Epistemological challenges in Applied Linguistics: corporeality, discourses and identities of a teacher in a demonstration class

Desafios epistemológicos em Linguística Aplicada: corporalidade, discursos e identidades de uma docente em prova didática

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ABSTRACT: In this paper, we aim to shed light on the theoretical-analytical contributions obtained from the articulation of the dialogical perspective of language (BAKHTIN, 2000) and its performative view (BUTLER, 2003; BAUMAN; BRIGGS, 2008). The investigation is informed by a socioconstructionist epistemology of discourse and social identities (MOITA LOPES; 2006), and guided by the applied studies of language in situated contexts (RAMPTON, 2006) with a view to establishing a dialogue between local interaction and translocal/transhistorical dimensions. We begin by problematising the constructs of language, subject, reality and knowledge, key to any politically engaged research aimed at inventing alternatives for issues of contemporary life. We then present an analysis of the corporeal-discursive identitary performance of a teacher giving her demonstration class in a public selection as a way of illustrating our theoretical framework.

KEYWORDS: corporeal-discursive performances; socioconstructionism; demonstration class.

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RESUMO: Neste artigo, pretendemos explicitar contribuições teórico-analíticas advindas da articulação entre as perspectivas discursivas dialógica (BAKHTIN, 2000) e performativa (BUTLER, 2003; BAUMAN; BRIGGS, 2008) da linguagem, orientadas por epistemologia socioconstrucionista do discurso e das identidades sociais (MOITA LOPES; 2006), aos estudos aplicados de linguagem em contextos situados (RAMPTON, 2006), de modo a estabelecer diálogo contextual entre a interação local e dimensões translocais e transhistóricas. Para tal, problematizamos os construtos de linguagem, sujeito, realidade e conhecimento, essenciais para pesquisas engajadas política e eticamente na construção de conhecimento e na invenção de alternativas para questões da vida contemporânea. Ademais, apresentamos análise de performance corpóreo-discursiva identitária de docente em prova didática de concurso público visando ilustrar o percurso teórico apresentado.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: performances corpóreo-discursivas; socioconstrucionismo, prova didática.

Introduction

This paper aims to reflect upon the contributions offered by a theoretical-analytical articulation of dialogical and performative views of language, underpinned by a socioconstructionist epistemology of discourse and social identities (MOITA LOPES, 2003), within the applied studies of language in situated contexts. The challenge which gives momentum to the production of this text is related to how, in research about locally situated interactions which analyse language in a multimodal way, it might be possible to contemplate translocal and transhistorical dimensions, without, however, overestimating either one. Our considerations are based upon the investigation of the corporeal-discursive identitary performances of a candidate giving a Spanish demonstration class as part of the selection process of a public tender.[1]

It is our belief that the relevance of researching teacher selection processes lies in the fact that they consist of social practices in which various discourses circulate, adding to the discursive construction of professional teacher identities, knowledge forms and competences. While it does not focus *stricto sensu* on the teacher's activities, the selection process, taking place in between the spheres of qualification and action, helps consolidate certain power/knowledge relations (FOUCAULT, 1985) invested in and by social subjects; it also grants authority to certain voices. This process, besides being the device which ensures or hinders success in a public tender,

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[1] This paper is part of the research conducted in Almeida (2014).

establishes itself as a reference for upcoming college-level formation and for subsequent teaching work. That is to say that our choice of focusing on a teacher selection process is warranted by the fact that such institutional settings ascribe higher values to certain forms of knowledge, while belittling others – which are a part of history, but are ultimately silenced (DAHER; ALMEIDA; GIORGI, 2009).

Our specific interest in the field of Spanish language teaching is linked to our trajectories as Spanish teachers in the Federal Network of Education, Science and Technology. Such an interest is linked to certain contemporary tendencies in the Human and Social Sciences: an interest in producing relevant knowledge, responsive to the world we live in; in calling into question the tie between the field's epistemological renovation and the possibility of intervening upon the world in an ethical way; and in thematising aspects of researchers' own lives.

Epistemologically linked to an investigative agenda, which aims to speak to the contemporary world, and considering the constitutive dynamics of language in use – as is the case with performance – as well as the complexity of social contexts, this work subscribes to a view of Applied Linguistics (henceforth AL), which Moita Lopes (2006, p.14) terms Indisciplinary Applied Linguistics – a field which proposes a dialogue with other "subjects" in the human and social sciences in an effort to "create intelligibility about social problems in which language plays a central role."

In that sense, we resort to a transdisciplinary theoretical framework, spreading over the areas of Applied Linguistics, Sociology, Anthropology, Psychology and Education; and, more specifically, Performance Studies and the dialogical perspective of language. Our decision to bring such areas together is based on the recognition of a number of existing commonalities among recent theoretical undertakings developed in such fields. Some relevant examples are: a) they adopt a non-essentialist understanding of social life; b) they recognize language's world-building role; c) they maintain a belief in language as a way of producing what/who we are; and d) they see research as a possibility of intervening upon our ways of seeing, living and acting in society.

It is worth adding that, according to the socioconstructionist, dialogical and performative conception we align ourselves with, language is seen as a historically situated social institution; our interactions are believed to take place in a social world produced in the myriad dialogical discursive threads anchored in the passage of time. We are constructed by the world

as well as responsible for constructing it, and for constructing ourselves interactionally within it (BAKHTIN, 2000; ERICKSON, 2004).

With a view to showing the potential of that perspective to the applied studies of language, in the next section we shall attempt to explain how the socioconstructionist epistemology considers the notions of language, subject, reality and knowledge; and how such theoretical moves contribute to the investigation of identitary performances. Such constructs are key to any form of research in Indisciplinary Applied Linguistics (AL) (MOITA LOPES, 2006), a field in which political and ethical dimensions play a central role in the construction of knowledge and in the invention of alternative paths to the issues and dilemmas of social life in the contemporary world.

1. For a socioconstructionist epistemology of research in AL

As we propose that a socioconstructionist epistemology underlies research in AL, as maintained by Moita Lopes (2003; 2006), it is important to outline a few of the principles which compose such a framework, insofar as there is not necessarily one traditional philosophical alignment common to socioconstructionist investigations. Certain authors (WEINBERG, 2008) sustain that it is not a priority of the intellectual field to define what socioconstructionism is, but rather to consider the character of research practices thus classified. Weinberg (2008) sees as socioconstructionist all studies which attempt, at least in part, to replace fixed, universal and socio-historically crystallized ideas with more fluid, particular and socio-historically situated ones.

