Universidade Federal de Alagoas

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Programa de Pós-Graduação em Letras e Lingüística

Área de Concentração: Língua Inglesa e suas Literaturas

TEACHER'S AND STUDENTS' BELIEFS ON LEARNING STRATEGIES IN AN EFL CLASSROOM

Simone Makiyama

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Dissertação apresentada ao Programa de Pós-Graduação em letras e Lingüística da Universidade Federal de Alagoas – UFAL, como requisito para obtenção do título de Mestre.

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SIMONE MAKIYAMA

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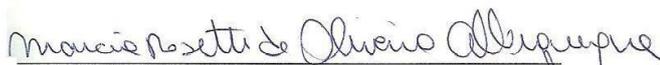
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ABSTRACT

The main objective of this investigation is to reflect upon how the teacher's and learners' beliefs give meaning to teaching and learning process and how they interact with the choice of language learning strategies as well as attempts to find out how these beliefs affect their approach to language development. Having Bakhtin's language and ideologies concepts as a starting point, this investigation is grounded on studies developed in Discourse Analysis and Applied Linguistics. Data was collected at Casa de Cultura Britânica, the extension English school that belongs to Languages Faculty of Federal University of Alagoas. Data-gathering procedures were conducted under the guise of ethnographical methodology and Discourse Theory. In order to pursue the beliefs that permeate EFL teaching and learning process, lesson observation is carried out once the classroom is the stage where discourses emerge. Discourses, in turn, give voice to the ideologies on which beliefs are founded. The corpus is constituted of audio recordings and respective transcription, questionnaires, interviews, field notes, articles from magazines and newspapers obtained via internet.

RESUMO

O principal objetivo deste estudo é refletir como as crenças do professor e alunos de língua inglesa dão sentidos ao processo de ensinar e aprender e como elas se relacionam com a escolha de estratégias bem como buscar entender como estas crenças afetam o seu fazer nesse processo. Tendo como ponto de partida conceitos de linguagem e ideologias de Bakhtin assim como bases teóricas nos estudos desenvolvidos pela Análise do Discurso e na Lingüística Aplicada, os dados foram coletados na Casa de Cultura Britânica, uma extensão da Faculdade de Letras da Universidade Federal de Alagoas. A coleta de dados foi conduzida sob a guia da metodologia etnográfica e da Teoria do Discurso. A fim de buscar as crenças que permeiam o ensino-aprendizagem de língua inglesa, observações de aula foram realizadas uma vez que a sala de aula é o palco onde os discursos que dão vozes às ideologias que as fundamentam emergem. O *corpus* se constitui de gravações de áudio e respectiva transcrições, questionários, entrevistas, notas de campo e artigos de revistas e jornais obtidos via internet.

MARCUSCHI'S TRANSCRIPTION TABLE[1]

T ………………………………………….. Teacher

S ………………………………………….. Students[2]

(+) or (1.5) …………………………..……… 0,5 second pause in speaking or the duration of the pause

/ ………………………………..……….. Interruption

: …………………………………………. Long vowels

(( )) ………………………………………….. Researcher's comments

/…/ ………………………………………….. Partial transcription

CAPITAL LETTER ….……….…..……….………Emphasis or stress

- ………………………………….………. Syllabic pronunciation

" ………………………………………….. Rising intonation,

' …………………………………………. Short pause in speaking

, …………………………………………. Falling intonation.

eh, né,hmm ………………………………………Hesitation

XXX ……………………..……………………. Parts in speaking that are not understandable.

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[1]from MARCUSCHI, L.A. **Análise da Conversação**. São Paulo: Ática, 1991.

[2] Different numbers following S indicate different students.

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INTRODUCTION

Due to the man's social nature, language plays a vital part to human kind as it enables life in community. For this reason, language has fascinated thinkers who have pursued studies regarding this matter. The first reports started in Greek philosophy with Plato's works, which exerted great influence on Western thinking.

Subsequently, territorial conquests widened this scope and aroused an ongoing interest in foreign languages. As a consequence, target languages started being taught for different reasons, ranging from cultural interchange to political purposes (SILVEIRA, 1999).

Nowadays, specific values in a community determine what foreign language must be learnt, as well as the criteria for its instruction, such as purpose and what language aspects to master (ALMEIDA FILHO, 1993). These values are the driving force that regulates target language education and the way teachers do their jobs. In addition, they also influence learners' approach to foreign language.

In Brazil, the English language is compulsory in the last cycles of Basic Education. In order to understand how the present situation has been established, it is necessary to contemplate the context in which foreign language education is inserted.

English became a dominant language throughout the 18th to early 20th century due to various reasons, from great writers in literature to industrial progress (BRETON, 2005). Despite the decline of the British Empire in the 20th century, the hegemony of English language has continued owing to the emergence of the United States in the international scene. Since the last decades of 20th century, there have been consistent technological and scientific breakthroughs in developed countries, especially in that country (MASCIA, 2001). In Brazil, the end of the dictatorship led to political changes and, consequently, a search for new educational policies. With the ongoing supremacy of the United States, not only in specialized research but also in cultural matters, e.g. films and music, the English language started to be seen as a necessary tool so as to allow people to be part of this process. Hence new educational documents started being outlined, and English language was included in the school curriculum. In this sense, Brazilian National Curricular Parameters (hereafter PCN)

postulate that progress in this new millennium establishes new educational requirements so that young people can handle the matters of adulthood with ease. Bearing this in mind, the justification of foreign language in the curriculum is based on the argument that it opens doors for the student in order to have a "self-perception as a human and a citizen" (BRASIL, 2000, p.19) as it provides a distance from his/her own language so as to contemplate a multifaceted world, composed by diverse ways of speaking and apprehending the world.

Although there is no intention here to get into deep discussion, it is paramount to draw attention to the fact that this objective contrasts with the Brazilian school reality. Few hours of lesson allocated per week, lack of language command by professionals, and overcrowded classes, to name just a few, are some of the obstacles that prevent foreign language instruction from reasonable accomplishment. Accordingly, English is seen as a distinguished good and whoever masters this knowledge is in high prestige.

In order to conciliate this question, the Ministry of Education justifies that the prevailing communication skill a student needs to master is reading. Despite the acknowledgment of the importance of the other abilities, different aspects and conditions of Brazilian public schools fail to cater for the other communicative skills: listening, speaking and writing. In addition to that, it is believed that the majority of the Brazilian population does not have opportunities to use oral abilities in their everyday life and the need of a foreign language is basically for "technical literature and leisure" reasons (*op.cit*., p. 20).

Nevertheless, once you undertake the enterprise of learning a new language, it is essential to acquire it as a whole, not its bits and pieces. Even in conditions that are far from ideal, being an experienced teacher allows me to believe that language learning is feasible, given the necessary changes to implement a foreign language course.

In this sense, teaching a non-primary language involves various features such as teaching and learning approaches of the teacher and students, among others (ALMEIDA FILHO, 1993). As well as that, in order to understand thoroughly not only the relationship between teachers and students but the various aspects that involve human nature, Breen (1985 *apud* BARCELOS, 2004) asserts that we also need to

"take […] expectations, […] and beliefs"[3] into account (p.125). These beliefs, in turn, comprehend the way people judge everything concerning human behaviour and learning, fashioned by their previous experience and their social cultural history.

Therefore, beliefs both teachers and students bring into the classroom environment are significant for the learning situation as they have deep influence on the way they see themselves in this process, their attitude towards learning and, consequently, their final result. As Ellis and Sinclair (1989) point out, learners have their own expectations about language learning, teacher's role and their own roles. Conversely, the teacher has assumptions of the ways that lead his/her students to the path of a successful language acquisition. For this reason, over the past decades, there has been a lot of scientific investigation of how such beliefs affect language learning. The next chapter will present an overview of the research in this domain in recent years.

Due to the significance of the role that beliefs play in educational settings, this matter called my attention while working as an EFL (English as a foreign language) teacher and having spent many years in this field allowed me to share and ponder my experience with my counterparts. The starting point of my interest in this matter emerged from the acknowledgment of differences between what teachers believe to be effective in language learning and what students usually do aiming the very same objective, which is noticeable through the ways they manage the target language. This made me feel curious about why people have different beliefs if they belong to the same educational circle. So, I decided to observe how these beliefs are manifested through the strategies both students and the teacher use to handle a new language. For example, why do some students prefer translating while some teachers avoid doing so or which activities are more used in the lessons?

This present study, therefore, focuses on the teacher's and learners' beliefs in terms of language learning strategies use in foreign language instruction and attempts to find out how these beliefs affect their action and, consequently, their outcome. I intend to identify their beliefs as well as their ideological foundations and their effects on both teacher's and students' behaviour, materialised by the means of the use of learning strategies.

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[3] All fragments are translated by this author unless otherwise stated.

Despite many studies in language teaching concerning this matter, beliefs are still food for thought, offering a great amount to be explored. As we can see in the next section about literature review, previous investigation is, in essence, cognitive-based. Some research reports on connections between beliefs and various facets of language teaching and learning, such as grammar and students' preferences. Also, Yang's findings (1999) shed light on the relationship between beliefs and learning strategy use among college students. However, do teacher's beliefs interact with the students'? In endeavouring to answer this question, this thesis comprehends not only learners' but also the teacher's beliefs, once this study understands that learning and teaching processes are interrelated phenomena since they are concomitant and have great mutual influence. For the same reason, this investigation takes the social element into account, as the scope of this study comprehends human subjects inserted in a social cultural context that affect their way of seeing themselves in these processes and, consequently, their learning beliefs.

Moreover, Almeida Filho (1993) and Kumaravadivelu (1998) affirm that mismatches between the ways students and teachers approach the language may cause problems and difficulties in its learning. As a consequence, both learners and teachers may feel frustrated once they fail to have a sense of achievement, and many times leading to beliefs *e.g.* learner's lack of talent for languages.

Being aware of these aspects allows teachers to reflect upon their way their teaching practice and, thus, re-signify the learning teaching process so as to promote more successful language acquisition. In this sense, I suppose that the identification of learning beliefs and by pondering the meanings that these beliefs give in language learning and teaching provide valuable insights on understanding how these elements determine learning and teaching practice. As Félix (1998 *apud* NONEMACHER, 2004, p. 81) states, "if a teacher improves his knowledge […], he is able to leave the level of intuition and beliefs to go forward and explain […] why he teaches the way he does and why he obtains the results he gets".

More than analysing what language beliefs and/or strategies make a good language learner, this research proposes to reflect upon how beliefs on language learning strategies, which give meaning to the teaching-learning process. This allows a comprehensive understanding of the English teaching practice, considering what the teacher and students do so as to accomplish language development and how they

behave facing possible mismatches concerning the strategies they believe that lead them to successful language learning. In order to undergo this analysis, elements of Discourse Theory and Ethnographical Methodology are employed in this investigation.

I believe that this dissertation may contribute to teachers' awareness of the variability present in the classroom and the primacy of taking this fact into consideration to promote more effective language learning. It is worth saying that the teacher's attitude analyzed in this study reflects the practice of many educators in EFL field. The objective of this investigation may provide teachers and researchers with better understanding of the role of beliefs and their connection with students' learning strategies in EFL.

In order to gather material for the *corpus* of the present study, data was collected at an extension private language school that belongs to the Faculty of Letters of Universidade Federal de Alagoas, where I currently work, fact that facilitates my access to the human subjects of this study as well as pedagogical school policies. Due to the nature of this school, most learners are university students but there are also learners with different backgrounds, since its goal is to offer language instruction to people who cannot afford to pay a private institution.

To present this thesis, the first chapters account for the literature review of essential concepts and relevant studies performed concerning language learning beliefs and learning strategies, as well as a survey of research done in these domains. Following this, the theoretical framework is presented, including a definition of English as a foreign language (EFL), relevant learning theories that underlie today's teaching practice, interfacing specialists in this field.

The next chapter deals with the methodological procedures, presenting the human subjects in this investigation, the *corpus* and the *locus* for data collection.

The last sessions comprehend the analysis of the *corpus* and the conclusion of this investigation and future extensions of the research, followed by reference and appendices.

As previously mentioned, this present study intends to analyse the relationship between language learning beliefs and the choice of language learning strategies through a social perspective. In this sense, aspects such as ideologies and human subjects' history are taken into account in this study so as to reflect the effects of social

factors on beliefs and learning strategies use. However, by no means does this thesis aim at absolute results. Rather, it expects to provide some contribution, as Wolcott (1992) says, to the "myriad of little *theories*" in the broader picture, which I take here as Applied Linguistics.

1. BELIEFS AND STRATEGIES: THE STATE OF ART

Owing to their prevalence in teaching and learning domain, not only beliefs but also learning strategies have been the focus of many researchers in the past decades. Although most of these studies are cognitive-oriented, it is pertinent to depict an overview of some relevant research in these areas in order to have a more comprehensive notion of how these studies have been conducted so far.

