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## SPECIAL EDUCATION CLASSROOMS, LANGUAGE, AND SPACE: A DISCURSIVE-LINGUISTIC REFLECTION

Carmem Caetano\*

Universidade de Brasília

Brasília, Distrito Federal, Brasil

**Abstract:** *Originating from the notion of space and language as formulated by Gunn (2002) and based on the theoretical foundation of Critical Discourse Analysis, as proposed by Norman Fairclough (2003), this paper deals with the investigation of identity (re)construction for teachers in special education classrooms in Brazil. Elements from Fairclough's theory are used to approach the category of space in language praxis for the purpose of investigating, specifically, how people involved in the social events of special education represent this social space and how issues of power and ideology are perceived in the discourse (s) of this education assistant model.*

**Keywords:** *Identity. Space. Language. Special education. Discourse.*

### 1 INTRODUCTION

In this paper, I discuss the importance of the awareness of the space within special education classes inside regular schools, an environment that has been adapted to aid individuals with one or more deficiencies, with the objective of reflecting about identities per the category of space, an aspect many times neglected in contemporary research of discourse and identity. I intend, here, to focus on the space of language, but also keeping in mind that there are other forms of semiotic domains, e.g., symbols, movements, and gestures, which are important in studies that focus on the production of space. My motivational question is - how do the people involved in this social event of specialized educational treatment (from now on referred to as SET) represent this social space? The purpose is to identify the nexus between this and the awareness of space.

Initially, I'll comment briefly about special education classes, and after, I'll dedicate myself to observing the awareness of space in the two topics. Firstly, space produced by discourse, as a discourse topic; secondly, space as a "place" of discourse. In this line of thinking, I am considering the connection among space, social action, and identity. Particularly I understand that space is somehow constructed per the means of a "common thread" in which human activities and identities are (re) constructed. Thereafter, I approach the study of space within the area of discourse analysis. Secondly, I discuss the issue of institutional identities to understand that this approach helps elucidate that identities can be (re) constructed according to space awareness.

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\* Professora Adjunto de Pós-graduação em Linguística da Universidade de Brasília – UnB. Doutora em Linguística. Email: [carmemjena@gmail.com](mailto:carmemjena@gmail.com).

Based on the considerations of the Analysis of Critical Discourse<sup>1</sup> (from now on referred to as ACD), which considers the way people interact as a part of social practices and studies, and based on the Theory of Social Representations (TSR), which understands that an elaboration of knowledge is linked to the narrow relation among social forces, is where I begin the analysis on social intentions where I call special education classrooms “the space of educational apartheid”. I believe that some analysis of institutional interaction can indicate the institutions as “structures” that involve power and thus have a role within representations of identities.

## 2 SPECIAL EDUCATION CLASSROOMS

According to Marchesi and Martin (1995) it was in the 1960s that an important movement of public opinion in favor of the integration of students with some type of deficiency began forming in different countries. This movement was contemplated in the 1970s with the adoption of special education classrooms. One of the first concepts of special education classrooms refers to 1977 that established this classroom as follows: “It is the indication of teaching with the adequate resources for exceptional students enrolled in a regular class. This way of teaching is convenient for any child that could be successful in a regular class while receiving this assistance. (DUNN, 1970, p. 35).

For Kirk (1977, p. 57) the definition of special education classrooms is “the offer of special teaching in an environment that is the closest to normal that could enable the absorption of the content and skills that are being taught.” Thus, the special education classroom would be a space generally “small where, by indication, there is a special teacher and the children go for short periods of time daily for special work”.

In this sense, special education classrooms were pre-developed as a place where, at a specific period of the day, people with special needs were tended to. This modality implicates that a student remain in a regular classroom, participating in daily activities with his or her so-called “normal” classmates and receiving specialized assistance in that specific classroom (BRASIL, 2009). However, what I noticed during my research was that the special education classrooms were not utilized in this manner.