Our understanding of language as more than merely descriptive, but fundamentally constitutive of social practices, power struggles and "regimes of truth" (FOUCAULT, 2007), as mentioned by Miller (2008), places us in agreement with a socioconstructionist view of discourse and social identities (MOITA LOPES, 2002, 2003; POTTER; HAPBURN, 2008). Nevertheless, before focusing specifically on the aforementioned concepts, let us place our emphasis on the socioconstructionist conceptions of *language*, *subject*, *reality* and *knowledge*.

In a socioconstructionist light, language is regarded both as a social practice and as a condition for the creation of intelligibilities about experienced reality. Therefore, it is understood that uttering a name is more than merely 'representing' a given category of objects through discreet sounds; it is constructing that same object and its category in a

situated fashion, in constant negotiation with other interlocutors and D/discourses.[2] The use of language is configured as an activity executed and interactionally maintained by participants who make use of a set of *multi-semiotic communicative resources* (BLOMMAERT, 2010; MOITA LOPES, 2013).

According to Blommaert (2008, p. 102), resources have to do with "the set of linguistic instruments and communicative abilities" which refer to different degrees of linguistic proficiency, to the command of specific codes, discursive genres, language varieties, styles, etc. The notion of resources is an intended post-modernist reinvention of the twofold concept of language (*langue / langage*) consolidated by modernist linguistics. It is a way of rebuilding it in other terms, deconstructing the ideal of a "pure language" which ideologically informs many circulating D/discourses, even in formation courses for language teachers (MOITA LOPES, 2013). According to Fabrício (2013, p. 152),

> Many theoreticians have channelled their efforts into criticizing the concept of a pure language, different from others because of its systemic aspects, i.e, phonological, lexical and morphological (Pratt, 1987; Pennycook, 2001, 2007; Blommaert, 2005; Rampton, 2006; Makoni and Pennycook, 2016). According to them, the 'autonomous' and 'stable entities' which we have baptized as 'Portuguese', 'Spanish', 'English', etc, and which we have come to associate with 'specific groups of people', may be seen as ideological constructions, inventions intimately linked to the emergence of classic modern nation-states, outlining 'imaginary' boundaries between countries, languages, people, ethnicities and cultures.

Far from the homogenizing and generalizing idea linked to traditional theories, our interest lies in the diversity and in the complexity of the resource repertoires that speakers and writers, "native" and "non-native" alike, employ in their corporeal-discursive performances, which are always situated in the time-space of enunciation. Such resources give visibility to a dimension of participants' social and cultural contexts, inasmuch as they are socially classified, and impart value according to orders of discourse

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[2] Here we adopt Gee's (2001) perspective regarding the notion of D/discourse. In proposing such a construct, Gee wishes to do away with the dichotomy between the dimensions of language in use and its socio-historical context. Generally speaking, Gee maintains that 'discourse' refers to language in use in social practices, whilst 'Discourse' has to do with particular ways of acting, being, thinking and evaluating in different contexts, including particular ways of using non-verbal resources for the purposes of meaning-making.

(FOUCAULT, 2009) and to instituted power-knowledge relations. The command of different resources may index an uneven distribution of access to rights and benefits in society; we are aware, after all, that linguistic varieties may indicate one's belonging to a given social class, a given educational background, a given geographical origin etc.

Thus, we insist upon our distancing from the solidified, static and essentialist view of language, and upon our moving towards the possibility of investigating complex contemporary sociolinguistic phenomena. We align ourselves with Moita Lopes' (2013, p. 30) assertion that, in late modernity, "it is vital that we operate with a view of mobility in the study of language," since there is the urgent need on the part of applied research to dislodge old constructs and create new ones, more suitable to the comprehension of social diversity and of its contingentially operated crossings.

In that respect, we make use of Gee's (2001) notion of *D/discourse*. According to Gee, the simultaneous use of capitalized and non-capitalized D/d's points to the existence of a group of interlocked dimensions which previous literature has often regarded as isolated: the resources of verbal language, non-verbal elements, identities, beliefs, values, ideologies, lifestyles, emotions, forms of knowledge, hierarchies, etc. The notion of D/discourse is, therefore, an effort to overcome the micro/macro dichotomy in the study of language practices, since it places emphasis both on resources being used, situated in the *here-and-now* of enunciation, and on other meaning-making dimensions, such as those established in a translocal and historical spread. In differentiating between *discourse* and *Discourse*, Gee offers the analyst the possibility of conceptually identifying dimensions relevant to each moment in the analysed excerpts. Small-d discourse refers to language in use, to resources, to the realm of interaction, either in face-to-face settings, in a phone conversation, in the writing-and-reading of a text, in the online or in the offline world. Conversely, big-D discourse has to do with the other dimensions which, interwoven with/in the use of language, allow subjects to execute activities and enact identities (GEE, 2001).

> As we have already stated, in any interaction, meaning-making is not limited to the (un)conscious choice of words uttered by interlocutors. It is also vital to bear in mind, as maintained by Gee (2001), participants' bodies, clothes, gestures, actions, symbols, tools, technologies, values, attitudes, beliefs, emotions, as well as their relations of appropriateness/

inappropriateness to certain expectations regarding certain situations, moments in time, places and social identities.

We thus move on to the notion of *subject*, the discussion of which is seen as paramount. If, on the one hand, the subject has been repeatedly essentialised and seen as the source of reason in modernity, there is, on the other hand, the possibility of over-emphasising its constructed character, rendering it abstract and disembodied. For we have chosen to adhere to a socioconstructionist conception of subject – de-essentialised and de-naturalised, produced in the situated corporeal-discursive performances of people acting in the real world – we now resort to the Foucauldian notions of *power*, *knowledge* and *subjectivity*. According to Foucault (1995), the subject is in itself a crystallised, objectified construction which becomes "real" and embodied through the action of language.

As he historicises certain practices and institutions, the French philosopher convinces us that forms of knowledge are engendered and organised vis-à-vis a wish of power, "and end up working as conveyors of the very power they serve" (VEIGA-NETO, 2007, p. 117). Opposing commonsensical readings, Foucault (2009) demonstrates that power is not restricted to governors or sovereignties; nor is it an object to be possessed. In truth, the singular-form and capitalized Power does not even exist; it gives way to *power relations* which crisscross both local practices and the entire social body, spreading into multidimensional arrows across small interactions.