1.1. Beliefs, the Role of the School and Language Beliefs

A general definition of beliefs is given by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), who describe them as the ways people see themselves and their surroundings, as a result of the connection of two elements of the person's environment, be they an object, a value, a concept, an attribute or another person.

However, an inter-individual relationship is also necessary otherwise beliefs will not be established, once they are socially-constructed, and not a product of exclusively subjective reasoning. These beliefs (conscientiously or not) provide people with support to their action and ways of thinking.

Bourdieu (1968) affirms that the school has an important role in establishing beliefs. According to him, the school provides social heritage and converts it in "common individual awareness" (p.212), and thus integrates the individual in the community culture. As a consequence, students' perception and thoughts become more homogeneous and share more or less the same beliefs. Through the school system, values are conveyed, such as the relevance of what is studied, aptitude to learn, and difficulty of certain subjects (*op. cit.*). This fact can be evidenced in the analysis of this study, as both the teacher and students present similar beliefs related to language learning.

In this process, teachers must place their practice in accordance with their workplace. Being the authority designated by the educational institution and representing the school in the classroom, they have an important role in this matter as

they directly interact with the student, since everything teachers do (or do not) affect learners to different extents and, likewise, teachers' beliefs can also influence students' assumptions.

Among these beliefs, teacher and learners have convictions about how to approach the new language. These elements are dynamic and are developed in social interactions and compose the collective conscience of a community. Once they conceive a meaning to the individual, these ideas incorporate the person's individual conscience, constituting people's beliefs.

Based on these beliefs, both teacher and students establish which actions to take[4] so as to ensure good language learning. One of these actions concerns the adoption of learning strategies. It must be highlighted here that these strategies are not always consistent with their beliefs, fact that is detected in this investigation. Like language, beliefs are at many times incongruous with what these subjects actually do but are determined by the individual subject's discursive memory. That is why these discrepancies are not always deliberate and, by analysing their discourse, it is possible to reach their discursive formation, *i. e.* what can and must be said in a given situation.

By seeking foreign language command, a language teacher pursues a guarantee of good language development. For this reason, teaching is anything but an easy task: the teacher has to bear in mind all the principles that underlie his/her practice at the same time s/he has to deal with a wide range of variabilities, which can be represented by the learner, the context or the institution s/he works for, just to mention some examples. As Kramsch (1993) states, teaching is like a "juggling act" (p.3): teachers are constantly required to make decisions according to what they feel their students need, what is expected from them, their intuition of the situation. In effect, these factors can be contradictory with one another and teachers are not able to know which "balls" are about to fall on their hands and which should be "juggled up". However, based on their own judgement of what is happening in a specific moment of the lesson, teachers take action according to what they believe promote better learning.

Brown (2001) suggests that each teacher has his/her own approach, which:

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[4] As already mentioned, this process can be conscious or not.

> […] is the theoretically well informed global understanding of the process of learning and teaching. It is inspired by the interconnection of all […] reading and observing and discussing and teaching, and that interconnection underlies everything that you do in the classroom. (BROWN, 2001, p. 14)

In sum, a teaching approach is a systematised collection of experiences which guides what the teacher does in class. These experiences, in turn, provide the basis for their learning beliefs.

Almeida Filho (1993) asserts that, besides the teacher's approach, there is also the learners' approach, which corresponds to ways they learn and prepare themselves to use the target language in real contexts.

All these definitions show that an approach does not mean a set of "static principles", but a result of the interaction of some preconceptions derived from experience. It means that, on the one hand, students develop ways of learning founded on what they believe that optimizes learning according to their experience as language learners; on the other hand, teachers conceive their lessons according to basic principles of learning and teaching and their beliefs of what promotes effective learning grounded on their own history as a teacher/learner.

Having said that, what do language learning beliefs account for? Barcelos (2004) points out that different researchers have given different definitions and even diverse terms to learning beliefs. With reference to definitions, she characterises them as concepts both learners and teachers have about the teaching/learning process. She states that these ideas correspond to "ways of thinking, […] of seeing and perceiving the world" as a result of "an interactive process of interpretation and (re)signification" (BARCELOS *in* BARCELOS and ABRAHÃO, 2006, p.18). Lightbown and Spada (2006) add that "beliefs may be based on our own experience or that of people we have known" (p.53). Kudiess (2005) also states that they are founded on learners' "meaningful experiences". Lima (*in* BARCELOS and ABRAHÃO, 2006) concludes that they affect the process of decision-making. Woods (1996 *apud* BUZZO *et all*, 2002) postulates that, not only beliefs but also assumptions and knowledge (what he calls BAK) influence people's interpretation of the world. For Kajala (1995), it is essential to determine how these beliefs are formed in order to establish what is reckoned about target language instruction.

As we can observe above, there are different perspectives of beliefs which, in reality, are not contradictory and can be put together to form a broader definition. In this investigation, learning beliefs correspond to assumptions teachers and learners have about how to learn, which are product of their life experience. Despite presenting different terminology as already mentioned, this research will adopt the word *belief* as it is broader and thus suitable for the proposition of this study.

In agreement with Kajala and Barcelos's findings (2003 *apud* BARCELOS and ABRAÃO, 2006), among other features, beliefs are a) *dynamic*: as they can be changed over the time; b) *emergent*: socially and context affected; c) *experiential*: a result of the interaction between the individual and the environment; d) *mediated*: as tools to be used in the various interactive circumstances; e) *paradoxal and contradictory*: as they can function as a facilitator or an obstacle to learning[5]. In this study, this contradiction is also seen as incongruity with their action. All these features are taken into account in this investigation.

Hence, it is undeniable that the beliefs students and teachers bring into the classroom are determinant in the learning environment. The way they conceive the elements that lead to successful language acquisition, *e.g.* strategies and aptitude, affect how they deal with language and the teaching and learning process, and for this reason, beliefs constitute a relevant matter to account for in EFL field.

1.1.1. Research on Language Beliefs

Over the past twenty years, a lot of research has been done to investigate not only students' and the teacher's beliefs (BARCELOS, 2004), but also regarding the methodologies used in these investigations (SILVA, 2004). This growing interest is due to the fact that the focus of language learning has changed, from the product, *i.e.* the language system itself, to an emphasis on the process (BARCELOS, 2004). This concept was reinforced by the learner training movement as the student started to have a special place in the teaching process. In the following, an overview of some of the relevant studies done in this field is presented.

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[5] There are other characteristics mentioned. For further detail, see Barcelos and Abrahão, 2006.

These studies started in the mid-1980s (BARCELOS, 2004) and a lot of research in this field was based on a tool to survey teachers' and students' beliefs called *Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory* (BALLI), devised by Horwitz (1999). Her intention was to contemplate the most common beliefs students systematically use but her approach was essentially an individual one. She carried on the investigation in the area and concluded that this inventory fails to comprise all the beliefs and, in later studies, she suggests that this inventory could be used to compare beliefs among learners (HORWITZ, 1999).

As already postulated, BALLI has been a good starting point for researchers to scrutinise beliefs in second and foreign language learning, and they are gathered under five major categories, according to their features. One grouping refers to beliefs students have about *the degree of difficulty* the target language presents; another category concerns more *individual aptitude to learn* the new language, such as age and sex; beliefs about *the language learning process*, in turn, deal with more systematic features like grammar and translation; another group comprehends beliefs about *learner's motivation and expectation*; and, finally, beliefs about *communication* correspond to ideas students have about how to communicate and learn the target language, *i.e.*, the strategies they privilege in language learning. At first, the approach of this dissertation to beliefs intended to consider exclusively the last category. However, beliefs from other categories can determine which strategies to use in language instruction and, thus, are also included in this research. These aspects are covered when human subjects are interviewed (see Appendix 6).

Yang (1999) complements this theoretical concept with a proposition of learner's constructs based on two criteria: *metacognitive* sphere concerns beliefs on him/herself as a language learner, on the activity and on the strategy to best acquire the language; *motivational* domain, in turn, corresponds to expectations, objectives and affective features towards the new language.

In the beginning, investigations about language beliefs were incomplete since they fail to make a connection between what was said to what was done. However, the importance of taking the context into account is paramount so as to compare the learner's and teacher's statements with their action, through classroom observation (BARCELOS, 2004). In addition to that, the researcher is able to make considerations about the influence of the classroom environment on the learning process, as various

elements in this context have to interact with one another and are determinant in language instruction (BREEN, 1996).

For this reason, recent studies have been multifaceted in terms of methodologies and researches. This can be observed in the investigation undertaken in Sadalla's case study (1998), which analyses how the teacher's behaviour is affected by her thoughts. Through stimulated recall (in which the subject under study watches her own video recorded lessons), the teacher has the opportunity to reflect upon her own performance and to make considerations about the decisions she made. By doing so, Sadalla aimed to establish the connection between the teacher's thought and action.

Yang (1999) scrutinised college EFL students and the connection between their beliefs and the choice of learning strategies. Despite being dissonant at times, certain beliefs do affect certain learning strategies, *e.g.*, the belief of the relevance of learning spoken English leads to the emphasis on repetition and having American friends is a strategy used in order to improve oral skills. Finally, the researcher in question highlights the importance of teachers accounting for this matter when they plan their lessons.

Another investigation realized by Kudiess (2005) focused on language teachers' beliefs system, especially about grammar instruction in private language schools. Her study aimed at identifying and interpreting their beliefs, how they are originated and evolved, as well as the way they incorporate the teacher's beliefs system. In her investigation, she concludes that teachers consider grammar as a prevailing element in language instruction, which is approached in different ways, in accordance with their beliefs. She also understands that they are changeable and are influenced by the teachers' learning experience, the interaction with students, the material used and the institution.

Not only in-service but also pre-service teachers' beliefs have also been analysed. Freudenberger and Rottava (2004) investigated the formation of teaching beliefs in a university course, in which future language teachers in the second and sixth semesters were interviewed. These researchers concluded that beliefs of these two groups vary according to their learning experience and, consequently, they can change over time.

There are also studies relating both the teacher and students' assumptions. Moraes's studies (*in* BARCELOS and ABRAÃO, 2006) deals with a teacher's and her students' beliefs on both evaluation and learning and teaching process, and she found out that the learners' beliefs on this last issue have changed due to the teacher's influence.

Eslami-Rasekh and Valizadeh (2004), in turn, focused on learners' beliefs on their preferences for learning activities in General English courses. In their study, they compare learners' and instructors' opinion about learners' preferences, and they found out that there are some mismatches concerning teacher's and students' favourite activities, and that the former (i.e. the teacher) is not always aware of these differences. Their findings shed light on ways of developing material to cater for students' needs.

Thus, language learning beliefs, attitudes and approaches "represent specific moments in their lives as learners and they [beliefs, attitudes and approaches] have been contextualized within specific language learning experience interpretation in specific educational and social contexts" (NUNAN, 2000 *apud* BARCELOS, 2004). In this sense, without understanding the context both teacher and students are inserted in, it is not feasible to analyse their beliefs. More than conceiving beliefs as correct or not, they must be seen as resources they use to deal with the various learning contexts.

In sum, this overview shows some research driven in this domain. As we can see, to date, most of the investigation in this area is cognitive-oriented. Although these studies have demonstrated the significance of beliefs in educational settings, they fail to account for the importance of social cultural aspects in belief formation. For this reason, this study intends to undergo a social approach as this investigation sees beliefs as a product of people's interactions in community as well. The human subject, the immediate context and the sociocultural background are essential elements so that meanings are produced, in which each one affects and is affected by the others and, consequently, beliefs are formed.

As already postulated, beliefs are dynamic as they not only affect people's behaviour but also can be changed by the context. Being a social event (BREEN, 1996), learning is a collectively constructed activity, in which all participants of this process take an active part, by providing and interpreting the data brought to the learning environment. As previously noted, more than judging, we have to examine

how teachers and learners are affected by their beliefs in decision-making process (WOODS, 1996 *apud* BARCELOS 2004). Learning and teaching process, as the name suggests, is a shared activity in which the teacher and students partake the commitment of promoting language learning. One does not occur without the other.

1.2. The Learner and Learning Strategies

Teachers and students have beliefs related to what promotes more effective foreign language learning. Therefore, they learn and/or develop ways of reaching their objectives. In this sense, they determine the strategies to approach the new language (like beliefs, this process is not always conscious). This may be the reason why there have been considerations about the connection between good language learners and the adoption of certain habits in dealing with learning (CARROLL, 1977; ELLIS and SINCLAIR, 1989; OXFORD, 1990; LIGHTBOWN and SPADA, 2006).