In the first place, the student never stays in a class with other students. Upon arrival, he or she is directed to the special education classroom. Another fact observed is that there is no proposal, at least in the classrooms visited, that the teacher in these classes should have had specialized formation for the specificity of the job. Upon this fact I ask myself if these classrooms are not really just institutional spaces of segregation. I am not, with this affirmation, generalizing the role of special education classrooms, only commenting on what I witnessed and what I believe could be modified in order to truly contribute to the process of social inclusion.

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<sup>1</sup> The Critical Discourse Analysis is a theoretical and methodological approach to the study of language in contemporary societies that is based on a perception of language as an irreducible part of social life.

## 2.1 THE REPRESENTATIONS OF THE SPACE OF APARTHEID

I proceed in this section with an attempt of registering what I am denominating as space of educational apartheid within discourse analysis approaches, and thus, comprehending special education classroom as a place where discourse suggests the social act of a treatment that is not specialized and that is directed towards students with special needs.

Differently from the centralized and static conception of culture, I seek to problematize the meaning understood as property of the text produced by means of reports done by a team of teachers as well as by representatives of people with special needs. I propose that any comprehension that there may be in it is not fixed and unchangeable, knowing that special education classrooms are not being considered here as a mirror of a reality, and that, as does any other means of representation that constructs and represents its frames of realities through codes, myths, conventions, ideologies as well as practices of meaning. This is the same as saying that it is by the process of meaning that we construct our identity and our position as social actors and that we seek to construct the position of others. Thus, to represent is to mean something. It implicates to impose particular meanings that belong to a specific social group about the meaning of other groups.

Finally, what I intend with this section and with the following section is to bring to the analysis of the representations of the space of educational apartheid the reflection of how the representations present in this space are impregnated by the “weight” of traditional cultural values of Modernity. In this sense, I take the contributions by Hall (1997) to situate social actors of Modernity and Post-Modernity in the context of the transformations of time and space, as well as the contribution of authors such as Giddens (1991) and Harvey (2000) about the concepts of space in Post-Modernity. It is to these reflections that I dedicate my attention in the following subsection.

## 2.2 FOR A REFLECTION OF THE CONCEPTS OF SPACE AND SPACE REPRESENTATIONS OF IDENTITIES

In this subsection, I proceed to a reflection of space and, indirectly, to time in special education classrooms, anchored to the conception developed by Hall (1997) when he affirms that these categories are basic in every representation system and that every means of meaning should translate its object into dimensions of space and time, here in this case the social inclusive school in a delayed modernity<sup>2</sup>. According to the author, different cultural epochs have different ways of combining these space-time coordinates. Hall reminds us, still, that all of these identities are localized in a symbolic time and space and that they have what Said (1990) calls their “imaginary geographies”, their characteristic landscapes, their sense of place, as well as localizations in time, in

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<sup>2</sup> I use the term “school of delayed modernity” because the postmodern way of thinking (or way of thinking in delayed modernity) could include among its most important factors the rejection of rationalist arguments that human nature is always the same everywhere, universally and absolutely.

the invented traditions that link past and present. Therefore, the meanings produced in relation to the educational institution and to the people that inhabit it gain expression: in the specific case of the research I developed are the team of education professionals and the students with special needs.

In other words, to speak of representations of time and space of the educational apartheid is to take these concepts as social constructions, that is, not taking them as given conceptions, *a priori*, but comprehending them as derivative of the social lifestyle of society. In this case, it is to question how time and space in special education classrooms constituted its participants and how time and space were constituting themselves per social lifestyles.

In the next section, I dislocate the focus to the necessary reflections on what I denominate as identities of space.

