I am not*) in a loud voice, and by the use of the adverb "REALMENTE" (in fact) as an intensifier, also in a loud voice, with a strong inflexion, the whole body disposition suggesting the speaker's determination. The use of modal verb "poder" (can) in the negative expression "eu não poderia" (I *couldn't*) indicates total impossibility, complete denial of the student's assumption.

The next verb sequences perform an order speech act; the formal polite expression "*queira fazer o favor de sentar-se/ will you please sit down*") used in the sequence really does not mitigate its authoritarian feature in the verbal interaction because this expression in fact constitutes a polite formula which is usually employed by Brazilian speakers in order to mark social distance and absence of intimacy with the interlocutor⁸. In this case, there is a discursive movement, which is opposite to that of the interaction's first moment (line 4), when the teacher mitigates the order, changing it into a polite request. Here the formality and authority of the polite request produce rather the effect of an order. In this third moment, the categorical modality, high affinity with the statements, and a particularly formal politeness without protecting the interlocutor's face seems to signal the strengthening of the teacher's power in the interactional event.

However, in the verbal action described on line 17, two discourse markers still appear (*sabe, sim / you know and ok*) which indicate transition in the distribution of the participants' roles and attention to sharing knowledge between the interactants. This reveals the maintenance of the teacher's style to establish

⁸ Observing that particular politeness conventions embody particular social and power relations (Kress and Hodge, 1979, apud Fairclough, 1992:163).

more symmetric discourse relations. The discursive marker 'you know', ("sabe" in Portuguese), functions both informationally and interactionally, signalling an appeal to the hearer's attention, occasionally producing a rhetorical effect: "in arguments it (you know) may be used to appeal to shared knowledge as a way of converting an opponent to one's side in a dispute" (SCHIFFRIN, 1987, p. 279).

Therefore, I consider the teacher's ethos to be mostly that of a non-authoritarian, democratic professional, yet of someone that is constantly confronted with acts, which are threatening to her face and menacing to her self-esteem. She resists them, struggling to get professional respect and a more powerful position in the sociopolitical relations, which underlie the classroom interactional event.

Going up a step further in an incursion into the perspective of CDA, I came to reflect upon the data of this interaction in terms of its interdiscursivity, that is, I looked at the linguistic features as realisation of discursive features, the ones which mediate the social features and relate discourse to a network of social practices.

I understand that doing CDA analysis means looking at the discursive resources drawn upon in the texts (genres, discourses and style), as elements that are contained in the text 'per se' and in the social structure as well. This implies drawing upon the interdiscursive relations manifested in the text to see how they are articulated together and relating the micro-analysis of the text to the social macro-analysis, concerning the power relations which work across the networks of social practices.

According to Fairclough (forthcoming), discourses may be seen as ways of representing the world and they differ in how social events are represented; genres are seen as ways of acting and interacting linguistically, and the nature of semantic/grammatical/vocabulary relations, types of exchange and speech functions depend on them; styles are ways of being, that is, speaking, writing, including language body, like moving, looking, constituting identificatory meanings.

I consider that this interaction text presents a mixture of discourses, genres and styles, reflecting movements in subject positions and in discursive formations as they flow through shifting boundaries in social life. Shifts in modality within the interaction text are to be seen as shifts in ways of acting (genre), ways of representing (discourse) and ways of being (style).

As shown in the first part of my analysis, the shifts in modality are constant in this interaction text, reflecting what may be thought of as a permanent tension between

different genres, discourses and styles, related to the conflicting power relations and conflicting identity positions in the classroom and in the school setting. The teacher moves from a democratic to an authoritarian style, and these movements are manifested by the shifts from a weak modality to a categorical or strong one.

In the first moment of the interaction (lines 1-5), a weak modality predominates, with the speech functions of invitation/request. Though the social activity is a class (which I call a didactic genre), the didactic genre is mixed with that of an informal conversation, as the teacher enacts the preliminary contact with the students setting up affable and friendly relations between them.

The discourse of the ordinary world coexists with the discourse of the institutional order (for instance, in relation to the rules the teacher is carrying out, comments about the correct time for beginning the class: “*já são mais de sete e dez, já dei os dez minutos de tolerância / it's about ten past seven... you've already got ten extra minutes*”) and with a democratic pedagogical discourse, as the teacher constructs a democratic style, addressing the students as interlocutors, lessening the asymmetry between interactional roles. In this sense, a democratic style is inculcated and a democratic pedagogical discourse is enacted as a democratic didactic genre.

The second moment (lines 6-15) begins with the maintenance of this democratic style, with the teacher giving instructions, politely asking for the students' attention, but it moves into an authoritarian style when the requests are changed into orders. The verbal sequences (line 15) establish a categorical modality so that an authoritarian style is constituted, linked to an authoritarian discourse, and enacted as an authoritarian didactic genre. Yet, though the teacher moves into an authoritarian style, some discursive elements still present in the text (the way of looking at the students while she talks, giving explanation or presenting reasons for her acts: “*tá demais hoje, assim não dá, vou ter de fechar esta porta / it's impossible, I'm obliged to shut the door*”) are characteristic of a democratic style.

In the third moment (lines 16-19), a categorical, strong modality predominates; the speech functions are denial and order, constituting an authoritarian style, enacted as an authoritarian didactic genre, when the teacher reacts to the student's mockery (line 17). But even so, this authoritarian style is mixed up with a democratic one, as a democratic pedagogical discourse is drawn upon when the teacher offers the students explanations about her personal health

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and intimate life (line 17), enacting a conversation genre.