Breen (1996) proposes three constructs of language learners according to the way they handle a new language. The first is the *interpretative learner*, who tries to cope with the message in the target language with meaning, even if s/he cannot understand all the sounds that come with it. The second type is the *accommodating learner*, who organizes the target language data into various interlanguages and assimilates it until s/he is able to use it properly. This construct explains how language input and learner's mental processes interact but it fails to account for the differences between language learners' pace and outcome, leading to outline the *strategic learner*. This construct comprehends the ways students deal with foreign language so that learning becomes more successful or enjoyable.

Although he concludes that the three types are in a continuum and are also coexistent, the strategic learner has been food for thought by being a new scope of investigation in the field of foreign language learning and thus reconsiderations concerning this construct have been made (SANTOS, 2004). Despite the discrepancies, strategies provide some insights into the way learners conceive their learning based on the beliefs they have about language learning.

Strategy is a term which has come along with mankind since immemorial times. It originally referred to a position of command in war or generalship

(CHIAVENATO; SAPIRO, 2004). In 330 B.C., during the time of Alexander, the Great, its definition had already changed into ways to beat the enemies. Throughout history, the application of strategies has reached other areas, such as politics, business and sports (CHIAVENATO and SAPIRO, 2004). Due to this diversity, an exact definition of strategy is rather complex, varying considerably according to the area of concentration. However distinct these fields are, simply put, strategy implies actions to be taken in order to be successful.

In language realm, the notion of learning strategy was introduced by Selinker in 1972. In his studies about Interlanguage (RICHARDS, 1980), it is characterized by attempts of learners to provide order and structure to the linguistic input by a gradual process of trial and error and hypothesis testing. He delineates central processes through which learners employ some strategies so as to use the new language meaningfully, such as language simplification. So, initial studies about strategies in target language learning had a slightly different emphasis from the focus of investigation, compared to those which have been carried out to date. In essence, current investigation in learning strategies has also concentrated on scrutinising what makes a good language learner (SANTOS, 2004), by categorising strategies and diagnosing which ones lead to successful language acquisition.

Moreover, some of the definitions in this field cover a rather broad spectrum and are essentially cognitive-based (*op. cit.*). Cohen (1996 *apud* PAIVA, 1998), for example, affirms that learning strategies are "conscious behaviour and thought" employed by learners to handle the new language and adapt learning to their individualities. This is rather difficult to be determined once not every behaviour and thought related to strategies are conscious and therefore not always interdependent. Oxford (1990), in turn, conceives learning strategies as mechanisms employed by students to optimize their learning, whose reasons can be diversified, *e.g.* to make this process more pleasant or faster. Likewise, Wenden (1987 *apud* STEVICK, 1990) defines them as tools that enhance language development and highly influence language instruction. Nonetheless, he makes a distinction between learning strategies and learning behaviours, like individual features which can enhance learning (*op. cit.*). Named as study skills by Ellis and Sinclair (1989), strategies allow students to be more successful and responsible for their learning. Despite these concepts regarding learning strategies can be quite divergent, all of them pursue the idea of what makes a good

language learner, dealing with ways learners make use with the intention of optimizing their language development. Notwithstanding, the prescription of which learning strategies are more effective is a hard task.

In his review of terminology in language learning research, Stevick (1990) draws the attention to the dualism body-mind that the term *learning strategy* accounts for. This difficulty in determining what these strategies really shelter derives from what he calls the Outside-Inside Problem. This refers to the dilemma of establishing a clear connection between mental entities and external actions. As previously stated, these two activities can be incongruous for failing to have a plain cause-effect configuration, once this is not always a conscious process, being conditioned to other elements, such as ideology and social relations.

In this present inquiry, more than mental resources to handle target language, strategies are also understood as a result of the social activity in which individuals get in contact with different means of dealing with learning and overcoming problems, and because these mechanisms are not always conscious, they can be contradictory. In effect, language learning strategies are resources that both teachers and students lay hold of in order to give meanings to their learning process, ideologically traversed and not always consonant with their beliefs.

As already postulated, most of the studies in this field have considered strategies as a means to distinguish good and poor language learners due to their appropriate strategy use, and research in this area has assumed four basic principles (SANTOS, 2004): a) strategies are individual; b) they influence target language learning; c) they are subject to many variabilities such as task and learners' individual characteristics; d) they can be trained.

Due to these assumptions, research in learning strategies has had two main objectives: students' strategy training and student's self-direction so as to promote more successful learning. This can be noticed in Ellis and Sinclair's material (1989), which advocates that learners should be "trained" in order to use suitable learning strategies and consequently, "become more effective learners" and "take on more responsibility for their own learning" (p. 2). This last postulation is more related to students being self-directed, and it is one of the strongest assumptions evidenced in the analysis of this investigation.

In accordance with Oxford (1990), learning strategies present various characteristics. Basically, they aim at language competence and contribute to learner's self-direction. They are also employed to solve a problem, *e.g.* to memorize vocabulary, and are affected by many variables, such as the teacher and learner's motivation. They also comprehend many functions, e.g. cognitive, affective and social.

Oxford also devised a "system of language learning strategies" or SILL (*op. cit.* p.14), in which she classified them into *direct strategies* (which exert direct influence on the new language learning) and *indirect strategies* (which give support to direct strategies and help students to manage their learning but do not deal directly with the new language). These strategies[6] are subdivided, as follows:

SILL - System of Language Learning Strategies Table	
Direct Strategies	**Indirect Strategies**
• Memory	• Metacognitive
• Cognitive	• Affective
• Compensation	• Social

Based on research undertaken by different authors, Yang (1999) suggests that there is a relationship between motivation and the use of learning strategies. She found out that this feature is likely to affect students' dedication to language learning and selection of activities. According to this author, beliefs can affect effective use of learning strategies which, in turn, may convey higher motivation. This order, however, is not fixed: in accordance with her, motivation can also lead to effective strategies use and,, thus it can affect beliefs. For this reason, this present research ponders the effect of students' motivation in their learning process in this analysis.

In line with Bandura (1994), motivation can also be affected by what he calls self-efficacy, that is, one's belief about their ability to perform a task. Apart from motivation, this feature may influence their feelings and behaviour towards what to be accomplished. In other words, self-efficacy has an effect on people affectively and on

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[6] For further detail, see OXFORD, 1990.

how they manage the various challenges assigned. Coming to language instructional settings, it can be said that this aspect may establish learners' choice of strategies when handling the new language.

Nevertheless, highlighting the importance of motivation in language learning is, as Revuz (1998) suggests, "to break into an open door" (p.216). According to this author, the fact that this door is open does not imply that it will be crossed over. If so, foreign language methods would have obtained much better results than the ones they actually do. Crediting the success in language development to motivation is to simplify the whole process of acquiring a new language, neglecting complex features that language involves, which will be mentioned in further detail in Section 2.2.

In conclusion, literature in this field understands learning strategies as procedures to enhance cognitive behaviour, in which motivation plays a considerable part in determining the resources so as to promote successful language development. Despite valuable contributions to this domain, such as the learning strategies inventory, which systematised the research in this area, these studies are limited as they do not reach the social milieu where these strategies are outlined. Indeed, at the expense of the analysis, this dissertation adopts Oxford's SILL as a starting point to scrutinise learning strategies despite controversies about the efficacy of strategy inventories. However, it is paramount to emphasize the fact that strategies are understood as being socially-constructed in this study and for this reason, it is necessary to take the sociocultural context into account in order to develop a more comprehensive investigation concerning this matter.

1.2.1. Research on Language Learning Strategies

Research in this field analyses different facets of language teaching and learning. This section presents a survey of some studies with reference to this area.

For example, Paiva (1998) investigated a group of good language learners to access their individual strategies for a period of three years in a university in Brazil. Through compositions, students reported their procedures to help their language development. She concludes that students present different strategies and learning styles, which determine their final outcome. Also, diverse contexts can influence their

learning, and the classroom is only one factor in this process, and she suggests that the teacher should encourage students to be more responsible for their learning.

Gregersen *et all.* (2001) undertook a study case investigating learning strategies used by good and poor language university students from basic level and compared them to more advanced students under the same circumstances so as to check whether strategies change over time. They found that effective language strategies at lower levels may turn into crutches at a more proficient stage and learning strategy training must acknowledge these differences.

Costa and Boruchovitch (2004) studied the relationship between learning strategies and anxiety levels in Brazilian students from state schools through an anxiety inventory and a structure interview to identify the strategies they use. They found out that this connection is not as significant as they expected, fact they regard as a result of an inadequacy of the method for measuring the anxiety degree. They suggest that different levels of anxiety may affect the *adequate* use of strategies (emphasis added). However, they propose further investigation associating these two features.

These are some of the studies about learning strategies undertaken so far. As previously noted, most of the investigation about strategies has cognitive underpinnings, especially because the inventories to scrutinise this matter are mental-oriented. This fact produced a number of studies in this area with the same perspective, pursuing ways of diagnosing and prescribing the good language learner.

However, learning strategies are part of the conscience of the human subject, not only social but also historically tailored through learning and life experience. In addition to that, many attempts to explore language learning process fail to acknowledge the wholeness of the language, *i.e.*, disregarding its very first function: the social activity and the effect of this interaction upon the interlocutors. As Santos (2004) postulates:

> The picture of a thinking and disembodied learner cannot account for the complexities of learning […]. An individual who learns exclusively through the exercise of mental mechanisms does not correspond to what the language learner

is. This artificial individual is not a learner with whom language teachers interact everyday in the classroom. (p.178).

Hence in order to undergo a more comprehensive investigation in this field, the learner cannot be approached through the mental/social dichotomy. In effect, the multidisciplinary character of the realm of non-primary languages has led to a diversity of studies and thus enlarged the scope of the research, enabling a broader understanding of this area (SANTOS, 2004).

Being a prevailing feature in foreign language learning and having made the initial considerations, this study analyses the procedures of a teacher and his group of students of an EFL classroom, in order to identify beliefs that underlie their choices of the strategies to manage the target language. This present investigation also makes considerations on how these beliefs give them meanings in the teaching and learning process, as well as the role of ideologies in tailoring these beliefs.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Once the objective of this research is to reflect upon beliefs that underlie both teacher's and students' action towards the language learning process, it is necessary to understand how foreign languages have been taught so far, and the most relevant theoretical trends that underlie today's thinking. In addition, in order to apprehend how beliefs are formed, it is necessary to construe the role of ideologies in this process, as well as to present relevant concepts for this investigation. Hence, this chapter comprehends the theoretical foundation so as to ground this present study.

2.1. Brief Overview of Most Influential Language Theories in Learning and Teaching Methodologies

It has been only over the last two centuries that "the language-teaching profession was involved in a search" (BROWN, 2001, p. 14) in order to conceive how foreign language learning occurs in order to promote successful acquisition. To date, many theories have been developed with this aim. Conscientiously or not, these theories permeate teachers' practice as they are "a helpful guidepost" (WOLCOTT, 1992, p. 8) to what they believe to lead to effective language learning.

According to Mitchell and Myles (2004), a theory is a "more or less abstract set of claims about units that are significant within the phenomenon under study, the relationships that exist between them, and the processes that bring about change"(p.7). Moreover, Wolcott (1992) states that a theory bears researchers' social background as well as guides their work. In sum, a theory not only gives a researcher support to explain an event under investigation and the relations between its elements, but also it is a result of his/her social and historical experience.

Based on that, it can be said that a theory guides people's performance in instructional settings. Because of the nature of this investigation, I will depict five most relevant studies to the field of EFL that have been developed since last century, and which are pertinent to the present investigation, presenting a brief historical

overview about the theories in this area in order to make connections between the human subjects' beliefs and the ideas that rule them.

2.1.1. Behaviourism

One of the most influential learning theories in the twentieth century is Behaviourism. In simple words, it postulates that learning is determined by the environment, which provides stimuli. These, in turn, will be responded and, if this response is desirable, it will be reinforced. Thus, language learning is promoted through observable behaviour (in which the learner reproduces, by the means of repetition) and through practice of language forms (form manipulation)[7] (LIGHTBOWN and SPADA, 2000).

Brought to foreign language learning, this theory inspired methods that stimulate learning via language models, intensive repetition and model drilling. In this way, errors are seen as the consequence of "bad habits", and, therefore, should be eliminated by the teacher.

In terms of language teaching methodology, this theory gives support to Structural Teaching Approach, in which language drilling is the key-exercise to automate language structures.

2.1.2. Innatism and Chomsky's contribution to second and foreign language acquisition

The behaviourist perspective of language acquisition was put into question by Chomsky's critique of this theory. A central part of his thinking is that language behaviour involves more than "mechanically producing memorized strings of learned responses" (OMAGGIO, 1986, p. 26) but rather, it implies the production of meaning and creativity, *i.e.*, novel utterances which are produced and interpreted in accordance with an abstract language system that underlies this sentence formation.