### 3 A REFLECTION ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF SPACE IN REPRESENTATIONS OF IDENTITY

Although much research within the social sciences have focused their attention on the study of social life in “its context,” Dixon (2005) comments that it is a characteristic of this research to not consider a fundamental dimension in social life – geographic localization. Space and time have been treated as receptacles or recipients that “taken as correct” are seen as “neutral” and, therefore, not interesting for the studies that are not particular to the fields of Geography and History, for instance. This connects to some observations made by scholars that theorized the link between space, place, and identity. One of these studies is by Barnes (2000) that teaches us that who we are is inexorably related to where we are, have been or will be. The centrality of place and of space for daily comprehension in our lives has become an emerging and recurrent theme in the theorization of social and human sciences. As Dixon (2005, p.i) points out:

All the aspects of our social life are revealed within these material and symbolic environments (‘places’) that are both socially constituted and constructed. We call this recognition ‘spacial dimension’ that turns new methods of looking at the phenomenon more accessible, such as the formation of social identities and relationships.

Attention to the study of space has its origins based on theories of post-structuralism and post-modernism, outlined in Foucault’s observation (1986, p. 22), according to whom “we are currently living in a ‘space era’”. Space, more than “time”, is crucial to contemporary social and cultural analyses.

What is increasingly observed is that there is a change of focus to these studies, in other words, there is a displacement of focus from temporality and history to space and geography and its importance to the theorization of social processes. The priority of this change, according to Gunn’s explanation (2002) is that space, place or landscape were dimensions of social life fundamentally neglected in critical social studies. Sociological studies of historical and geographical antecedents tell us how much connection there is between class and spatial structure of cities, treating space as an abstract and uniform

category. Still, according to the author (2002, p. 2-3) “there was little focus on the study of space, as something that was ‘produced’ or that could be constituted by the historical development.”

According to Gunn (2002, p. 3), it was linguistics and discourse analysis within the social and human sciences that brought a new understanding to “place” and “space” as constituents of meaning of the social processes and as conductors of meaning in their own right.

It is known that the term space is a fundamental category for Geography, but it was also recently adopted for the analyses of many areas of knowledge. Although many geographers still work based on a unidimensional notion of this concept, multidimensional concepts are increasing. For Lefebvre (1991), for instance, social space is the materialization of the human existence, albeit, the author does not clarify that social space is inside the geographic space created by nature and transformed by human relations, existing, therefore, many diverse types of material and immaterial space, such as political, cultural, economic, and virtual spaces.

Social relation in its intentionality creates a determined reading of space, and thus, a geographic or other specific social space is produced. Here, social space is an educational institution. In this subsection, I dedicate myself to approach the space/place produced in discourse, as a discourse topic or an arena of conflicts in which some social representations of identity are (re) created or modified.

Still, basing my ideas on Hall (1997), I remember that people use space as an appropriate place for a determined social relation that produces and keeps them based of some sort of power. By this measure, spaces are as concrete as immaterial. The geographic space is the classroom used as a resource to “separate” people with deficiencies, for example, as a form of concrete territory, as well as its representation as a form of immaterial territory. Knowledge is an important type of immaterial territory. Immaterial or concrete, the fact is that territories have limits, boundaries and, thus, are consequently a space favorable for conflict. It is in a space of conflict that relations of power and ideology surface to enable the investigation of representations of identity. For instance, a sign that reads “Special Education Classroom” could possibly have no meaning until it is placed in a specific place, in a place within a regular school in a space with the purpose of receive only people with special needs. Although this could have an abstract linguistic meaning, as with the sign, it did not have its power reference until it was placed firmly in a determined place. Signs, boards, signals, thus, are fundamentally “indicators” get their meanings and power to separate spaces once they are positioned in order to engrave some space, informing everyone what it delimitates. Once a sign or a signal is in a certain place it becomes dialogically interdiscursive and intersemiotic.

Scollon and Scollon (2003) discuss different discourses that comprehend semiotic aggregation on signs or marks in public spaces. I could notice similar discourses in the special education classrooms I visited in schools where I did my research, where, upon observing these classrooms, which are very distinguished from conventional classrooms, I found that there is almost always a board with students’ names, what could in fact be an indication of control of the circulation of the people in these places, a sort of division of spaces within one place.

When I asked the professional responsible for the classroom the reason for the choice of putting this information on a mural, she simply said that it was a norm because if the teacher was absent the substitute would know what problem each child has. However, these murals have a marked meaning because they divide spaces and determine behaviors. Why put the names of the students with their respective special needs? Just the fact of not having the same information on murals in classrooms that don't aim to receive students with special needs could already be an indication of space and identity differentiation.