According to Foucault (2009), a society devoid of power relations is but an abstraction. Nonetheless, power is not necessarily repressive; it is necessary to consider its productive nature, its ability to produce subjects, objects, techniques and devices. As an example, we might think of the notion of *the individual*, produced by power and instituted by disciplinary techniques.

A power relation is defined as a way of action upon action itself; it is linked to the Other and to the opening-up of a field of answers, reactions, effects and possible inventions. Considering such premises, it is possible to see a power relation, even if it is not limited to discursive practices, which installs itself in a dialogical dynamic, standing close to the view of language put forth by the circle of Bakhtin/Voloshinov (1995), since there is no power without alterity or without effects/answers. All of which allows us to affirm that, in the use of language, power is always dialogical.

Through his research, Foucault offers us the perception that the privileged locus for the investigation of power relations in their discursive

practices and their constitution of subjects is to be found in institutions, insofar as these wish to strategically preserve themselves over time through the use of disciplinary techniques and through the placing of rules (often times explicit or quiet) and control procedures.

The author sustains that power and knowledge are mutually implied in the production of subjects: there is no power relation without the constitution of a field of knowledge. Furthermore, every point at which power is exercised is also a point at which knowledge is formed, and every knowledge guarantees the exercise of a certain power.

This intimate relation contributes to the comprehension of the dynamic of the demonstration class – our object of analysis – as a selection device which produces professional subjects, based on rules that are more often silent than explicit, with a view to assuring the maintenance of the school as an institution. As we speak of subjects, we do not refer merely to the discursive realm, but to the bodily one as well, since subjects are then materially constructed as bodies in action. To do so, we must distance ourselves from a disembodied notion of subject, typical of modernity's dualist imaginary, which assumes the existence of an essentialised body in opposition to a psychologised subject (LE BRETON, 2007). We must thus seek new ways of interpreting the meaning of the body in a contemporary socioconstructionist perspective.

In what concerns the notion of *reality,* we align ourselves with Berger and Luckman's (2003) seminal study emphasising the meanings of socioconstrution in everyday life. According to them, language, or D/discourse, continuously bestows upon subjects the required objectifications of reality; it is language that determines the order in which such objectifications are made sense of, and in which everyday life becomes meaningful to the subject. It is also language which sets one's coordinates in society, filling life with meaningful objects. Veiga-Neto (2007, p. 50), subscribing to a Foucauldian perspective, explains that "what we call reality is not an external piece of data to be accessed by reason, but rather the result of an interested construction. Reality is on the surface, in practices; there is no essence of its meaning."

Berger and Luckman (2003) also highlight a few elements concerning the social construction of reality which are interesting to the defence of this epistemology. These include: a) the fact that the reality of everyday life is organized around locally situated references, the "here" of my body and the "now" of my present; b) the fact that the reality of everyday life is presented

to the subject as an intersubjective world, one of joint participation; c) the manifold perspectives which human beings have of that common world; and d) the fact that the structure of time is coercive, not being afforded to the subject the possibility of wilfully inverting its sequences. Such characteristics show that, although reality is socially constructed through the action of language, the subject does not possess limitless freedom over it. There is always a sense of tension between the dominant social structures and the subject's possibilities of agency. Such an understanding is crucial to fighting back naïve criticisms against socioconstructionism, some of which might point out a drawback, such as the offering, to the subject, of absolute powers of construction. What such criticisms fail to acknowledge is that the subject itself is one of the "results", an effect of that construction. Of course, not being the source of produced meanings does not entail forfeiting the possibility of producing innovative ones.

The fourth notion to be approached is the notion of *knowledge*, which is directly related to the Foucauldian understanding of the term, as well as to the author's concept of *regimes of truth*. As regards the production of academic knowledge, it is important to highlight that investigations based upon a socioconstructionist epistemology do not search for the "truth" of knowledge; they understand that even their own results are socially, culturally and historically situated constructions, produced in accordance with a specific perspective and aligned with a scientific community and a given regime of truth (FOUCAULT, 2009). Their ideas are not *maps* or *mirrors* of the world (GERGEN, 2009), but rather resources with which to reflect upon and interact with multiple 'realities'. Different researchers, operationalising the same data and another or the same theoretical framework, would produce different analyses and different results.

Since no knowledge can be torn apart from regimes of truth, there is no neutral knowledge; all knowledge is political, states Foucault (1985). The philosopher affirms that knowledge is not a human faculty (natural, biological, cerebral), but an invention, an event linked to power, a strategy, a discursive construction situated in history. As a historical construction, knowledge itself produces its truths and its regimes of truth. "Truth is intimately linked to systems of power, which produce it and support it, and to power effects, which it induce and which, in turn, reproduce it" (FOUCAULT, 1985, p. 133).

Another element which contributes to characterising the knowledge produced by socioconstructionist studies is their motivation. Many studies

have been carried out with a view to promoting more ethically informed ways of thinking and living in society (WEINBERG, 2008). Such investigations foster a more active participation in the generation of cultural meanings associated with feminist groups, ethical and racial minorities, gays and lesbians, elderly people, poor people, deaf people, etc., in order to challenge the "truth" and the "facts" of the dominant order and, consequently, render possible the creation of new D/discourses and new ways of life – now and in the future (GERGEN, 2009).

Thus, another cornerstone of socioconstructionist studies is their direct opposition to fundamentalist/foundationalist studies in any field, particularly in philosophical investigations. Such an opposition to foundationalism does not mean that socioconstructionist works are devoid of any methodological rigour; it only produces the comprehension that there is no universal truth waiting to be unearthed, nor a universally valid method for the production of knowledge.

2 D/discourses and identities in a socioconstructionist perspective

Grounded on the socioconstructionist discussions on language, subject, reality and knowledge, we now move back to the relationships between D/discourse and social identities. We understand that placing emphasis on a professional teaching identity in a selection process constitutes a form of creating intelligibility about the ways in which D/discourses, guided by regimes of truth and situated in specific contexts, within and outside school, continually construct who teachers are, that is, the identities which they enact or take upon themselves.