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[7] Lightbown and Spada (2000) illustrate these two features through some examples of 24-month children learning their mother tongue. When an adult says, "*That's a carrot*", the child imitates "*carrot*"; after this moment, the child starts manipulating with the language by uttering: "*He eat carrot. The other one eat carrot. They both eat carrot*" (LIGHTBOWN and SPADA, 2000, p. 11)

Although Chomsky acknowledges the importance of other features that regulate language, such as psychological aspects and social conditions, this theory is essentially linguistic. His conception deals more with the *competence, i.e.,* the abstract support that allows speakers to be able to use the language, than with the use of language knowledge in real life, which he calls *performance* (MITCHELL and MYLES, 2004).

Moreover, he advocates that every person has an innate ability to learn languages. Otherwise stated, his theory postulates that every human being has a universal set of rules that underlie human languages, which allows resemblance among them (*op. cit.*). This *Universal Grammar* would enable individuals to seek right hypotheses on how language systems operate. Contemporaneous studies in psycholinguistics corroborate this idea by pointing that, in spite of individual variability, children go through the same stages, regardless the language they learn.

Despite having investigated first language acquisition, Chomsky's ideas triggered great influence on second and foreign language studies and gave new directions to this field, in the sense that learning shifted from being an external process to the individual, to a mental activity. These ideas promoted the emergence of innatist-based studies, once language is developed from the individual, and not implanted by some outside agent. In other words, language acquisition is accomplished through cognitive processes, via own individual's mental apparatus, grounded on an internal "natural grammar", since human languages share similar elements. In this way, the speaker is the one who controls language acquisition, produces and interprets utterances, thus, enabling the creative aspect of the language.

Chomsky's theory also inspired studies related to Error Analysis. The shift of the focus of linguistic studies from a behaviorist standing point to a more cognitive perspective made possible for language teaching to concentrate on a study of learning, instead of teaching. In this context, learner's errors in both speech and writing are examined and classified (BOHN and VANDRESSEN, 1988, RICHARDS, 1980, BROWN, 2004). On that account, mistakes are part of the natural process of language acquisition, as learners hypothesize about the target language system and these hypotheses are grammatically logical in their own terms.

Indeed, Chomsky's concepts have great influence on later works in language learning field, and pervade today's teaching methodologies. The fact that most of

studies presented so far are basically cognitive-oriented corroborates this idea and elements of his theory are noticeable throughout this inquiry.

2.1.3. Pragmatics

Unlike linguistic previous studies whose focus was on language system (Cf. SAUSSURE, 1988, WEEDWOOD, 2002), Pragmatics linguists turn their attention to language use. In line with this perspective, external elements are taken into account, such as the interlocutors and, in special, the context.

Based on the philosophy of language, the central assumption of this theory is concerned with the linguistic choices speakers make in social interactions and the effect they (their choices) cause on interlocutors, catering for communication needs (WEEDWOOD, 2002). Otherwise stated, our speech is governed by social rules that regulate what can be said.

Being language a social act, its prior function is to perform actions (ARMENGAUD, 2006). This action can be from different natures, such as to persuade, to apologise or to ask a question (*op. cit.*). These speech acts cause different effects on the interlocutor, such as irritation or flattery. In other words, the speaker acts on the interlocutor through speech.

In Pragmatics, it is believed that errors must be analyzed considering "the speech acts that learners are seeking to perform, and […] the ways they exploit the immediate social, physical and discursive context to help them make meaning" (MITCHELL and MYLES, 2004, p. 131). That is to say, errors in Pragmatics are at a different level of the more traditional models of language, such as phonological and syntactic standards (WEEDWOOD, 2002).

As Pragmatics is a quite new field of study, its parameters have not been fully established so far, allowing numerous studies concerning this theory in the future.

In terms of teaching, Pragmatics inspired a lot of research on second and foreign language due to the emphasis on the relevance of the context and social aspect of the language, thus, influencing many methods and approaches that focus on language functions and speech acts, such as Communicative Approach.

2.1.4. The Communicative Approach

Under the influence of Pragmatics and Innatism, the Communicative Approach is one of the most present teaching approaches to date. In *Teaching Language as Communication*, Widdowson (1983) puts forward that language should be taught regarding its communicative aspect. In line with this theory, knowing a language is not only a matter of formulating and understanding correct sentences but it also involves accomplishing "a communicative purpose" (p. 3), *i.e.*, to be able to know how to appropriately use the language in the various communicative situations. That is to say, mastering a language implies the ability of choosing suitable linguistic items in accordance with communicative contexts.

Like Saussure (1988), who establishes the dichotomy *langue* (language form) and *parole* (language behaviour), and Chomsky's Universal Grammar concepts of *competence* and *performance* (LIGHTBOWN and SPADA, 2000, WEEWOOD, 2002), the Communicative Approach outlines *language usage* (abstract language system) in opposition to *language use* (meaningful communicative behaviour). Although both events are simultaneous when language is employed, Widdowson (1983) affirms that these two features can be separated at the expense of language learning. In terms of language teaching, language usage is covered to allow the accomplishment of language use, *i.e.*, the meaningful manifestation of the language. For this reason, this approach does not oppose to techniques employed by other teaching methodologies such as drilling and translation, which focus exclusively on the form of the language, as long as they help students to handle the language meaningfully.

Being communication the driving force of language learning, this theory advocates that the activities employed to promote language development must be meaningful and in accordance with the students' level so that they are able to use the target language in real communicative situations (RICHARDS and RODGERS, 2001).

This approach states the relevance of integrated development of language skills, namely as *aural* (speaking and listening) and *visual* (reading and writing), and *receptive* (listening and reading) and *productive* (speaking and writing). Moreover, it advocates that the learner has an active role in this learning process, thus, assuming responsibility for their learning situation.

As we can see, the influence of Chomsky's ideas is evident in the Communicative Approach, through notions of linguistic behaviour implying creativity and novel utterances, and the learner's control of their learning, clear aspects present in this methodology.

I would dare to say that the Communicative Approach is currently one of the most influential EFL teaching methodologies at language schools in Brazil to date. Being in this field for many years has allowed me to testify the widespread adoption of course books which advocate being in line with this approach, as well as teaching resources which have sustained this methodology. As a consequence, the discourse of this approach is well-established among EFL teachers and language institutions.

There have been other alternative teaching methods which try to replace the Communicative Approach but not as successful as this theory.

2.1.5. Sociocultural Approach

This approach believes that language is acquired like other human skills, and suggests the inexistence of particular brain mechanisms with such a function and the emphasis of the social nature of learning process (LIGHTBOWN and SPADA, 2000; MITCHELL and MYLES, 2004). In this perspective, language learning occurs under the influence of the environment.

Environment here is not seen as just a supply of input but where interaction plays a key role to promote learning, in which language is a mediated process. In other words, people do not interact directly with their surroundings but they use the language as an activity to intervene the interface with others and themselves. This approach sees language learning as a continuum whose starting point is social ending to individual; likewise learning initiates from the interpersonal process (social interaction) to intrapersonal process (subjective activity).

Developmental psychologist Jean Piaget's studies about children's learning contributed for outlining their development stages through which children experience and he comes to the conclusion that language is a great indicator to determine in which stage the child might be. Despite agreeing with Piaget in many points, one of the most influential psychologists in language learning studies, Lev Vygotsky, concluded that

both language development and teaching should not be seen as separate elements but rather learning is the product of social interaction (VYGOSTSKY, 2002). Bearing this in mind, he devised the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which, in simple words, corresponds to a metaphorical place where a child manages to realize a task (an activity she would not be able to do so on her own) with the help of another. Therefore, in line with this theory, people's cognitive development is the result of their experience, in which thought is tailored by language.

Brought to foreign language learning, ZPD has initially been interpreted as a process involving a learner and an expert, and then becomes more comprehensive, in which two learners can be the interlocutors in an interactive activity (LIGHTBOWN and SPADA, 2000). Furthermore, the ambitious attempt to encapsulate both social and cognitive features has both appealed and challenged target language educators. However, investigation concerning language learners' outcome has posed drawbacks to explain researchers' results as they found hard to establish if learning was due to ZPD or to target language exposure[8]. Nevertheless, it seems that sociocultural theories still provide language teachers with alternative ways to deal with foreign language learning and has been food for thought in terms of how to handle classroom issues, such as interaction and learning strategies.

2.2. Language, Foreign Language and Implications in Language Teaching

Lev Vygotsky's theory (see previous session) meets the ideas of another Russian thinker, Mikhail Bakhtin (1990), who considers language as a social activity in which every utterance in a speech community (that is, meaning materialised through language inserted in a given context) is an essential feature to verbal communication. According to him, these utterances are formed by signs, ideologically constructed elements that reflect the logics of a community and integrate the social consciousness. For this reason, Leontiev (2004) asserts that "language is a product of collectivity" (p.92) as it arises from the human necessity to interact and communicate.

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[8] For further details, see Mitchell and Myles, 2004.

For being social, language has a dialogical nature and, therefore, verbal interaction is the genuine core of language, manifested through utterance(s). The notion of utterance is adopted in this study as this term surpasses the sentence linearity, thus, comprising non-linguistic factors. According to arguments put forward by Bakhtin (1990), an utterance does not rely exclusively upon the participants' interaction: it overlaps the individual, being intertwined with external elements, *e.g* ideology and context. That is to say, utterance is the result of various elements – linguistic and extra-linguistic – which embody what the speaker says. Accordingly, this investigation does not regard language as an abstract system of rules since this concept fails to comprehend all the aspects language involves.

In order to promote interaction, it is necessary that individuals are socially organised so that their meanings can be conveyed. That is why he says that "every word is ideological" and it is laden with meaning (BAKHTIN, 1990, p. 95). Language, in this sense, represents the "necessary mediation between man and his reality, […] it is where […] ideological confrontation takes place, and it cannot be scrutinised outside societal boundaries once the processes that constitute such a language are social historical" (BRANDÃO, 1997, p.12).

As we can see, Bakhtin's ideas diverge in this point from Vygotsky's thinking. Although the latter considers that language prior function is social and shapes people's thought, he also accounts for cognitive elements in his investigation (*e.g.* intra-mental processes)[9]. Bakhtin, in his turn, believes that language is purely social and the "individual conscience is a social ideological fact" (BAKHTIN, 1990, p.35). This is dealt in further detail in the next section. For the time being, let us regard language as an entity that, together with human subjects and social cultural contexts, constitutes the meanings given in communication.

Although Bakhtin's ideas were formulated at the beginning of last century, only recently have they come into discussion in various areas, including language teaching field. Hence, this new concept of language initiates discussions about teaching approaches from a different angle, giving continuity to the pursuit of more effective forms of achieving successful language learning. Therefore, researchers have been

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[9] In fact, there is still great discussion about this matter among researchers (see MOLON, 1999). This study, however, understands that Vygotsky does consider cognitive aspects in language learning.

reflecting upon the role of social factors when one learns a new language rather than only taking cognitive and individual elements into account.

Revuz (1998) also draws attention to the complexity of the language. According to this author, language involves various aspects: it is at the same time an abstract and practical object, once it means both cognitive knowledge and practical use. She advocates that language is a simultaneous interaction of *self* – as the new language disturbs the way the individual sees him/herself, requiring new parameters of interacting with others and the surroundings; the *body* – by the means of the use of the speech organs; and *cognition* – once learning a language comprehends the knowledge of a new linguistic system. However, this study understands that another feature should be added to this matter: the environment. The social and historical context in which the subject is inserted affects the language as well as it is affected by the context. For this reason, all these characteristics make language learning an intricate activity and, accordingly, a complex matter to handle.

Moreover, there is another feature concerning language that is fundamental to highlight in this study in order to conduct an inquiry on language learning. In terms of non-primary languages, research has diverged into two domains: second language and foreign language. Although both involve learners who already master a language (*i.e.* mother tongue), the first refers to acquiring the new language in its natural environment, inserted in its community, with communicative and social functions (OXFORD, 1990).

Conversely, foreign language corresponds to learn a language where it is not socially spoken, generally implying formal instruction. Owing to the context in which language learning is investigated here, *i.e.*, learning English in a language school in Brazil, the concept of foreign language is taken in this study (hereafter EFL).

As already mentioned, the acknowledgment of social nature of language is quite recent, fact that can be observed throughout the language learning theories and approaches described previously. This led to reconsider how EFL has been taught so far. The way teachers conceive their lessons externalises the notion of language they have. Their language concept, in turn, incorporates the wide range of beliefs arisen throughout their life experience. The same operation occurs on students: they learn the new language in accordance to the way they see themselves and the learning process,

based on their history as language learners. This process is not only concerned with the foreign language but also their mother tongue, in which learners build representations of the language in question. Ideologically affected, this concept is determinant to language instruction as it has an effect on the meanings conveyed by the participants of this learning process and the way they are constituted as human subjects. These aspects are discussed in further detail in the next section.