Space and place are not examined in a static form, *a priori*, or as an objective phenomenon, but as tools progressively and dynamically constructed "for thinking and acting" (LEFEBVRE, 1991, p. 26). Relatively, the experiential and cultural meaning of space and place in constructions of identity are examined not only in human and cultural geography but also in psychology and sociology. Within these perspectives of knowledge, these sciences argue that "not only do people make spaces, but also the spaces make people", through confinement; therefore, they could also offer opportunities for the construction of identities. Institutions such as schools and its special education classrooms "more than including particular subjects could also truly and actively create them" (THIFT, 1995, p. 4, *apud* LEFEBVRE, 1991). Identity is seen, this way, fundamentally as a category of space as long as we understand the idea of "territory", "I", and "we" as symbolic and sociocultural entities that are divided physically by marked lines. Spaces and places may employ a meaning in which identities are constituted and represented.

An emerging concept in this perspective of space identity, that I have focused on now, is one that talks about the way people make sense of their self ("I") through the attribution of meaning of places. An example of these meanings could be expressed in idiomatic phrases such as "there is nothing more human than inclusion", or "my school has a well-equipped special educational classroom." However, in the school environment where I did my research, there are divergencies on these postures and that, because of this, they are significant to the comprehension of the representations of identity. In the next section, I start to focus with more detail on the representations of identity in the spaces of the researched special education classroom.

### 3.1 THE REPRESENTATION OF SPACE IN THE EDUCATIONAL APARTHEID PER THE VOICE OF THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

I should clarify that I will use here the characterization of intertextuality as understood and used by Fairclough (2003, p. 47). According to the author there are various other less evident ways to incorporate elements of other texts, or in other words, intertextuality refers to a range of possibilities. Everything is 'told' in a text, is 'said' in a contrasting relation with the 'unsaid', but taken as given. The author relates these implied elements to intertextuality "I use the generic term 'implied' to encompass implied terms of content that are distinguished in the literature of pragmatic linguistics,



as presuppositions, implications or entailments" (FAIRCLOUGH, 2003, p. 40). As in intertextuality, implied content connect a text to another, to a 'world of texts', the difference between implied content and intertextuality is that implied content, generally, are not assigned to specific texts. It is much more than an issue of relation between the text and what was said, written or thought elsewhere, with the 'other place' left vacant. It is in this sense that I use the term intertextuality in the analyses in this section, as an interchangeable concept with implied content. Therefore, this section proposes by the means of analyses which are the present and absent voices in the discourses of parents and guardians of people with special needs and how the intertextual relations that are implicit and sometimes explicit are a way of denouncing its relations with the space of educational apartheid.

For the perception of the majority of the parents and those responsible, the inclusive school of delayed modernity, many times, brings negative experiences that affect the physical and psychological development of these people, strongly leaving a mark on them. The image of the special education classroom as a place for their children, along with the natural fear of strange environments, remains rooted in the memory of many. However, this attitude is found in a process characterized as hybrid and fluid since we found distinguished postures within the researched special education classrooms. In other words, based on my observations and participation, and even reading the statements and reports by the parents or those responsible for the students with special needs, I found perceptions different from the dominant attitudes. I seek, this way, to investigate by the means of analyses within the category of intertextuality/implied content how one of the possibilities of comprehension of representation of the space of education apartheid. Let us move to the analyses.

### 3.2 INTERTEXTUALITY/IMPLIED CONTENT IN THE NARRATIVES BY PARENTS AND THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

From this topic on, we begin the analytical moments about the way the parents or those responsible for the students with special needs look at their experience in the researched special education classrooms. Experience is understood as something that occurs to someone, something they go through, something that touches someone, as opposed to something that simply happens. Here we have a comment belonging to Maria, Bruna'

Here we have a comment belonging to Maria<sup>3</sup>, Bruna's mother.