Identities, in the epistemological perspective adopted in this study, are not to be defined as a fixed property we permanently possess, but rather as an ongoing process that takes place in discursive practices (MOITA LOPES, 2003, 2002; FABRÍCIO; MOITA LOPES, 2002; HALL, 2003; CASTELLS, 1999; LOURO, 2010). Moita Lopes (2002) sees discourse as a form of social action through which people (inter)act and negotiate meanings, which, in turn, are always situated in a particular socio-historical context. "In this social process of meaning-making, we construct the social world, we construct ourselves and our interlocutors" (MOITA LOPES, 2002, p. 63), with D/discourse being responsible for constituting and producing subjects. As argued by Fabrício and Bastos (2009), discursive practices and identitary

practices establish a permanent and bidirectional relation. Identities are, from a social point of view, constructed in the interaction between discourse participants; alterity (BAKHTIN, 2000), the relationship with the other, is a key part of that process.

Conversely, it is true that there are more crystallized identities, which, through the ritualized repetition of identitary-discursive practices (FABRÍCIO; BASTOS, 2009), end up establishing higher levels of fixity and permanence, thus producing the effects of stability to which Fabrício and Moita Lopes (2002) refer. The game between crystallised, normativised, hegemonic identities and other minority ones is established by power relations, which operate in society, constructing "asymmetries and hierarchies of every sort" (FABRÍCIO; BASTOS, 2009, p. 41).

Moita Lopes (2003, 2002) underscores three central characteristics of the understanding of social identities in the contemporary world: fragmentation, contradiction, and flux. In dialogue with such characteristics, Moita Lopes and Bastos (2010) stress the epistemological and ethical productivity of creating intelligibility about the identitary flux, thereby moving beyond the "traditional and unclear" identitary polarisations (black/white, male/female, teacher/student, etc.) and granting visibility to processes of hybridization, ambivalence and ambiguity, all of which are "situated in the frontiers in which ideas, people and cultures in flux interweave and mingle" (MOITA LOPES; BASTOS, 2010, p. 10).

Many predicates, informed by the ideas hitherto explored, have been commonly used in social research to describe and explain social identities in the contemporary world: contingent, transitory, flexible, dynamic, decentred, dislodged, multiple and intricate are some of them. Social identities are contingent and transitory, for they are produced and sustained in situated and emerging contexts, wherein a simple change can alter identities on display. They are flexible and dynamic, for they change and adapt to different contexts. They are decentred, dislodged, multiple and intricate, for a same subject can "possess" more than one identity at the same time. Overlapping and multidimensional, identities may complement one another, establishing a relation of coherence, or even stand in contradiction to one another (MOITA LOPES, 2003, 2002; LOURO, 2010).

Louro (2010, p. 12) maintains that "these multiple and distinct identities constitute subjects, insofar as these subjects are interpellated in different situations, institutions or social gatherings". In the case of our investigation, emphasis is placed upon the professional identities

of a teacher during her selection process, which are constituted in her corporeal-discursive performance. Even though, as argued by Louro (2010), professional identities, by force of the very institutional structure which interpellates subjects, are more likely to solidify themselves, such identities are likewise multiple, fragmented and in flux. Thus, such identities cannot be understood as an a-priori piece of data, but they must be seen as continuously produced in performative discursive practices marked by plurality and transformations in social institutions (FRIDMAN, 2000; BAUMAN, 2005).

3 Identitary performances: bodies and D/discourses in construction

Performance studies take us back, at first, to the work of sociologist Erving Goffman (1959), according to whom people in interaction are constantly performing and enacting a wide range of social roles. In that perspective, we are always performing in our practices. That does not lead to an essential falsehood of social relations; in fact, it is the very practice of performances that enables social relations to be established. It is by means of such movements that we construct the "reality" of our interactions. Pennycook (2007) maintains that the notion of performance also points to the somatic turn in social sciences, that is, the emergence of a body in that field of knowledge as a meaningful locus of/for discursive engagement.

In language studies, the discussion about *performance*, more specifically linked to the idea of performativity, is indebted to the works developed by philosophers John Austin and John Searle, and to their theory of speech acts. By venturing the basic assumption that language is used to act upon the world, the authors have established a fundamental relation, in language, between meaning and action (SCHFFRIN, 1994).

Taking Austin's proposal as a starting point, North-American philosopher Judith Butler develops a theory of performativity of gender identities. Her work might be understood, in her own words, as "a performative theory of gender acts which break with categories of body, sex, gender and sexuality, thereby promoting their subversive resignification and their proliferation beyond the binary structure" (BUTLER, 1990, p. 11). Such a structure is made possible and brought to light by the ever-persistent logic of opposition between male and female as the only existing possibilities of being.

Butler (1990), in her theoretical efforts to understand gender as performance, sustains that gender identity is one of the effects of gender acts, i.e, one of the effects of performance. She believes there is no such thing as an "I" preceding these acts; any pre-existing idea of subject or essence is discarded, in a philosophical movement, which we believe may be extended to other crossing identities. The central issue derived from that perspective is the political possibility of performativity (JAGGER, 2008). The philosopher explains that identitary categories, such as gender, are at once necessary and contingent. The subject's possibilities lay not in a free, limitless agency, but in forms of resistance through D/discourse – resistance to regimes of truth and operating structures of power. In relation to this work's object of study, it may be said that the teacher, in her classroom interactions, constructs forms of knowledge which enable her to act so as to continuously reconstruct her own professional identity.

The performative view can thus be said to contribute to an avoidance of the binaries which often constitute the concept of identity, and which can be traced back to an essentialist framework. We believe in the epistemological advantages of that theoretical-analytical choice in favour of a notion of identities produced in performance, that is, socioconstructed (MOITA LOPES, 2003) in interactions, in the ceaseless game between social constraints, at a translocal and transhistorical level, and the emergent, locally and historically situated. The notion of identitary performance, therefore, works as a way to create intelligibility between the continuous, changeable, "moving plot" (FABRÍCIO, 2006) of identitary processes, of what we are and what we can be. It aims to "[favour] the borders or the flux between two poles and offering an alternative lens to comprehend social life in traffic, in movement or in the in-betweens" *beyond identity*, as argued by Moita Lopes and Bastos (2010, p. 11).

Butler (2010, p. 152) believes that "performativity must be taken not as a singular and deliberate 'act', but rather as a reiterative and citational practice through which discourse produces the effects it nominates." Regarding the reiteration of a norm or of a set of norms, performativity conceals or disguises the conventions of which it is a repetition, thus erasing its discursive origin. An erasure of its own historicity (BUTLER, 2010), which produces an effect of naturalization.