2.3. Ideology and Human Subject Constitution

Individuals living in the same community share a network of values and strategies that compose the social consciousness, so that they can interact and understand each other. This network is made not only of similar values and strategies but also includes contradiction and conflict. Discourses appear in the tension between these intertwining strings of the social fabric, immersed in the universe of meanings of a social formation.

These meanings are not only linguistically predetermined, but are also dependent on factors that are external to the language (ORLANDI, 2002). In order to make sense, language is affected by history to be interpreted. History in this perspective is seen as context, in which meanings are shaped in accordance with social relations, and it provides the elements so that meanings can be interpreted. Thus, every time a formulation is articulated, an interpretative movement takes places in endeavouring to answer: "what does it mean?". This interpretation is not hermeneutical-inspired[10], but it is the result of productions of meanings that provide understanding in which the meaning emerges as evidence, social and historically tailored. In this way, meanings are taken for granted as if they have always been there, being thus an unquestionable truth. This evidence is only allowed due to the presence of ideology that ascertains transparency between reality and meaning, thus, obliterating the interpretation (ORLANDI, 2002).

Accordingly, everything that is embodied by meanings constitutes an ideological sign[11] (BAKHTIN, 1990). Once this sign has meaning, it becomes evident

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[10] Hermeneutics is taken here as the pursuit of truth, and not the interpretation of texts.
[11] Due to the social nature of the language, Bakhtin postulates that there is no sign without ideology since it reflects the social relations (1990).

and constitutive of the collective conscience so that it can be shared and can enable understanding and interpretation among people of its community. As it reflects reality, every sign is not only determined by the social group, but also historically shaped where it is inserted. So, at different times in every society, hierarchies of distinct signs are established and taken for granted. Being an ideological sign as well as a material object of the language, the word infiltrates in every relation, and it works as an indicator of social shifts:

> The word literally penetrates in all relations among individuals, […] in everyday life casual encounters, in relations of political matters, etc. Words are woven from a crowd of ideological threads which work as a web for all social relations in every domain. It is, therefore, evident that the word will always be the most sensitive *indicator* of every social transformation […] (BAKHTIN, 1990, p. 41)

This phenomenon is what Bakhtin entitles Common Sense Ideology. The social-political structure institutes relations of production which rule every sort of possible verbal interaction in any realm. Otherwise stated, ideology permeates social connections of any kind and allows a sense of understandability between individuals. So this ideology permits that people engage in "web of meanings", already established in life community (ORLANDI, 2002).

This meaning, in turn, is determined by a relation between a human subject, *i.e.*, individuals ideologically crossed by the language, and history (*op. cit.*). For this reason, ideology is fundamental not only for meanings but also for human subject constitution. As already mentioned, it is by means of ideology that human subjects interpret reality: their perception of the material world is filtered by ideology, through an imaginary mechanism. What they see is not the concrete materiality but images yielded in the interface of subject – history – language. Grounded on this argument, Orlandi (2002) asserts that ideology is an essential feature to establish a relation between language and reality. Moreover, ideology promotes the effect of evidence, obliterating the fact that the subject's identification is ideologically constituted. This condition leads them to believe that they are the origin of their utterances, failing to be aware of the fact that everything they say is part of a collection of already-said.

It should be said here that the fact subjects are constituted in relation to the interdiscourse (*i.e.* whatever that has already been said and, thus, it is able to be understood) does not entail that speakers are completely subject to the conditions which enable them to make sense. In effect, they are also a constitutive part of such conditions once subject, history and language are equal parts of the social context, where meanings are produced and, potentially, each part is capable of interfering with each other in equal measure. That is to say, the subject is constrained by the limitations of the language and the historical context determines that the meaning conveyed is one and not the other. But the subject also influences on the language and history by the choices he establishes and by the meanings he wants to convey.

As well as that, human subjects do not lie on empirical people but rather, on the representations which are translated from this reality mediated by the language (ORLANDI, 2002). This mechanism corresponds to what is called *imaginary formations*. Once they are formed, these representations become part of human subjects' imaginary. This operation is the result of how people perceive the various interfaces with their surroundings and make judgments based on reflections of these connections and it guides the process of verbal interface, leading each person "to take a determined position in society where [s/he] belongs, has an image for him/herself and the others in correspondence to the position taken by each one of them" (NÓBREGA, 2001, p.73). In other words, more than factual entities, human subjects comprise a position, which is taken in their social enterprises, affecting their meanings and, therefore, it is constituent of their saying. For example, the proposition formulated by a teacher conveys a different meaning if the same utterance is yielded by a student. Thus, a relation of powers between human subjects is established via language, reflecting the hierarchical relations instituted in the society, and ideologically maintained by these different positions every time interactive events come about (ORLANDI, 2002). In this sense, at the moment interaction happens, "an imaginary game" occurs, in which the images of the position of the speaker, the interlocutor, and the discourse object take place.

Due to the dialogical nature of the language characterized by a continuous flow, communication involves two elements: what has been already said (otherwise understanding is not ensured) and the interlocutor (who determines the speaker's utterance) (BAKHTIN, 1990). In this process, a production of images occurs: images

of human subjects, the object of the discourse, everything based on a social and historical context. It is, therefore, this imaginary mechanism that rules the exchange of words in communicative enterprises (ORLANDI, 2002).

In addition, the imaginary legitimates the system of institutions *e.g.* religion, school, moral, press, and provides them with autonomy, essential factor for their maintenance (LAPLANTINE; TRINDADE, 2003). Although imaginary and ideology share the field of mental representations, the first differs from the second by being the part of the subjectivity related to consciousness, which gives signification to individual subjects' actions, thoughts, feelings, etc., reflecting the world in accordance with the person's social experience (LEONTIEV, 2004).

Once ideological products are validated in Common Sense Ideology, they give meanings which tailor this ideological system of institutions, a phenomenon that Bakhtin (1990) calls Constituted Ideology, which rules social life. That is why Orlandi (2002) states that the prior function of Ideology is to "produce evidence, placing the man in imaginary relation to the material conditions of his existence" (p.46). Hence, Ideology provides human subjects with conditions to interpret and give meaning to the world that surrounds them.

These ideological instruments - called a complex collection of the ideological state apparatus by Pêcheux (1988) quoting Althusser[12] - are the mechanisms which yield values, beliefs, social practices in a community so that individuals can place themselves as social subjects. That is to say, being created in the social milieu within inter-individual interactions, these signs may acquire a social value, incorporating social indexes of value. These indicators, in turn, reach the individual conscience and are absorbed in the individual indexes.

As we can observe, conscience arises and is shaped in the social environment. Despite the singularity of this process, in which meanings are apprehended individually, the psychic phenomenon is also accountable by social and ideological features (BAKHTIN, 1990).

Thus, language has a fundamental part in this process: through verbal interaction, individuals are subjectively constituted as meanings are settled in a

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[12] ALTHUSSER, L. Aparelhos ideológicos do estado. Rio de janeiro: editora Graal, 1985.

continuous movement of social meanings and individual interpretations. As Bakhtin asserts, conscience lies in the intersection of the organic structure and the world:

> […] subjective psychism is on the boundaries of the organic structure and the external world, say, on the *frontiers* of these two spheres of reality. […] but this meeting is not physical: the organic structure and the world converge in the sign. The psychic activity constitutes the semiotic expression of the contact of the organic structure and the external environment. That is why the interior psychism must not be analysed as a thing; it cannot be understood and analysed as anything but a sign. (BAKHTIN, 1990, p. 49).

This subjectivity or conscience is, therefore, the result of the ongoing semiotic process whereby social and cultural contingences are permeated by the individuality, materialising in the human subject. These principles of human subject constitution guide people to operate their thinking and provide the basis for the formation of their beliefs.

For this reason, beliefs are not only dynamic but they can also be modified throughout people's history, as an outcome of the different interactions. As teachers and students are part of the same educational environment, they may share beliefs about teaching and learning process. However, each individual has different backgrounds and history, elements that influence on different ways of perceiving the world.

By sharing many traits due to this imaginary mechanism, human subjects in the same social domain share equivalent positions which are thus replaceable. In educational settings, for example, there is *interchangeability* between different teachers as they belong to similar positions or discursive places (ORLANDI, 1998a). It does not matter which teacher utters the sentence, the meaning conveyed may not be altered since they speak from the same position.

Nonetheless, the dialectic functioning of this network may well present contradictions in discourses that are apparently homogeneous. In these terms, it is possible to find in the discourse of teachers that have a lot in common (institution, social background, education, etc) different positions and reproducing meanings of what has been established. Statements like, 'a good learner must be self-directed' or

'the teacher is a facilitator of the learning process', are some of the various ways of expressing the reputable idea that learning depends on the learner. The latter implies that the teacher is in charge of learner's outcome, whereas in what the former is concerned, the responsibility lies exclusively on the student. Being the authority in the classroom, such principles are hardly ever questioned.

Orlandi (1998a), however, advocates that teachers should be elements of change in this process and promote what she calls *reversibility*. This refers to teachers promoting students' awareness of their position, in which learners interpret and confront the meanings conveyed by the teacher's position. In this sense, students are encouraged to produce their own meanings and go beyond, inciting shifts of the dominant voice. That does not mean a movement between subjects from diverse positions. As Orlandi advocates, "we cannot utter from someone else's place" (*op. cit.*). In this sense, it is not possible for a learner to speak from a teacher's position with the same validity. In order to promote real reversibility, the teacher mediates the image learners have about the focus of their study by moving the places of meanings. Only by doing so will learners be more aware of their own beliefs and more critical about language learning and, consequently, become a true agent in their learning process.

2.4. Fundamental conceptions of the Discourse Theory

Once this dissertation employs elements of Discourse Theory in order to examine the available *corpus*, some essential notions of this perspective must be delineated before conducting this investigation and undertaking the analysis. The categories adopted in this study are grounded on concepts outlined by Michel Pêcheux (1988) and via other authors – especially Orlandi, whose studies derive from his work.

As already postulated, language is the means through which the man apprehends the reality and the *discourse* is materialised. The concept of discourse overlaps the notion of message put forward by the Information Theory, which claims that the message is the focus of communication (BALIEIRO JÚNIOR, 2001). Discourse implies a larger scope, denoting more than message transmission and linear communication processed through a code: it presupposes indeed a dynamic activity

during which various processes take place, with interlocutors signifying and yielding meanings (ORLANDI, 2002).

These meanings are contingent on *conditions of production* - the human subjects, the immediate context and the sociocultural background. As already mentioned, these three elements are indispensable factors to scrutinize the utterances yielded by the interlocutors. They determine the meanings of assertions produced in the interface of these elements based on the discursive formation (ORLANDI, 2002), that is, "a place where he (or she) means and interprets through the memory that inscribes the interdiscourse" (ALBUQUERQUE, 2003, p.41). The definitions of interdiscourse and discursive formation are better explained in the next paragraphs.

Interdiscourse corresponds to all the meanings that have already been articulated, enabling every formulation to be said and understood, being the source from where interlocutors unconsciously make use so as to produce utterances, supplying meanings every time an assertion is expressed. It is through the interdiscourse that ideologies reach the human subjects and are materialised (PÊCHEUX, 1988). By the means of an ideological mechanism, meanings become evident and are not required to be interpreted, thus, erasing the materiality of the word, whose meaning changes in accordance to the "positions sustained by those who employ [it]" (*op. cit.*, p. 160). Otherwise stated, words and utterances are imbued with meanings based on the human subjects' discursive formations established in various interactive situations, and, for this reason, the position from where human subjects formulate their utterances are constituent of the meaning conveyed.

The concept of discursive formation, in turn, has been controvertible due to the claim of restraining the actual human subjects' capability of transformation and singularity (ALBUQUERQUE, 2003). Nevertheless, this notion is fundamental for discursive-oriented analyses as it enables the researcher to apprehend how meanings are yielded and how discourses are constituted, as well as their connections with ideologies (ORLANDI, 2002).

The conception that has been better known and used as basis for many studies is formulated by Pêcheux (ALBUQUERQUE, 2003). In line with him, a *discursive formation* "determines what can and must be said" (PÊCHEUX, 1988, p. 160), in

accordance with social factors and the position of the human subjects. This concept implies two aspects (ORLANDI, 2002):

1) discourses are based on a certain discursive formation in which human subjects are inscribed, leading to certain meanings and not others. On that account, the materiality of words and phrases are not independent entities but they are conditioned on discursive formations, whose meanings are ideologically tailored, thus, reflecting, ideological formations;

2) different meanings can be produced through the same words and vice verse, according to different discursive formations that these words refer to, as well as diverse conditions of production. The reference to discursive formations enables understandability of different significations.