(1) Maria: When I saw that the school had a special education classroom and that Júlia, the teacher, waited in the classroom for Bruna...I thought: What a good thing (...) finally they made a special education classroom and what a good thing that the teacher is Júlia because she already taught my other girl. But the classroom is small, ugly, and almost doesn't have any supplies.

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<sup>3</sup> All the names of the people involved in this research were switched to pseudonyms.

I highlighted a phrasal structure elaborated by Maria. It is a phrase formulated by the actor (the teacher), by a material process (waited), and a goal (Bruna), that could be understood as a complement that justifies an agreeable surprise. According to my analyses, as I examined the same topic, I highlighted the implied intertextuality category as a way of understanding the representation that Maria has of the space that is the special education classroom that in fact materializes as being good, but that implicitly brings about the issue that it is better because Júlia, a teacher she already knows, is present (“*What a good thing*”). Maria emphasizes that she worries about “who” will be the professional working in the special education classroom. Maria does not explicitly mention her judgement about other schools, but reinforces her “contentment”. This contentment implies that the proposition is “somewhere else” where schools do not have special education classrooms and do not have Júlia, the teacher - in this case, our discourse is hybrid, because she ensures that it is good because of the teacher’s presence and not only because of existence of the special education classroom *per se*. In the context where the bit was taken from, Maria was referring to the different postures among the professionals in education. What she seems to be implying is that the people that attended to her assert or asserted different behaviors that were different from what she was accustomed to, which makes a difference for a mother.

In sequence, Maria refers to the concrete setting of the classroom, and as she does, she points out the concrete space of lack of supplies. As Beiro (2005) warns us, landscapes, before being a rest for the senses, is work of the mind. This way, space is not presented to our eyes as a finished object. On the contrary, it interpellates us<sup>4</sup>, asking of us attitudes of a functional and affective nature and so forth. In this sense, space and landscape are, as explained by Beiro (2005), a cultural text of many dimensions that is offered to different possibilities of simultaneous and equally valid readings. It is this quality of space that justifies the fact that Maria activates several attitudinal fields when she evaluates the setting of the classroom that does not seem adequate, what is contrary to the first expectation that the school now had a special education classroom.

Lúcia’s report, however, points out what is happening in other schools.

(2) Lúcia: In Areal, the children spend all their time on the patio, left alone the special education classroom is worse that the patio it is hot has no windows is very small and is filled with boxes. Ah, my daughter. Ah! She already is mentally ill and they, still believe there is no way! Only God really, on the patio the kids run around and get themselves all dirty. This can’t happen it’s inhumane.

We can infer that the association is made with a long-lasting sense at least at the researched school. People with special needs are suffering discrimination, and this ends up provoking a desperate attitude from Lúcia, when she closes her comment with the phrase “This can’t happen it’s inhumane.”

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<sup>4</sup> The term *interpellation* is used by Althusser (1974).



In terms of intertextuality, what is highlighted is the insertion of the indirect report in which Lúcia summarizes the content that was said, without the resource of a literal copy of another text. There is no use of citation marks, however, in a clear way it presents a change in verbal time (ah! she already is mentally ill) and the deixis (“already”). Other voices could be incorporated, but were not. What brings us to the inference that in the apartheid space, the occurrence of conflicts of voices is always remitted to specific actors. Comparatively, it is noticeable that there are special education classrooms, and what is a type of pseudo-space, but is somehow appropriate.

To complement the reflections about space so far, I utilize Fiorin’s study (2003, p.174) that teaches us that the linguistic space is organized “from the *hic*, that is, from the place of the *ego* .” Every object is thus localized, no matter its physical place in the world, because the place that contextualizes the objects puts itself in the center and in the reference point of the localization. The linguistic space for Fiorin is expressed by the demonstratives and by some adverbs of place. For the author, the linguistic space is not a physical space, analyzed based on geometric categories, but is a place where utterances are developed. From there the importance of focusing attentions on what the Brazilian linguist teaches us.