Moita Lopes (2008, p. 15), in agreement with Butler (1990), affirms that "actions are performative insofar as they fabricate, based on body and discourse, a sense of essence for what is, in fact, fiction." The idea of fiction

is linked not to the falsehood of the subject, but to the idea that there is no essential or natural truth in subjects. They are produced in corporeal-discursive performances, in conformity with regimes of truth and power relations, which could, in fact, be different. Hence, to say that social identities are performative is not merely to say that they are enacted, but that they are produced in performance (BUTLER, 2003).

> From this perspective, gender, like grammar, like many other forms of identity or apparently structured properties, is a sedimentation of acts repeated over time within regulated contexts. And while giving the appearance of substance, of representing an underlying reality, it is actually a result of the repeated layering of acts that purport to correspond to an identity but actually produce it in the doing. Such a position also ties in to Bakhtin's view of the dialogic nature of language, suggesting that all language use carries histories of its former uses with it. (PENNYCOOK, 2007, p. 72).

An utterance's potential of being quoted, unhinged from its context and moved towards others, producing performative effects, is its very condition of possibility. This understanding of language is closely linked to the notion of dialogism, put forth by Bakhtin and his circle as a founding principle of language (BAKHTIN/VOLOSHINOV, 1995; BAKHTIN, 2000). The author believes that every D/discourse is doubly dialogical, that is, dialogue is established in two co-occurring and interdependent plans. In one of them, dialogue represents the product of interaction between one speaker and his/her interlocutor(s). In the other, D/discourse acts as a link in the infinite chain of Discourses, perpetually establishing relations with previously produced utterances, and triggering off answers from upcoming ones. As mentioned by Gee (2001, p. 18): "The Discourses we enact existed before each of us came on the scene and most of them will exist long after we have left the scene. Discourses, through our words and deeds, have talked to each other through history, and, in doing so, form human history."

In that sense, saying is always a response-reaction to other utterances (BAKHTIN, 2000), which enables us to affirm that a corporeal-discursive performance is dialogical, since, while it is produced for the benefit of an audience, which is, in turn, never passive, it always responds to other previously executed performances and to forthcoming ones – to repeat them, quote them, reply to them, parody them, etc. A given performance always hinges upon meanings constructed by others.

Thus, the Butlerian view of performance may be placed in conversation with Bauman and Brigg's (2008) anthropological pursuits. The authors understand that the study of performances illuminates the possibility of a clearer comprehension of the myriad facets of the use of language and of its inter-relations. Moreover, they emphasize an understanding of how language, in its performative dimension, is structured and socially distributed. The notion of performance is associated with a paradigm shift; it contributes to the critical study of heterogeneous stylistic resources and contextual meanings. Bauman and Briggs (2008, p. 189) add that "performance studies may open up a broader field of perspectives as to how language can be structured and how it can play different roles in social life."

The study of certain formal patterns, in certain events of performance, for instance, afford us the comprehension of the performative nature of identities, social relations and community-building (BAUMAN; BRIGGS, 2008). They also contribute to the establishment of linguistic tools which can be used in the analysis of pragmatic processes involved in interaction.

A crucial notion in the authors' theoretical perspective is that of text, taken as the unity which materialises D/discourse in performance. A text's performance (BAUMAN; BRIGGS, 2008; PENNYCOOK, 2007) operates in terms of the dynamics of *recontextualisation*, which is tantamount to saying that a text may be reported, rehearsed, translated, broadcast, quoted, summarized, parodied, amid other dialogical possibilities (BAKHTIN, 2000). As they have attempted to understand how the dynamics of recontextualization unfolds, anthropologists and folklorists have identified, in the study of performance, the possibility of addressing issues such as the social construction of reality and social reflexivity. That is only possible because, although performance is an event situated in a particular context, built by interacting participants, it responds to a broader sociocultural, political and economic context (BAUMAN; BRIGGS, 2008). This context is a constitutive dimension of the use of language (RAMPTON, 2006). Performance is not entirely contained in or limited to a single, circumscribed interaction: there is a relation between the micro-situated performance and its macro-social context. The performative operates with a view to constraining the reiteration of D/discourses which circulate in a diversity of social contexts. Furthermore, contextual aspects enable us to distinguish between what Coupland (2007) terms *mundane performance* and *high performance.*

The former concept refers to all performances which, by force of everyday repetition, achieve a status of naturalness, while the latter refers to events in which acts of language stand out for sharing certain specific characteristics. These are usually programmed events, circumscribed in time and space, which take place outside the chain of our day-to-day communicative routine; they are identified as uncommon or spectacular[3] (BLOMMAERT; RAMPTON, 2011). They are collaborative coordinated activities in which participants' roles are well defined. They are typically public events wherein the audience is positioned as part of a broader social collectivity (BAUMAN; BRIGGS, 2008; COUPLAND, 2007). Additionally, according to Bauman (1977, as mentioned by COUPLAND, 2007), another key feature is the intensity shared by these events as they produce their texts in performances, which accentuate interaction's ritual or scenic dimension. Based on the traits described by Bauman (1977), Coupland (2007) proposes a list of seven dimensions which, once emphasized, shed light on the intense character of such performances:

- *form:* poetic and metalinguistic functions of language are brought to the spotlight, and considerations of "style", in its everyday sense, become particularly salient;
- *meaning:* the presence of an intensity, a density and a depth in declarations or deeds, or, at least, the assuming thereof on the audience's part;
- *situation:* performers and audience are not only jointly present, but also "gathered" according to certain dispositional norms. People know what their roles are;
- *performer:* performers are those who establish interactional grounds, literally, or at least in participants' normative understanding, as regards the right of speech and sequencing options;
- *relation:* performances are meant for an active audience. Even though performances are often public, certain performances are projected for specific groups;

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[3] Rampton (2006) states that spectacular texts are all of those, which, being exceptional, draw people's attention and break expectations of regularity and co-occurrence. Blommaert and Rampton (2011) maintain that, if a spectacular practice or event is truly meaningful, it must be registered somehow in time and space.