In these terms, every discourse reports to other discourses, that is, not only is each one sustained by previous sayings but also it points to future discourses (ORLANDI, 2002), thus, constituting the relation of meanings. It, therefore, conveys that the discursive process is in a continuum, in which there is no beginning or end for the discourse (*op. cit.*).

As already stated, this theoretical foundation is indispensable so as to conduct the analysis of the *corpus*. Bearing these concepts in mind, it is feasible to reach the broader context in order to analyze the origins of both students and teacher's beliefs.

3. THE RESEARCH AND ITS METHODOLOGICAL
PROCEDURES

3.1. Data Collection

To investigate the features of the classroom environment, it is essential to understand its routine and the elements that compose this setting to favour better interpretation of the meanings that come into play provided by the human subjects involved in this process.

Bearing this in mind, in order to drive research and collect information, data-gathering procedures are conducted under the guise of two methodologies: Ethnography and Discourse Theory.

Techniques of ethnographical methodology are adopted since its primacy lies on meanings of events for participants under study taking into account all the elements of "a situation in terms of interaction and reciprocal influences" (ANDRÉ, 2004, p.17). For this reason, it has been the foundation to all studies whose core is grounded on fieldwork (WOLCOTT, 1992), which is characterised by the researcher locally observing the phenomenon, influencing and being influenced by the situation as s/he needs to be in contact with the object of study. Another feature is the researcher as the main source of gathering and analysing data, and the focus on the process rather than the finished product (ANDRÉ, 2004).

As this study aims at investigating an EFL teacher's and students' beliefs and how they affect their choice of language learning strategies, as well as presenting findings through an "authentic and holistic portrait" taking the context into account (TAVARES, 2006), this research employs elements of the Ethnographic Microanalysis. It allows to unfold the nuances of instructional environment, many times overlooked by the participants of this process due the "invisibility of everyday life" (ERICKSON, 1986), by employing various means to gather information to compose the *corpus* and inscribing utterances through transcriptions.

The ethnographical methodology deals with the immediate ecology, and accordingly, it does not contemplate a broader context of teaching and learning foreign languages in which it is inserted. As a consequence, aspects such as the ideologies which give meaning to beliefs are not comprehended in this methodology, thus, requiring, elements of Discourse Theory (see section 2.4) to do so. On that account, this investigation lays hold of the ethnography, which handles the material yielded in the immediate context, *i.e.* the classroom, and provides information that leads to a sociocultural context in order to reach the ideologies – in Bakhtin's perspective (as already described in section 2.3) - that underlie the human subjects of this study via concepts of Discourse Theory.

Therefore, this sort of analysis allows me to document and describe the processes under study in further detail through different instruments in order to understand the events that take place in the educational setting in a more precise way.

As previously mentioned, this investigation comprehends the use of various data collection instruments to provide a greater proximity to "representation, classification and organization systems" of the subjects of this inquiry (ANDRÉ, 2004, p. 45). Questionnaires were employed at different moments: the first one inquires about personal data for subject identification and was answered at the beginning of the term (see Appendix 2). This section also attempts to collect some information about their individual background. Then, another questionnaire was handed out after a month, when the subjects were more used to the presence of this researcher (see Appendix 4). The second questionnaire for the students was Likert-scale type, designed by taking Oxford's Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL). In this survey, they were to rate the 23 statements in terms of frequency. Being a monolingual class, both questionnaires were in L1 (Portuguese) so that language would not be an obstacle for the subjects to fully understand and answer them. They were dealt after the lesson so that I could ensure not only that would I have them back but also that I would be available to clarify any question.

Following these sections, six subjects[13] were chosen to be interviewed through open-ended questions, which were recorded (see Appendix 6). The purpose here is to clarify data collected through these questionnaires because "they produce hardly any

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[13] The criteria were based on class observation, questionnaires and tests marks. Six students were selected in accordance to their progress: outstanding, average and poor performance.

discourse" (KAJALA, 1995, p.197). In other words, through this instrument, I was able to reach information that was beyond what had been written. At this moment, the inquiry tackled with the SILL indirect strategies and beliefs about language learning based on Horwitz's instrument.

The same procedure was conducted with the teacher, in which he had to provide the personal data and information about his own schooling as a student, his history as a language teacher, and conceptions of effective learning strategies through questionnaires and a recorded interview (see Appendices 3, 5 and 6). I decided to observe a teacher rather than going for action research to ensure a more objective contemplation of the *corpus*, allowing the necessary distance to shift from familiar to strange, feature claimed by Erickson (1986) to guarantee an outsider's perspective.

Despite quantitative data analysis being performed in this research because of the nature of these questionnaires, this scrutiny is essentially qualitative since it has an interpretative basis, connotation that Erickson (*op. cit*.) uses to replace the term subjective, as the former is more inclusive and the latter contrasts with objective, which is positive-oriented. A qualitative interpretative approach provides the researcher with more comprehensive data on how both teacher and students' action are affected by their beliefs and figures here have the function of explicating "a qualitative dimension" (ANDRÉ, 2004, p. 45). Moreover, as Almeida Filho (1993) has already highlighted, what is said does not always match what is done in the classroom and its meaning is only understood when the sociocultural context is accounted for (WOLCOTT, 1992).

For this reason, 75-minute lessons were observed, twice a week, from March 2007 until the end of the semester, consisting of 24 lessons. Lessons have been registered through field notes during observation. After a month of lesson observation and the teacher being more at ease at my presence, classes started being recorded in audio material. Apart from this material, some articles from newspapers and specialised magazines about education as well as information collected from informal conversations with students were also included in the *corpus* so as to make considerations about the discourses that percolate educational realms.

This research intended to investigate the following matters:

1. What beliefs do the teacher and students have related to language learning?

2. What discourses permeate their beliefs?

3. What strategies do the teacher and students think that are relevant for successful language learning?

4. What strategies do they use in the teaching and learning process?

5. How do their beliefs affect their action?

Through the collection of these data and the analysis of the *corpus*, I expect to find an explanatory conclusion for the issues mentioned above.

3.2. The Constitution of the *Corpus*

As the analysis starts from the delimitation of the *corpus*, it is convenient to characterize what it implies and how it is constituted in the perspective of the Discourse Theory, the methodology adopted in this inquiry, so as to comprise extra-linguistic factors, essential elements for this analysis.

According to Courtine (2006, p. 66), a discursive *corpus* is a "collection of structured discursive sequences, in accordance with a defined plan with reference to a certain state of conditions of discourse production". Otherwise stated, a group of texts is assembled, yielded in the boundaries of the human subject, the immediate ecology and the sociocultural context, limited by the field of discourse under investigation, ascertaining "a field of sight" upon a gathering of collection of utterances, delineating the discursive universe (*op. cit.*).

Due to the fact that this sort of scrutiny deals with discourse, Orlandi (2002) states that the analysis following a discursive orientation is inexhaustible as its empirical object – the discourse – can always be seen from a different viewpoint, leading to wide range of interpretations. No discourse is isolated: being dynamic, it establishes a connection with a previous discourse, at the same time it points towards a future one (*op. cit.*).

In this sense, starting from the data gathered for the study - which is the language material, a collection of utterances is selected conforming to the focus of the research – in this case, the educational discourse, and more specifically, the beliefs and learning strategies in EFL classroom.

Following this, a principle of segmentation is outlined, in which internal elements of the *corpus* point out to external factors. At this moment, the analysis pursues to establish connections between discursive formations and ideological formation. In the present inquiry, this collection of utterances are observed under the guise of Common Sense Ideology, institutionalized by educational policies, and Constituted Ideology, established by foreign language teaching theories.

Finally, the *corpus* is reorganised, when the utterances are regrouped, following a logical plan, based on their regularities and discrepancies. In this analysis, the *corpus* is rearranged in accordance with the most recurrent beliefs regarding language learning present in the utterances, accounting for similarities and incongruities. Thus, a shift onto how to contemplate the selected texts is imposed (COURTINE, 2006). In this sense, "a domestication of sight" (*op. cit.*) is promoted, in which changes the way of looking at what is taken for granted.

3.3. The Subjects

The initial process of collecting the *corpus* started in August 2006 and ended in December in the same year. However, due to external factors such as the researcher's health problems and the fact that the teacher was sometimes substituted, I understand that these circumstances would affect my collection and, for this reason, I decided to gather new data. Nonetheless, this first gathering served as a pilot collection, and thus, its procedures were improved. On that account, I was able to avoid some problems, *e.g.* technical recording problems and questionnaires gathering, which occurred throughout the first data collection.

The *corpus* of this study was constituted by a group of 20 students, attending their second term in foreign language instruction. Their lesson attendance was fairly high, varying from 12 to 19 students each class. There were some students who came to class even when they were considerably late, *e.g.* 45 minutes after the lesson had already started, in a fairly regular basis. Towards the end of the term, there was a slight drop in attendance, which varied from 9 to 15 learners.

My interest in this language level relies on the fact that it is generally formed by students who are newcomers in the institution, and will probably build up their own

learning strategies, apply and/or change the ones they already have. As well as that, learners are from different backgrounds and schooling levels, elements that may affect their choice of strategies.

The students' age ranges from 12 to 32 years old. Most of the learners are university students (12 learners), in which 2 are taking their second major and another one is at a post-graduate course; one student has finished her university course; 2 learners have finished Secondary School, while other 2 are still studying at this level, and just one learner is in Elementary School. In most cases, both parents have concluded Higher Education (8) or Secondary School (7), while 3 students have parents who finished Elementary School, and only 2 have one of the parents having a university degree. Throughout this analysis, however, this information showed not to be relevant for the formation of beliefs and the choice of learning strategies. Nevertheless, although this information is not employed in this investigation, it serves as a referential to have a more comprehensive view of the human subjects in this study. Moreover, it gives account of the heterogeneity present in this group.

With respect to time as language learners, 6 students are attending a language course for the first time and doing the second term of language instruction. The others have being studying English for a longer time (6 have been learning the target language for 1 year or so and 7 have stopped the course and resumed it the term before). Four students have studied another language (Spanish).

In reference to the objective for them to study English, the main reasons are professional (9 students) and academic (6 students) purposes, followed by the fact of being necessary (5 students), broadening their knowledge, and preference for this language (both 4 students). Travelling and obligation were also mentioned (1 student each).[14]

The teacher, in turn, has a long professional experience. He started in 1978 and has taught in various schools. He started studying English after finishing Secondary school because he thought it would be helpful for his future career and for travelling. He is graduated in Languages (Translation/Interpretation) and is a public translator and a commercial interpreter. However, he started teaching before getting into university.

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[14] When answering this question, students presented more than one reason that motivate them to learn the new language.

He carried on his language studies in England, where he studied and worked as an English teacher for 2 years. He has DipTFLA (Diploma of Teaching English as a Foreign Language), a certificate offered by Cambridge University to teachers who have undertaken an one-year intensive course and teaching practice, and deals with TEFL methodology. Currently, he has been doing distant PhD in Education concerning Language Interference offered by California Coast University, USA, and he states that his theoretical foundation is grounded on Chomsky, Krashen and Gardner.

In terms of his teaching practice, he affirms that his lessons are Communicative approach-oriented, "which incorporated the most recent advances and findings in Linguistics, Psychology and Education fields"[15]. He is currently interested in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and believes that the aspects of the language that need to be highlighted the most concern to language interference, once, according to him, they might facilitate or hinder language learning.

When I asked for permission to watch his lessons, the teacher at first showed a slight opposition to my observation for the discomfort that it normally causes. I explained that my central interest was not judging his practice but observing the classroom activities to understand the beliefs that underlie the strategies used by the participants of the teaching and learning process and the information collected in this course would be confidential. After agreeing to be observed, he wanted to know what my investigation was about and I informed him that I would undertake a study about beliefs.

On the first day with the group, I explained my presence to the students and the importance of the observation for the research and they showed good receptivity. In this lesson, notes were taken in general terms, in order to have a sense of the atmosphere of the class and the teacher's approach.

In the first three lessons, the observation was focused on the teacher, in particular, and the students, as a whole, unless one presented an outstanding behaviour throughout the lesson, due to the unfamiliarity with their names. I tried to sit down on different desks every lesson so that I would be able to observe different students more closely. After learning their names, I started to take notes to build individual profiles based on their behaviour during the lesson.

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[15] Extract taken from the questionnaire answered in Portuguese and traslated into English.

Within a month, I started to audio record the lessons, after letting the teacher and the students know about this fact. Due to technical problems, the first lesson was discarded.

On the second observed class, students were asked to fill in a questionnaire about their personal information, which was previously mentioned the lesson before. The second section was applied two weeks later, after I had already collected all the students' answers as I did not want to overload them with one questionnaire after the other.