The complex network of social practices is constituted by a multiplicity of discourses, genres and styles that may be articulated and interconnected in apparently contradictory ways. G., in her subject position of teacher, paradoxically moves from a democratic style into an authoritarian one, holding institutional control/power, as a condition to keep on acting democratically.

The students' voices are pervaded by voices which reproduce class, ethnicity and sex discrimination (Paraíba = poor and dark; acts of mockery), voices of dissatisfaction and rebelliousness and also voices that respect the institutional rules (helping the teacher to call the role) and which reproduce orders of discourse strongly established in social life.

The social tension and contradiction of social practices in school are reflected in this discursive tension of shifting genres, discourses and styles that are manifested through constant shifts of modalities within the interaction text. Discourses as representations of the human world incorporate the complexity of social relations and power struggles so they are not simply assembled in the text; instead, they are articulated together by ceaseless ordering and reordering.

5 CONCLUSION

According to Chouliaraki & Fairclough (1999), ethnography is said to benefit from CDA in the sense that data material should not be seen as faithful descriptions of reality, nor the researcher's and participants' accounts as transparent reports about the social processes they are involved in, but as discursive construction and particular ways of representing the world. This idea was particularly relevant to prevent me from making naive interpretation of data as I was interested in observing the educational setting and the power relations involved in the teaching-learning process, relating them to the social tensions underlying the school space which affected the teacher – learners relationships in classroom interaction.

The interdiscursive analysis of this interaction text reveals the existence of a tension between shifting modalities (weak – strong), corresponding to shifting styles, genres and discourses (democratic – authoritarian), which is related to the complex network of orders of discourse underlying the school social life. Different

discourses represent different ways of viewing the world. Thus, a democratic pedagogical discourse is related to a democratic didactic genre and to a democratic style, which correspond to the construction of a progressive teacher's identity.

However, there is the maintenance of an institutional authoritarian discourse deeply established in the school (prescription of rules and control), which is reflected in the enactment of an authoritarian didactic genre and of an authoritarian style. In addition, there is the discourse of discrimination enacted in the genre of 'joking' and 'doing mockery' and in the construction of the rude student's style. So this analysis reveals that the mixture and shifts of discursive resources, discourses, genres and styles, in this interaction text, is related to the existence of a complex network of conflicting power relations and conflicting identities in the school social life.

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Título: Ser mulher e professora: as relações de conflito de poder na interação em sala de aula

Autor: Ana Lúcia de Campos Almeida

Resumo: Neste artigo, a partir de uma perspectiva teórica Bakhtiniana, utilizando conceitos de análise micro-etnográfica de Erickson, elementos da pragmática de Schiffrin e fundamentos da análise crítica do discurso de Fairclough, analiso um texto interacional, produzido em evento didático, uma aula de Geografia de ensino médio, em que são focalizadas as relações de poder (re)construídas discursivamente entre alunos e professora no decorrer da interação. A análise desvela a questão do baixo prestígio social vinculado à representação do gênero feminino e da profissão docente (a mulher professora) no contexto sócio-cultural-político brasileiro, bem como confere visibilidade ao conflito emergente nas relações de poder entre os sujeitos envolvidos na interação em sala de aula.

Palavras-chave: análise Crítica do Discurso; interação em sala de aula; conflito; poder; professora-mulher.

Titre: Être femme et professeur: les relations conflictuelles de pouvoir dans l'interaction en salle de classe

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Résumé: Dans cet article, à partir d'une perspective théorique de Bakhtine, utilisant des concepts d'analyse micro-ethnographique d'Erickson, des éléments de la pragmatique de Schiffrin et des fondements de l'analyse critique du discours de Fairclough, j'analyse un texte interactionnel, produit pendant un événement didactique, c'est-à-dire, un cours de Géographie de l'enseignement secondaire, où sont focalisés les rapports de pouvoir (re)construits discursivement entre élèves et professeur dans la suite de l'interaction. L'analyse laisse entrevoir le faible prestige social lié à la représentation du genre féminin et de la profession d'enseignant (la femme enseignante) dans le contexte socio-politico-culturel brésilien, et d'autre part, assure une visibilité du conflit qui se manifeste en salle de classe.

Mots-clés: analyse critique du discours; interaction en salle de classe; conflit ; pouvoir ; enseignante.

Título: Ser mujer y profesora: relaciones de poder conflictuosas en la interacción del aula

Autor: Ana Lúcia de Campos Almeida

Resumen: En este estudio, a partir de una perspectiva teoría Bakhtiniana, utilizando conceptos de análisis micro-etnográfica de Erickson, elementos de la pragmática de Schiffrin y fundamentos del análisis crítico del discurso de Fairclough, analiso un texto interaccional, producido en un suceso didáctico, una clase de Geografía de enseñanza secundaria, en que son focalizadas las relaciones de poder (re)construidas discursivamente entre alumnas y profesora al largo de la interacción. El análisis revela la cuestión del bajo prestigio social realacionado a la representación del género femenino y de la profesión docente (la mujer profesora) en el contexto socio-cultural-político brasileño, y torna visible el conflicto en las relaciones de poder entre los sujetos involucrados en la interacción en el aula.

Palabras-clave: análisis crítico del discurso; interacción en el aula; conflicto; poder; profesora-mujer.