Still, referring to excerpt 2, the demonstrative pronoun (“here”) in (“the best school that I passed is here”) is the space of the utterer. The word (“there”) is determined according to (“here”). These words have two distinct functions - one would be to designate or show (deictic function) and one would be to remember (anaphoric function). The first function is very important, because in the same way that it is impossible to speak in this world without discoursing, without determining time, it is also impossible to speak without singularizing the beings we refer to. There is no way to construct discourse without only universal references. Demonstrative determiners share with articles the function to designate singular beings, but do not, together, have the function of generalizing. On the other hand, what still differentiates articles is their capacity to contextualize things in space. (“The”) from (“The best”) singularizes and specifies the school, but it is *here* that situates the classroom, that determines the territory, the border in which Lúcia situates her child.

It may seem, at first sight, that people participating in this research selected schools with special education classrooms as their preferred place, what in my perception would be arguable. I understand this attitude of preference towards an educational institution only as a temporary situation, since the representations of the special education classrooms is still very unsatisfactory.

What is best from fathers/mothers and those responsible is different for the team of teachers. However, I school clarify that it is not only fathers/mothers that make comments that the social spaces in a regular school are differentiated. Also in the voice of the faculty I find reports with a congruence of opinions, with subtle differences. However, since I had the objective of analyzing in this section only the voices of the fathers/mothers/responsible adults, I leave this responsibility for the next section, the task to demonstrate by means of my analyzes the congruences and discrepancies of the reports of the members of the pedagogical faculty related to the space of the special education classroom. Here, I believe it is useful to make a subdivision in terms of analyzes of the voices of the faculty. I opt to act this way to understand that there are two perspectives of representation in the space of the group of teachers. In the first

place, I highlight the actors whose voices are in dissonance with the fathers/mothers/responsible adults. In the second place, I will show how these dissonances also occur with the professionals of education.

#### 4 INTERTEXTUALITY/ASSUMPTION IN THE NARRATIVES OF THE TEAM OF TEACHERS

Studying the representations of the team of teachers in relation to the space of the special education classrooms requires some reflections. In the first place, there is hybridity in relation to the identity representations of teachers that sometimes behave with typical postures that are expected from professionals of special education, and other times behave in a way that is reminiscent of “old postures” that are predicted in segregational models of education. Secondly, as I have argued before, there is what I call the “arena of conflicts.” I suggest that there are at least two places of dispute in the social practice of inclusive education. The school space and the special education classroom space. The intersection of these two spaces serves as an area of dispute that is not unanimously marked, but that is occupied by social actors with divergent representations. On the one hand, we find teachers that refuse to work in special education classrooms because they understand that they are not prepared, and on the other, there are professionals that, despite not being prepared, do not want to work there. There is yet second group, that do not have a choice because they are “new” in that career or because they have temporary contracts - substitute teachers. For the faculty, this is moment where the “arena of conflicts” is introduced.

#### 5 A CONFLICTING POSITION

In an a priori interpretation, the biggest ally of the teachers that do not want to work in special education classrooms because they were not capacitated for it would be the pedagogical faculty itself. However, according to reports by some members of the pedagogical faculty, these professionals have presented resistance to the work done in these classrooms and to the necessity of the school to offer this space to a student with special needs.

Report (3) points to two aspects that produce conflict among professionals - the first refers to comprehension, agreement, and adhesion to the ideas of inclusion, but that can be affect by factors of diverse orders, such as recognizing lack of capacitation before such important work. A second aspect talks about the structure of the special education classroom that, most times, suffers problems so familiar to public education institutions, such as lack of supplies and professionals.

(3) Bernadete. The most difficult part is that the teacher does not want to understand the need to stay in the special education classroom, that could be supporting us. Most of the time she keeps running from the responsibility. Because despite being in a stable situation, she needs to know that she needs to work where it is needed, not where she chooses, she is person that needs to work and needs to agree to everything. We're talking about precious time. She needs to understand that the special education classroom is a special place.