- *achievement:* performances are enacted vis-à-vis more or less specific demands. Gains and losses are risks that are always involved; there are possibilities of praise and censorship, of good and bad execution;
- *repertoire:* performers and audience are usually sensitive to the given and the new in a performance. Performances may be versions of well-known texts, or at least belong to well-known genres. Particularly relevant is the possibility of innovative performances, as well as planning and rehearsal.

Thus, what sets high performance apart is its strongly reflexive character, and its likelihood of enabling recontextualization dynamics. In other words, the performed text unhinges itself from its local context and re-establishes itself as a reiterable text, which may be quoted and updated in other contexts (BAUMAN; BRIGGS, 2008). That process enables performance to incorporate aspects of a given context so that the resulting text will carry elements of its history of use. The transformation of D/ discourse into textual materiality, what the authors refer to as *entextualisation*, in high performance, somehow weakens its immediate situational grounding. The speech act's perception is heightened, which in turn produces the impression of an utterance which rises above its context, thereby granting the audience the possibility of assessing the performer's ability and talent. As indicated by Bauman and Briggs (2008, p. 188), "performances dislodge the use of heterogeneous stylistic resources, meanings susceptible to context, and conflicting ideologies, to an arena in which they can be critically scrutinized."

4 Entextualisations of corporeal-discursive performances of a teacher in a public selection

The data composing our corpus were generated through the audio-video recordings of a demonstration class in a public tender which aimed to select a Spanish teacher, in the field of Basic, Technical and Technological Teaching, for a school in the federal education network of the state of Rio de Janeiro. The investigation favoured the study of the corporeal-discursive performances of a participant to whom, for ethical reasons, we shall refer as Gabriela. The data were then transcribed and analysed in the light of the theoretical framework we have presented, and of the objectives established for this research.

Since videotaping represented a key aspect of our research, with ethical implications to all persons involved, acceptance and authorization

requests to the institution, the committee and the candidates were presented as early as possible. In the specific case of the candidate, such documents were presented one day before her demonstration class, when the topic of her class was randomly drawn up. The candidate, who claimed to understand the implications of the process, agreed to the videotaping of her class and to the generation of data for further academic research and publication.

The excerpt we present, as a way of illustrating our theoretical-analytical framework's productivity, refers to the initial minutes of Gabriela's (the teacher-candidate) demonstration class. There are a few interruptions on part of the committee's president, who is referred to in the transcription as André. Metapragmatically, the excerpt marks the "start of the class", and it lasts one minute and thirty-six seconds, as registered by the timer in the video-player, used for transcription purposes.

With the members of the committee all set, Gabriela positioned herself in front of the class, placed her material (her bag and her printed paper sheets) upon the table, and discursively situated the beginning of her demonstration class. The transcription, we repeat, was elaborated with a view to giving visibility both to the verbal dimension (linguistic and paralinguistic aspects) and to the non-verbal dimension[4] (proxemics, kinetic aspects, gestures, facial expressions, etc.) of the participant's corporeal-discursive performance. The discursive analysis privileges contextualisation cues (GUMPERZ, 1998), which illuminate the way in which participants collectively construct the world around them and make sense of it, in an articulation of macro- and micro-dimensions.

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[4] As regards the non-verbal dimension, we have chosen to present what seemed to us more relevant to the analysis and the comprehension of what is happening in the interactional event. Our choice was guided by a concern with the relationship between stabilized repetition and innovation, which is key to the adopted theoretical perspective.

EXCERPT: Start of the class (0:00 – 1:36)

		Verbal dimension	**Non-verbal dimension**
Gabriela	01	entonces me voy a entrar en clase.	After placing sheets and other materials on the table, she stretches her right arm towards the door as she looks at the members of the committee.
André	02	... so:lo el plan de clase.	Gabriela interrupts her moving-out-of-the-classroom movement and walks back to the teacher's table. Her facial expression indicates disappointment.
Gabriela	03	...ah:: si, el- hhhh (4.0)	Gabriela collects some sheets from the table and smiles uncomfortably.
André	04	son cuatro, no? (5.0)	
Gabriela	05	las hojitas les doy después (5.0)	Gabriela walks towards the members of the committee, looking at them, smiles, and hands them printed paper sheets.
André	06	... °gracias°. (5.0)	
Gabriela	07	ya empiezo... <u>sí</u>? (1.0)	Gabriela walks out of the classroom, carrying a wooden board (a closed-up flip chart).
André	08	Sí	
Gabriela	09 10 11 12 13 14	estar estu::ve, tener es tu::ve, ser es fui y también es ir. querer es qui::se, hacer es hi::ce, tra::je es para traer... andar andu::ve, poder es pu::do, dije es para decir. Poner es pu::se, haber es hu::be, <u>su</u>::pe es para saber.	Gabriella walks back into the classroom in a rhythmic fashion, singing a song which uses the melody of "La Cucaracha", a folkloric Spanish-language song, while she reads from a sheet in her left hand. With her right hand and her right arm stretched towards the floor, she carries the wooden board. She moves her body as if she were zigzagging and dancing through the space in front of the classroom, before the committee. She moves according to the song's cadence, stopping at every intonation change. As she stops singing, there is a smile on her face.
	15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27	... sé: que estáis extrañando que estoy <u>aquí</u> can<u>tando</u> <u>hoy</u> ... es que me desperté <u>muy</u> feliz, estoy <u>muy</u> feliz y quiero cantar. y esa musiquita=el sonido es familiar a voso:tros? Esta es una letrita que vamos aprender des<u>pués</u> ... pero hoy empecé cantando porque quiero hablar de un asunto que me gusta <u>mu</u>::cho, que tiene mucho que ver conmigo con mis- con mis-sentimientos, con mi vida y estoy feliz y quiero compartir con vosotros esta cuestión ...	As she slowly walks, she moves the hand carrying the paper sheet towards the table, going back and forth in relation to the middle of the classroom's frontal part. All the while, she carries the flip-chart in one hand and gesticulates with the paper sheets in the other.

Gabriela indicates the beginning of her corporeal-discursive performance to the members of committee by walking into the classroom and starting to enact her teacher-identity: "entonces me voy a entrar en clase." (line 01). That utterance defines her corporeal-discursive performance in the demonstration class as that of a candidate; it also indicates the (re)contextualisation of a class, which begins with the teacher's walking into the classroom, thereby demarcating her insertion in the time-space of the demonstration class. Her eyes, projected upon the members of the committee, ratify them as interlocutors, and her stretching of the arm towards the door conducts their attention to her upcoming movement. In that sequence, we may identify the reflexive-metapragmatic aspect of the interactional event as high performance, especially if we consider that Gabriella produces her actions in a ritualized way – in a way that allows for them to be decentred, unhinged from their immediate context. In other words, her act of walking out of the classroom only to walk back inside sets the beginning of her performance as a teacher-candidate in a public selection.