After two months observing classes, I selected six students of the group (based on the criteria already explained in footnote 10 in section 3.1) and started the interviews, in order to get further information and lighten obscure aspects about strategies that questionnaires and observation failed to collect as well as their beliefs about language learning.

3.4. The school

The institution where data collection in this study took place is the largest language schools in Maceió, Brazil, with over 3500 students. Being an extension of the university and run by PROEX (Extension University Division) and FALE (Faculty of Letters), this school is located at Espaço Cultural Professor Salomão Barros de Lima, which belongs to Universidade Federal de Alagoas. Other educational institutions are held in this establishment (such as other language schools and Drama Department) as well as cultural events *e.g.* concerts. All coordinators of these institutions are university professors.

The pedagogical principles of this school are based on Communicative Approach characterised by the selection of course material. This approach basically focuses on teaching the target language through meaningful and contextual topics, aiming at the use of the new language for real communication (WIDDOWSON, 1986; ALMEIDA FILHO, 1993), in which the teacher plays various roles, particularly a facilitator (RICHARDS and RODGERS, 2001). The school also has a concern of teachers' development as it shows an effort to promote teacher training. Most teachers have long professional experience, ranging from five to over twenty years, and some of

them have been working there all their working life. Teachers regard this school as having a very good working environment.

Students, in turn, consider this institution as one of the best EFL schools in town, which offers very good teaching quality, information collected via questionnaires. The school has more than eleven classrooms,[16] all of them with a sound system and seven rooms with TV, DVD player and VCR, which must be booked by the teachers so that they can be used in the lessons. There is also multimedia equipment and OHP as well as a projection room available. Because of the emphasis on encouraging the relationship with the community, prices are lower compared to other private schools, fact that generates a really high number of people interested in studying there. Perhaps for this reason, most students seem to be very engaged in learning, attitude reinforced by the fact that there are no remedial tests.

The material adopted for the class is a new edition of a successful British course book due to its large adoption at language schools throughout the country. The teacher usually follows the syllabus closely and tests are made based on its contents. As previously mentioned, the book has a communicative approach orientation and comes with a workbook which precisely revises what is seen in the course book. It also accompanies a CD-ROM with grammar quizzes, vocabulary revision and pronunciation practice as well as real like dialogues presented in the course book.

Through this class observation complemented by newspaper and specialized articles, I was able to gather substantial data in order to constitute the *corpus* for my investigation. Moreover, I was provided with valuable insights of my own teaching practice. It is important to remark the relevance of data triangulation in qualitative research, once the phenomenon under investigation is observed through different instruments and enabling the researcher to have a more comprehensive view of the object of study.

This experience has made me see my students from a diverse perspective, regarding them as an individual, fully rich both social and culturally.

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[16] 11classrooms belong to the school but it requires extra rooms as a regular basis due to the number of groups and students per class.

4. THE FIELD OF SIGHT[17]

The analysis of the learning beliefs of the human subjects under this study and the influence on their choices of learning strategies started from the scrutiny of the ideologies that permeate the teacher's and the students' discourses. In order to transcribe the extracts, this investigation followed Marcuschi's transcription table, which is presented at the beginning of this dissertation.

The reflection on the *corpus* that both the teacher and the students provide in this research shows that their beliefs are crossed by various discourses. This does not mean that these discourses are congruous with each other, and in fact, they often present some conflict, fact that can be observed throughout the analysis. Yet, these discourses provide individuals with meanings so that they can place themselves as subjects and signify the teaching and learning process. Discourses, in turn, are traversed by the ideologies that supply the evidence to every sort of human interaction (as already mentioned in 2.3). Grounded on an ideological formation that embodies discursive formations, individuals hold positions in accordance with the different human relations − in this case, the positions of the teacher and the student which are considered in this analysis - and interpret the educational situation from this place.

Once the *corpus* of this study basically consists of the utterances yielded by the human subjects in this investigation, it is imperative to keep the integrity of these statements at the expense of the analysis. For this reason, most of the assertions present in this thesis are written in Portuguese, which is the original language used by the respondents. As Bakhtin (1990) claims, *every word is ideological,* so translation here might affect the possible meanings and the linguistic choices made by these interviewees. Therefore, all Discursive Sequences (hereafter DS) are translated either in footnotes or in the Appendix 1.

In the following, the beliefs present in the respondents' discourse are examined, considering their ideological foundations and their effects on both the teacher and the students' action under the perspective of the choice of learning strategies.

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[17] This is the translation from Portuguese of the expression "campo do olhar" used by Courtine (2006).

The analysis of the beliefs that pervade the human subjects' discourse in this study results in six major groups as follows:

4.1. The relevance of English in order to access knowledge

As already postulated in the section about methodology (see 3.2), the reasons why students decided to study English range from personal and professional purposes to obligation. However diverse these reasons are, they mostly converge to the relevance of English in order to access knowledge. Phrases like *deepening knowledge* and *access to information* are some examples students use in their questionnaires that sustain their belief about the prevalence of this language to instruction as a whole. When questioned about the reasons why they want to learn English in the interview, they use expressions such as *it opens doors* and *English as universal language*.

Indeed, the metaphor of the door is at times associated with this language (as illustrated in the Introduction). A specialised magazine in Primary Education refers to English teaching as "the door to access the world" (PARÂMETROS…, s.d., p. 61) in which learning a foreign language "is a passport to enter the information society" (*op. cit.*). Otherwise stated, English language is seen as a passage through which it is possible to reach information flow and, without mastering this language, individuals see themselves excluded from this universe. English would, therefore, work as a permit, which enables this door to be opened, so as to insert them into "knowledge".

This discourse is clearly noticeable in PCN, the national educational guidelines that ground Brazilian formal schooling. In the parameters for Secondary Education, foreign language is regarded as "indissoluble part of the essential acquirements collection which allows the student to get close to several cultures [...] providing their integration with a globalised world.[18]" (BRASIL, 2000). Again, the English language is considered a prevailing factor to break down the frontiers so as to permit people to be part of this globalised world.

Globalisation, in McGrew's terms (1992 *apud* HALL, 1997), refers to "processes […] that cross over national frontiers, integrating and connecting

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[18] "parte indissolúvel do conjunto de conhecimentos essenciais que permitem ao estudante aproximar-se das várias culturas e [..] propiciam a sua integração com o mundo globalizado."

communities […] in new space-time arrangements, making the world […] more interconnected" (p. 71). So globalization is a phenomenon that has affected the concept of society as a geographical entity and has compressed the world in terms of space and time, promoting the idea that it has become smaller. This process is spread over in many domains in society and is realised via technology and means of communication. Although this movement pursues the homogenization and it benefits mostly hegemonic countries, Constituted Ideology (see section 2.3) postulates that globalization is a beneficial process for everyone. After all, information, technology and good jobs, to name just a few, are considered to flow in this globalised world, and, for this reason, there is this notion of English as a *passport*, and accordingly, the *universal language* to access such a world.

The notion of being a universal language is well established in the subjects' interdiscourse and gives off the idea that English enables them to have the contact with every sort of information available, essential for formal schooling and which makes a difference in the professional milieu. This concept is illustrated in an advertisement of a language school handed out at universities saying:

DS 1

"Do X[19] – English for university students and upgrade your CV."[20]

In other words, it is not only a distinguished good in professional terms, but it also denotes modernity, since the loan word 'upgrade' is a technical expression used in computer science, which implies improvement and development.

In fact, the notion of the importance of English language is groomed throughout people's formal schooling and it reaches their working life, explaining the presence of many university students as well as graduates searching for English language command in this study. This belief is essential for the maintenance of English language in the curriculum and it is the foundation for many other assumptions in EFL learning field. Despite the emergence of Spanish as an international language, which

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[19] The name of the course was omitted for ethic reasons.

[20] Flyer distributed at universities: "*Faça X - inglês para universitários e dê um 'upgrade' no seu currículo*"

led to its inclusion in the school curriculum, it does not threaten the position of English language as a *lingua franca,* whose situation is well-established in the international view for being the official language of the hegemonic countries and other reasons mentioned in the Introduction of the thesis.

4.2. Language as Communication

By sharing this educational sphere, teachers and students are affected by similar discourses and, consequently, unveil some similarities in their utterances. The meaning of *universal language* that imbues the English language provides the basis for another assertion which is characteristic of the discourse of modern foreign language teaching methodologies: the emphasis on the idea that the prior function of the language is to be a tool for communication. This is the most influential belief in EFL domain and has clear roots grounded on the Communicative Approach, once this assumption repeats one of the principles of this theory, that is, language as communication (see Section 2.1.4). Although the aim is to master the language as a whole, in practical terms, there is a primacy of oral abilities and a denial of habit formation and repetition in order to promote learning, ideas put forward by Behaviourism. Despite this learning theory having started the focus on the development of oral abilities, Behaviourism is considered dated by modern teaching practices due to the means through which learning is promoted, and this notion is reinforced in specialized articles such as the one that follows:

DS 2:

"No ready sentences repetition. Being in contact with authentic communication situations is what leads to English learning [...][21]." (FERRARI, 2003, s.p.)

So, more than repeating sentences, which is a typical behaviouristic technique, being exposed to communicative contexts is what really promotes effective language learning. In fact, as already mentioned, behaviourists also seek communication and

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[21] *"Nada de repetir frases prontas. O contato com situações reais de comunicação é que leva ao aprendizado de inglês".*

language development is pursued via automatism of language structures through habit formation. Communicative Approach, in turn, advocates that communicative competence is accomplished through automatism of language functions. In other words, it tries to link social functions, *i.e.* the context, to linguistic structures.

The teacher's insertion in this discursive formation is evident in the following utterance:

DS 3:

> 1T: eh: a grande (+) a última grande (+ +) MUDA:NÇA né no nosso (+) ((lower the tone of voice)) no nosso campo de trabalho aqui foi a abordagem comunicativa (+) que é a linguagem como comunicação, /.../ todos os materiais praticamente SEGUEM essa orientação' quer dizer (+) a LÍNGUA (+) como comunicação, a::s pessoas deve:m (+) aprender a se comunicar né" pelo
> 5 menos (+) ra-zo-a-vel-men-te,[22]

An emphasis on the communicative function of the language can be perceptible here by the repetition of the expression "language as communication" in this extract, demonstrating how established this discourse is in this field. Moreover, the teacher believes that this assertion is advocated by recent methodologies in the language teaching field, expressed by the phrase "the last major change", thus, highlighting the idea of breakthrough in this domain. Also, by "communicating reasonably", the teacher's speech reinforces the notion of the communicative prior function of the language, in which there is an emphasis on language use, and errors can be acceptable for the sake of communication.

As well as that, the fact that most of teaching material "follows this orientation" corroborates the validity of the Communicative Approach. As a consequence, the coursebook becomes a highly considered guidepost for teaching practice.

This idea of language as communication also occurs throughout the lessons:

DS 4:

> T: É imporTA:NTE (+) eu saber (+ +) PERGUNTAR'é importante eu saber (+ +) RESPONDER, É importante eu saber emendar esses pedaci:nhos por exemplo' quando você (+) tiver que fazer (+)uma prova oral /.../ pra você poder conversar durante dois três minutos' fazer um diálogo simples /.../[23] (Lesson 13)

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[22] See SD 3 translation in note 1 in Appendix 1.
[23] See SD 4 translation in note 2 in Appendix 1.

DS 5:

> T: Esta resposta' quando a gente tiver conversando precisa estar na PONTA da sua língua, /.../ a (+) parte do *speaking*(+) é uma parte pra falar, (+) não é uma parte de silêncio, pergunta' resposta, pergunta' resposta, (Lesson 17)[24]

Here, we can also notice that the teacher's discourse is traversed by other language learning discourses. Communication here can be defined by having a double function: not only how to ask but is it also essential to know how to answer so as to have "a simple dialogue". This idea echoes behaviouristic notions of stimulus and response, i.e., learning is promoted via stimulus the environment provides, which should be responded accordingly (see Section 2.1.1.). Despite the current low prestige of this learning theory due to the predominance of the Communicative Approach, Behaviourist heritage is noticeable in this methodology, perhaps owing to the major prevalence of developing communication skills in both teaching approaches. Other typical elements, *e.g.* repetition and memory – which will be dealt later on in this investigation - are also present. In addition to that, this teaching method was very strong in the 70s, period when this teacher studied English and his practice recalls some features of this methodology.

Furthermore, the objective of developing the speaking skill in this case aims at "the oral test", surpassing thus the actual necessity of speaking through the target language. This utterance evidences the restraints the course material may inflict on evaluation procedures. In this sense, the teacher is restrained from taking into account other achievements students can make due to the imposition of focusing on the content presented by the course book.