(4) Sandra. Even if they (the teachers) have a classroom with good supplies and you can see that we have this here, they still think it is not enough. We in the principal's office seek to do the most so the teacher can have all the support necessary. But still, with all our organization and information, we receive this type of return from the teachers.

Based on these reports, it is clear that there are evident conflicts of interests. On one hand, we have the desire from the staff to guarantee that teachers can be working in special education classrooms, and on the other we have teachers that do not feel prepared to deal with being in the special education classroom. It is a difficult situation. We assume that in this arena of conflicts the ones that suffer the most are the people with special needs that find themselves in what I call the "zone of turbulence," although there is no way to evaluate, without any bias, the difficulties because it happens to another person.

In report 3, I highlight the use of the intensifier "most" in ("the most difficult part is that the teacher") as an indicator of the difficulty that there is in the action done by an actor that is expected to be an auxiliary agent. In other words, various factors could be found as complicators, but the principal's choice is to attribute this function to the teachers, who begin to be seen as the generators of the problems. This is ratified by the phrasal selection ("you can see that we have this here"). Some highlights can be glimpsed upon.

First, I highlight the partitive selection "most of the time" with the selection of the finite "keeps". The finite term constitutes a verbal component of the modal, however, there is a nominal component and this is marked by the choice of the subject. The selection process of the finite could have been done as a reference to the criteria of judgment that the speaker emits. The formal verb is singular with the objective of highlighting the combination as a unity. In other words, the focus is not on the emphasis of the various elements that compose the whole. The whole would be more representative for the purposes of Bernadete's speech that calls attention to the observation that occurs in generalized and recurrent form.

Furthermore, I highlight in excerpt (4), in Sandra's voice, a critique towards the teachers when she selects the discursive operator "*even if*", in the phrasal structure (*even if they have, they still think it is not enough*), that seems to indicate an intensification of attitudes from the faculty in relation to the pedagogical staff and to the children with special needs.

## 6 THE DISCOURSE OF EDUCATIONAL APARTHEID

In the previous section, I sought to describe and interpret the voices of the space that I consider a form of educational apartheid, that are the special education classrooms, always keeping in mind the relation between the representations of identity based on the notion of space and discourse that was highlighted earlier in this article. Now, I seek in the concept of institutional identities to bring about my motivational issue that is: how do the people involved in this social event of specialized educational treatment represent this social space? For this, first I will talk about what is an institution, and afterwards conclude my reflection.

## 7 DEFINING INSTITUTION

Defining “institution” is not an easy task. It is very common to associate this concept with a material or physical construction, or even with organizations such as hospitals and schools. The concept of institution is intrinsically related to the concepts of power and ideology that are frequently seen as a service of interests for groups of power (e.g., the government or the media).

Agar (1985, p.164) defines institution as “the socially legitimized skill together with all the people who are authorized to execute it.” This is a perception of what an institution could include any group of power and that these are not restricted to a material place. Agar’s definition could also be understood as a form of behavior, as an expectation that institutions produce roles in a binary and asymmetrical form - the expert (or the representative of an institution) that is vested with institutional authority, and the non-expert (generally a student or a those responsible from a person with special needs), that should get used to the institution’s norms.

The idea that institutions automatically exercise dominion, crushing the speech and the right of the people, and that they imposes an unnatural bureaucracy regarding daily events, is informed to us by some theorists such as Althusser (1974) and Habermas (1984). These versions of institution assume a unilateral imposition, coercive dominion power of one group over a second party with no wills and always subordinated. Still, other theoretical considerations adopt a more complex definition of power, treating it as a phenomenon that is reached by permission, consensus, and cooperative complicity, more than by coercion and oppression (e.g., FOUCAULT, 2003). Similarly, Gramsci (1979, p.12) introduced the concept of hegemony to explain the way in which social groups keep their positions in cultural life.