Nonetheless, Gabriela is interrupted by André, the committee's president, who verbally interpellates her: "...so:lo el plan de clase." (line 02). André demands the handing over of Gabriela's lesson plan – one of the constitutive steps of a demonstration class, which Gabriela seems to have forgotten. André's utterance is at once an answer to Gabriela's initial remark and a rupture in her corporeal-discursive performance. It may be seen as an answer if we analyse the non-verbal contextualisation cues: both her body and her eyes are aligned to the members of the committee. Still, it represents a rupture, insofar as the quintessential structure of participation in the "demonstration class" discursive genre does not feature any comments by the committee during the candidate's exposition. The action of requesting the lesson plan causes two frames of the speech genre to overlap: it is constitutive of the demonstration class, but not of the class *itself*, since the document is meant to serve the teacher himself/herself as a self-prescribed tool, or to be handed over to institutional instances which in general do not observe classes. The non-verbal cues produced by Gabriela – her facially expressed disappointment, her faint smile – construct her alignment as a candidate who realizes she has made a mistake. The whole dynamics emphasizes the hierarchical character of the identities at play. However, in lines 03 and 05, as she moves from an uncomfortable smile to

a more self-reliant one, Gabriela beacons to the members of committee that everything is fine. The candidate soon resumes her direct conversation with the members of the committee – "ya empiezo... sí?" (line 07) – requesting permission or acquiescence to (re)start her highly ritualized classroom performance.

Gabriela then (re)starts her "class", which is situated, at first, in the two overlapping frames: the public selection and the class. She walks out of the room and, as she walks back inside, she starts singing (lines 09 to 14). Her inward movement gives visibility to her body as a constitutive element of her identitary performance and of the teaching activity itself. The song (lines 09 to 14), recontextualised by Gabriela, recontextualises at least three Discourses or voices situated in three different plans, which construct different meanings and social identities, shedding light on the complexity of the interactional event. In one plan, the highly stylized bodily movement, synchronized with the melody, as well as the smile at the end of the song, produce the subjectivity of a person who sings "spontaneously" in order to display her/his happiness. In that first plan, there seems to be no didactic project, but rather the production of a frame of intimacy among interlocutors (Gabriela and her projected students) in the enacting of the class. In a second plan, the song's melody establishes a connection with aspects of a Hispanic culture, perhaps slightly stereotyped in our view, since it is "La cucaracha",[5] a well-known folkloric song frequently associated with Hispanicity in general. The third plan refers to the fact that the lyrics entextualise a Discourse which sustain a structural conception of language teaching and description, insofar as the text in Gabriela's version is but a formula for the memorization of irregular Spanish verbs in the indefinite past – which, in turn, tie in to the topic around which her class was supposed to revolve: "the uses and functions of past tenses in narrative texts." At the end of the song, the teacher ratifies her alignment as a person who sings because she is happy: "es que me desperté muy feliz, estoy muy feliz y quiero cantar" (lines 16 to 18), as we can identify through the use of verbal cues

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[5] *La Cucaracha* ("The cockroach") is a traditional Spanish-language folkloric song which belongs to the *corrido,* a greatly popular music style in Mexico during the Mexican Revolution. Although it is believed to possess Spanish origin, no studies have been able to prove it. According to journalist Ana Cecília Pujals, the *corrido* is a popular music style strongly linked to the social causes of the revolution. Available at: <http://www.elportaldemex ico.com/arte/musica/elcorrido.htm>

such as the predication *muy feliz*, its repetition, the prosodic emphasis given to the intensifying term, and her body's rhythm and movements.

To review once again some of the dimensions of performance proposed by Coupland (2007) in an extension of Bauman's (1997) work, it is particularly noteworthy that Gabriela's singing entrance into the demonstration class even further intensifies her highly stylized performance. As regards *form*, for example, we may argue that her singing abilities are not what would normally be evaluated in similar selections. The dimension of *meaning* is also intensified, if we understand that her interlocutors/evaluators would also have to ask themselves what singing that song means in that context. As for *repertoire,* we believe that it is probably shared, given that the melody corresponds to a well-known song of the Hispanic universe, and the lyrics contain a number of verbs which, regardless of differences in theoretical and pedagogical perspectives, constitute forms of knowledge which are relevant to Spanish teachers. That combination might, to a certain extent, be regarded as "innovative", for it would not represent a stable element of the "demonstration class" discursive genre. And, as an *achievement*, that performance entails a magnifying of the risks of gains and losses. Gabriela's overall results will hinge upon how the committee will evaluate her identitary performance as a Spanish teacher.

Once the song is over, the candidate accentuates the framing of the ongoing class in the emerging interaction plan by resorting to the localising indexes *hoy* and *aqui* – and she hints at the fact that her projected students may be reacting in bewilderment to her corporeal-discursive performance: "... sé: que estáis *extrañando* que estoy aquí cantando hoy..." (lines 15 and 16). Gabriela's utterance entextualises, in the means through which it constructs the expectations of projected students, a Discourse which sees the foreign language class as a territory devoid of emotions, and the teacher as a typically rational subject, which remains coherent under the logic of power relations normally taking place in the educational order of discourse. Gabriela reinforces her knowledge of that order of discourse by employing, as a contextualization cue, the verb "*sé:*". Nonetheless, as she enacts her performance, she proceeds to construct a place for emotions within the classroom setting, thereby bringing discursive friction to light.

In her acting out of the class, the candidate resorts to time and space deictic marks, localizing indexes, as well as personal indexes centred upon the *I*: "...sé: que estáis extrañando que estoy *aquí* cantando *hoy*..." (lines 15

to 16); "pero *hoy* empecé cantando" (line 21). Such cues situate the class in relation to a broader time sequence; in other words, that class is only one among others which came before it and will come afterwards. The deictic resources do not refer to the time-space of the demonstration class itself, but to the action produced in the high performance of the enacted class in which the teacher and students are participating.

To move back towards the heightened importance of the *I* in Gabriela's performance, marked by personal pronouns and first-person verb forms, we now underscore the excerpt "pero hoy *empecé* cantando porque *quiero* hablar de un asunto que *me* gusta mu::cho, que tiene mucho que ver *conmigo* con *mis-* con *mis* sentimientos, con *mi* vida y *estoy* feliz y *quiero* compartir con vosotros esta cuestión..." (lines 21 to 27), in which the candidate individualises herself as a subject, constructing herself as a happy person who wishes to share her happiness with others. The excerpt entextualises a D/discourse which challenges traditional expectations regarding typical classroom behaviour for teachers, something which seems inappropriate to the setting of a genre, which, in its sociocultural constraints, ascribes strictly professional roles to teacher and students, with no space left for relations akin to those established among friends, for instance.

The use she makes of the diminutive form in "musiquita" and "letrita" (lines 18 to 20), as she speaks directly to her group of projected students, signals the transposition of a sociolinguistic resource from Portuguese onto Spanish. It indexes the construction of the identitary performance of a teacher who treats her projected students as if they were children, in an entextualisation of the age-old stereotype of the kindergarten teacher. Gabriela moves about, but she remains in front of the classroom, thus preserving the sort of social distance which is typical of the traditional and hierarchized school model. The only exception is the moment at which she hands her lesson plan to the members of the committee.

Gabriela also positions her projected students as friends with whom she may share feelings and personal experiences: "quiero *compartir* con vosotros esta cuestión" (lines 26 and 27). The verb "compartir", *to share*, one of Gabriela's contextualisation cues, works as a metapragmatic descriptor; it enacts a language style typical of users and groups in social networks – something rather contemporary that is not part of the traditional educational model that socio-historically sustains the demonstration class.

We may understand how, in the performative event of a demonstration class, Gabriela (re)contextualises, in a highly stylised fashion, a class which begins with her entrance as a singing teacher. The deictic time and space indexes allow us to identify two institutional dimensions which overlap as frames previously established by the genre of the ongoing activity: a demonstration class, which is both a class oriented towards imaginary students, projected in the participant's discourse, and an examination, in which the candidate must demonstrate a series of competences and forms of knowledge, which will, in turn, be assessed by the evaluating committee.

In general, our analyses allow us to state that the corporeal-discursive performance enacted by the candidate in her demonstration class may be understood as an instance of high performance (COUPLAND, 2007). Gabriela produces her verbal and non-verbal actions in a markedly ritualised and stylised fashion, underscoring the reflective and metapragmatic qualities of language-in-use; when we consider that her performance is primarily directed at the committee, it potentialises her evaluation on the audience's part. In Gabriela's demonstration class performance, we can also identify strong friction between normative and emerging dimensions by means of the D/discourses she entextualises. Such discourses constitute the work of teaching, in general, and the teaching of Spanish, in specific, problematising what it might mean to be a Spanish teacher, or to take part in a public teacher selection in the contemporary Brazilian federal education network.

5 Final considerations

The epistemological challenge tackled by this text was about how it would be possible, in contemporary research in AL, to work from an articulation of interactional/situated dimensions of language practices and translocal/transhistorical ones. We have ventured the proposal that it might be fruitful to adopt a socioconstructionist, performative and dialogical perspective of D/discourse and social identities. In our understanding, such a perspective allows us to analyse multi-semiotic communicative resources with a view to contextualising the use of language without previously defining participants' identities or reifying their contexts.

The notion of performance, a key-word in anti-foundationalist philosophical endeavours related to the categories of gender, sexuality and race, as well as to the study of language, offers us the possibility of describing the identitary flux. Moreover, its integration into AL opens up meaningful

paths in the reflection about language and social identities, especially because of how it sheds new light upon the topics of action, corporeality, meaning and audience in the study of D/discourse.

By contrast, the dialogical perspective gains substantial importance in the task of comprehending the entextualisation of countless other Discourses through the dynamics of contextualisation and recontextualisation. As she enacts her high performance, Gabriela acts out a scene, along with her discourse, gestures and body language, discursive clashes which instil tension in all she does and in how she constructs herself in interaction. The researcher is then granted the possibility of analysing conceptions of class, teacher, language and language teaching, just to mention one professional field.

As regards teacher selection, we may argue that it is a highly institutionalised practice in schools of the federal network and in schools maintained by public universities. It ascribes specific roles to each participant: candidate, committee and audience. It aims to select and evaluate teacher-candidates who wish to start working in a school. It also gives momentum to a power device defined by the observation of a candidate's deeds in a well-defined interval of time and space.

In her class, Gabriela takes advantage of several models of what can be understood as a Spanish class in basic education. In the analysed excerpt, for instance, we can identify a hybridisation of communicative and structuralist teaching-learning traditions. Gabriela entextualises a series of Discourses which, in attrition with one another, attempt to say what a language teacher, a language class, and language teaching are in general. Structural conceptions of language teaching and description, still remarkably solid in our professional milieu, are placed next to reading-oriented work and activities about the nature of meaning-making. The profusion of conceptions helps create a tension between different choices regarding action in the classroom – a tension which, we might add, is quite responsive to recent modernity, a time of often contradictory and violent coexistence of many ways of being, living and thinking.

The participant also entextualises Discourses which add traction to the issue of subjectivity and emotions in the classroom. Thus, it becomes possible to challenge the traditional understanding of teacher evaluation as a *locus* of supposedly neutral and objective knowledge, and of the demonstration class itself as an instrument for the assessment of practical

knowledge. We understand that the analysis of such performances may contribute to academic production and to language teachers' qualification as a whole.

The demonstration class becomes an assessment tool which evaluates forms of knowledge that the institution, represented by the committee, regards as imperative to the work of teachers in that context. Forms of knowledge are directly linked to established power relations, and they point to the maintenance of teaching practices, which we consider to be traditional and underpinned by a strictly structuralist understanding of language.

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APPENDIX – Transcription conventions

...	pauses lasting less than a second
(1.5)	pauses timed in tenths of a second
.	descending intonation signalling the end of an utterance
?	ascending intonation signalling an interrogation
,	ongoing intonation signalling forthcoming utterances
-	abrupt stop
=	adjoining utterances
aquí	emphasis
°gracias°	spoken at a low voice
so:lo or ah::	prolonging of a sound
hh	aspiration or laughter