Another theorist pointing out potential “productivity” of power in institutions is Giddens (2001, p. 67), who argues that “the core of both domain and power rests on the transformative capacity of human action.” As we can observe, the traditional vision of institutional power has been modified and, consequently, could also be modified within the field of discursive studies, based on reflections about organizational aspects of the institutions that are paradoxically included in fluid and contradictory practices and processes. These productive visions of power provide a theoretical lens for the analytical approaches of institutional interactions. Through the construction of power as a process of action, it is possible to analyze the institutional identities as interactively constructed, in each moment of the phenomenon.

After these considerations of some definitions of what is understood by institution, I propose that these ideas about institutions could be explored empirically through the ACD lens using the analytical categories in a way that the educational institution could be understood as a space that has been, at least in relation to the special education classrooms, an arena of conflicts that, however, deserve more attention and investigation.

## 8 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This article was proposed to attend to the necessity of providing a more specific analytical treatment to what I called an “arena of conflicts” that is built on interviews and testimonials, interpreting meanings constructed discursively in them about the space of special education classroom in regular schools. I sought to explore approaches for the study of space and place as a bigger context of identity construction. I began making a connection between space, social action, and identity which I called the space of educational apartheid. I considered that the activities of the people involved in SET were embedded in spaces and institutions with their own singularities.

As many reports pointed to the space and the setting of the special education classroom, it was propitious to re-theorize space and spatiality in the interviews, as suggested by Hall (1997), Lefebvre (1991), and Dixon (2005). This re-theorization was made possible by the approximation of concept of geography such as space, territory, and territoriality (HAESBAERT, 2006), referring to linguistics with the theoretical assumptions on intertextuality and transitivity.

My expectations while writing this article were to respond to my motivational question: how do the people involved in this social event of specialized educational treatment represent this social space? What was revealed what that these people represent the space and the setting of the special education classroom with impregnated appreciation of affect, marking, implicitly, negative dimensions that denounce a state of apprehension, disorientation, and even fear before the school context of inclusive education. Beyond the affective dimension, the appreciations are also intersected by attitudinal values of judgment that seek to emphasize the interviewees’s engagement to the system. All the appreciations of the place (special education classroom) constantly touch upon the position in which they are constituted as a fighting element, even if more intuitively than conscientiously, to be included in the new standards of inclusion, noticing the importance of these standards, but in different molds than those currently in effect.

Finally, through these analyses, it was possible to comprehend the way in which the social actors position themselves in the environment of the special education classroom. To study the representations of space is to understand the way in which a social group constructs a set of knowledge that in a given moment in history.

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**Título:** Salas de recurso, linguagem e espaço: uma reflexão linguístico-discursiva

**Autora:** Carmem Caetano

**Resumo:** Partindo da noção de espaço e linguagem como formulada por Gunn (2002), e tendo como alicerce teórico a *Análise de Discurso Crítica*, como proposta por Norman Fairclough (2003), o texto trata da investigação da (re)construção de identidades de professores alocados nas salas de recursos. Elementos da teoria faircloughiana são usados para abordar a categoria espaço nas práticas de linguagem com o propósito de investigar, especificamente, como as pessoas envolvidas em eventos sociais da educação especial representam esse espaço social e como questões de poder e ideologia são percebidos no (s) discurso (s) deste modelo de assistência educacional.

**Palavras-chave:** Identidade. Espaço. Linguagem. Educação especial. Discurso.



**Título:** Salas de recurso, lenguaje y espacio: una reflexión lingüístico-discursiva

**Autor:** Carmem Caetano

**Resumen:** Desde la noción de espacio y lenguaje como formulada por Gunn (2002) y teniendo como fundación teórico el Análisis del Discurso Crítico, como propuesta por Norman Fairclough (2003), el texto trata de la investigación da (re)construcción de identidades de profesores asignadas en las habitaciones de recursos. Elementos de la teoría de Fairclough son usados para abordar la categoría espacio en las prácticas de lenguaje con el propósito de investigar, específicamente, como las personas involucradas en eventos sociales de la educación especial representan ese espacio social y como cuestiones de poder e ideología son percibidos en lo(s) discurso(s) de este modelo de asistencia educacional.

**Palabras-clave:** Identidad. Espacio. Lenguaje. Educación especial. Discurso.