The Behaviouristic methodology is also manifested in the teacher's discourse, evidenced when he says that it is necessary to "connect these little pieces" in order to communicate. That is, learners need to combine language chunks they have learnt together so as to establish a dialogue. This concern is translated into oral exercises, in which learners are to ask and answer the questions from a task in the coursebook, postulated to have a Communicative Approach (already mentioned in section 3.4). These questions are similar to the ones they have in the oral test. Because of the low

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[24] See SD 5 translation in note 3 in Appendix 1.

command of English, their communication in English is basically limited to the moments students deal with questionnaires from the adopted material.

The influence of EFL methodologies discourse also appears in students' speech, in which communicative abilities are considered highly important. This meaning can be summarised through the following statements:

DS 6:

> S1: /.../ ESCUTAR' (+) e FALAR' (+) eu acho MUITO importante'(+ +) além da parte gramatical,[25]

DS 7:

> S2: MUITO importante, ((pronunciation))
> R: É''(+) Por quê''
> S2: (1.5) Pra:: poder relacionar com as pessoas sem ter dificuldade'né'' ENTENDER o que a pessoa tá ou/ fala:ndo e FALAR fluentemente, eh: (+) mais isso que eu vim buscar, né''[26]

DS 8:

> S3: /.../ uma (+) maior atenção do professo:r' (1.5) que ele (+) realmente explica:sse aquele aquele exercí:cio e praticasse praticasse'(+ +) pra que o aluno possa (+) adquirir assim' aos pouquinhos né'' essa (+) tranqüilidade na hora de falar' de se expressar /.../[27]

As we can observe, all of them believe in the prominence of oral abilities, by the means of emphasis on both listening and speaking skills, through terms like *listening*, *speaking*, *understand, fluently* and *express*. Based on these statements, students' beliefs are basically crossed by the same discourses as the teacher's, *i.e.* Communicative Approach and Behaviourism, presenting, however, different perspectives: the first student segments the language, seeing grammar as an element apart from language use; S2, in turn, considers pronunciation as an important aspect to understand and speak fluently; whereas S3 sees speaking as a result of doing exercises and repetitive practice. As a consequence, they deal with language learning through different strategies: S1 prefers activities in which he deals with grammar exercises,

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[25] See SD 6 translation in note 4 in Appendix 1.
[26] See SD 7 translation in note 5 in Appendix 1.
[27] See SD 8 translation in note 6 in Appendix 1.

listening passages and asking and answering questions; S3 likes revising questions given in class; on the other hand, although S2 affirms oral abilities are important to learn a language, she claims that she is too shy to speak and prefers doing written exercises in order to strengthen her speaking skill.

As we can see, in these students' speech, it is also noticeable the concern for the accuracy of the language, which is expressed by *speaking and listening are very important apart from grammar* or *practise so that the learner can acquire tranquillity at the time of speaking*. So for these subjects, not only the meaning but also accuracy is important for establishing communication. During the lesson observation, most students tried to communicate in the target language only when they were sure that their sentences were grammatically correct. Otherwise, they prefer either to remain in silence or to use their mother tongue, illustrating the belief that without the form, they are not able to communicate.

This may clarify some of the strategies employed by the students which were observed in the classroom. In order to develop speaking skills, most students often lay hold of writing probably to improve language accuracy. So writing here is not a means of production of meanings but a strategy for memorization and repetition. For example, they tend to write before speaking. When asked how they study the language or prepare for English tests, the great majority answered that they write to revise what is seen in class. Their answers vary from doing and redoing the exercises in the workbook or writing the answers of questionnaires present in the coursebook or revising vocabulary to check the spelling. The teacher also gives written exercises in order to consolidate the language as a regular basis.

This concern to linguistic structures may explain the reason why students fail to use the target language meaningfully in the classroom: they may believe that, unless their utterances are perfectly well formulated, they feel that there is no point in using the target language to communicate, as this attitude would be embarrassing for them. There were some attempts of the teacher to make them speak in the target language in class, fact noticed during the lesson observation, but as he did not have the expected response, the teacher also gave up doing so after trying three or four times, seeming to believe that this enterprise would not be as successful as he wanted to.

In effect, these discourses imply a simplification of the role of language massively predicated by EFL methodologies. Contradicting what is postulated by Revuz (1998), who conceives language as a complex matter, these teaching methodologies reduce the language to a mere tool of communication, disregarding other features that language involves, *i.e.*, the self and the environment, as already mentioned in section 2.2. Based on these utterances, just the body and the cognition are encapsulated, that is, the pronunciation involving the speech organs, and the knowledge of the new linguistic system. The self, namely, the individual's psyche disturbed by the new language, as well as the interface between the subject and the social historical context do not seem to be taken into account. Aspects like how they see themselves as speakers of the new language and their relation with this context are not arisen. It appears that the language is seen something external to the individual, regarding the process of language learning simply as a matter of storing information.

This belief also reflects the influence of the Communicative Approach when it comes to the interlocutor, taken into account in communicative enterprises. In this sense, the immediate social context is considered once what they say depends on what their interlocutor has said. Communication thus is not only expressing themselves but also understanding the other. However, the context in which students deal with during the lessons is very limited: they usually handle situations that are connected to certain language structures which are linked to social conventions and linguistically adequate. For this reason, they cannot explore the context thoroughly as they do not have enough elements which are normally present in real contexts. And this may lead to a lack of confidence when students have to deal with the target language in real circumstances, such as using the language in other occasions, apart from the ones designated for oral practice. This is further explained in the next section.

4.3. Lack of confidence to use the target language and translation as a tool for language command:

As previously mentioned, by emphasizing the practical use of language, the self dimension is often neglected. Once this dimension comprehends the ways individuals see themselves and how they interact with language, with others and their

surroundings, this negligence may lead to uncertainty in handling the new language as the psychic foundations learners have in mother tongue are disestablished (REVUZ, 1998). This insecurity conveys statements as follows:

DS 9:

> S2: /.../ eu tenho vergonha de errar eu (2.0) porque eu já sou assim tímida por natureza né" aí eu tenho medo de errar, aí eu fico com vergonha de falar,[28]

In fact, S2's incertitude towards target language converges to an attitude which translates many students' belief in this study, that is, they are too insecure to communicate in the target language, beyond the limits of the book unit.

DS 10:

> S4: Eu não me sinto muito bem falando' XXX eu fico meio (+) eu fico em DÚVIDA'(+) muita coisa, tenho muita dúvida'(+) entendeu" /.../[29]

This may lead students to express the idea that they need full command of English in order to communicate effectively, generated by the formal schooling discourse, which equals every knowledge acquisition as "the assimilation of a school subject" (GRIGOLETTO, 2003, p. 226). For this reason, 12 out of 20 students in this group (60%) believe that translation is an important tool to help them master the language. This enunciation is manifested in assertions like:

DS 11:

> S4: Eu acho que a gente poderia pra praticar mais ((translation))/.../passar um texto na (+ +) mesclar MAIS com tradução passar um dar um TEXTO e ah tentar (+) tentar traduZIR em casa (+) utilizar algumas palavras /.../[30]

DS 12:

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[28] See SD 9 translation in note 7 in Appendix 1.
[29] See SD 10 translation in note 8 in Appendix 1.
[30] See SD 11 translation in note 9 in Appendix 1.

> R: Então você acha a tradução importa:nte”
> S5: Sim, (+) TEM que saber,
> R: Senão::’
> S5: Senão não se expressa se você não souber das coisas,[31]

These formulations echo not only the influence of typically school discourse but the students are also affected by more traditional foreign languages methodologies, which postulate that language development is a result of grammar exercises and translation practice and successful language learning corresponds to effective exercise completion.

This need for translation can also be a result of what Rajagopalan (1998) entitles homogeneity of the language. According to him, linguistics domain articulates the notion that any language learning is a homogenous process and it can be acquired as a whole. In this sense, every foreign word/expression would have a correspondent term in the mother tongue. And building up this knowledge is believed to lead to the command of the target language.

In addition to that, this need for translation can also be a demand from their own learning practice, once students feel that the necessity of knowing the meaning of the word/phrase in Portuguese so as to understand and communicate in the target language. This feature reveals the students’ and the teacher’s transgression in the learning process as the Constituted Ideology advocates that translation is considered an unacceptable resource in this EFL field. Yet, not only students make use of translation in their learning process but also teachers may employ the mother tongue throughout the lessons for various reasons, *e.g.* to explain a topic or to make a joke. In foreign language teaching, however, translation is believed to interfere with the full acquisition of the target language and there is encouragement for the participants of this process to look up to the ideal learner: the native speaker (GRIGOLETTO, 2003). Once they are below this level, this situation may cause some discomfort when they use the target language and may explain their resistance to English use in real contexts.

Furthermore, the fact that this need for translation contradicts what is established by the social institutions – here represented more notably by the School – unveils that their experience as a language learner is a relevant element that constitutes their imaginary. Since these two discourses are contradictory, they can also generate some conflict, as observed in the extract below:

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[31] See SD 12 translation in note 10 in Appendix 1.

DS 13:

1R: Você acha tradução importante"
S2: Acho,
R: É"(+) Por quê"
S2: Pra entender mais a língua (+) eu (+) ainda sinto necessidade, é errado' né" ((chuckles))
5R: Não não, é a forma que você achou né" (+ +) de aprende:r,
S2:Tem muita gente que fala que daqui: que você traduza (+) que a pessoa tá (+) tá querendo dizer falando'(+) já perdeu tudo,[32]

Although this student assumes that translation is an important means for her learning, she feels confused as she is also crossed by the Constituted Ideology – personified here by *many people*, who affirm that *it is wrong*. This confusion is translated in her position when dealing with language:

DS 14:

S2: /…/ amanhã eu vou pra um (+ +) vai ter um seminário de (+ +) do pessoal da: (+ +) acho que é: (1.5)não sei se é de lá de Nova Iorque (+) é (+) de fora, aí vai ser tudo em inglês, (+) eu digo' ÓTIMO, mas eu vou ((chuckles)) pra ver se eu consigo entender alguma coisa já é um (+) um exercício a mais né"[33]

Her contradiction to affirm whether this seminar will be valuable is shown by the phrases "Great", which is a positive word, and the subsequent contrastive idea "but I'll go". Consciously, she sees this seminar as an opportunity to improve her English, although she fails to know what the seminar is exactly about. Probably in her mind, it is worth going indeed as *everything will be in English* and consequently, no translation will be held there, no matter what the topic is. However, subconsciously, she demonstrates a certain resistance to this idea, expressed by the phrase *but I'll go*. This may show that she feels unconfident as she believes that her level of English is not enough to cope with the seminar and being exposed to this scenario frightens her. By chuckling she seems to evidence her embarrassment and discomfort towards this situation. In order to adjust this conflict, she claims that it will be an extra exercise to enhance her learning by being exposed to the target language and checking if she will be able to *understand something* from the seminar.

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[32] See SD13 translation in note 11 in Appendix 1.

[33] See SD14 translation in note 12 in Appendix 1.

Her attitude illustrates the notion in EFL instruction that regards form and meaning as two independent elements once the topic of the seminar is irrelevant for her. Despite efforts of EFL methodologies to conceive language meaningfully, what are noticed in many course materials are well-intended texts, questionnaires and dialogues that, in many cases, are present in the book as an excuse to practise linguistic structures, detached from a purpose for communication. In fact, the purpose of this material is very restricted to the lesson theme and to certain vocabulary and language structures.

Another conception present in her discourse which is also put forward by EFL instruction is the idea that developing oral abilities leads to language command. This concept is grounded on the aptitude that small children have to learn a language, which leads EFL researchers to propose proximity of foreign language learning to the conditions children acquire mother tongue. This massive preponderance of such skills overshadows other abilities, especially writing. Even though they write quite a lot, whether in class or to study for tests, writing is hardly ever considered as an ability to be developed to master a language, or is simply used as a strategy:

DS 15:

> S1: /../quando você aprende uma língua'(+) eu aprendi que você não tem que ter medo de errar, (++) tem que falar MESMO que você não tenha: (+) tanta certeza (+) FALE'[34]

DS 16:

> S2: às vezes eu:: (+) boto no pape:l (+)pra (+) aprende:r a:: como que bota ele no passado /.../ pra ver se eu consigo fazer sem olhar'/.../[35]

DS 17:

> R: Na sua opinião' pra uma pessoa:: aprender BEM inglês /.../ preCIsa saber o QUÊ?
> S4: Praticar ((chuckles))
> R: Mas praticar o QUÊ?
> S4: e::h ouvir' falar' acho que praticar (+ +) com outra pessoa, /.../[36]

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[34] See SD 15 translation in note 13 in Appendix 1.
[35] See SD 16 translation in note 14 in Appendix 1.
[36] See SD 17 translation in note 15 in Appendix 1.

The extracts above evidence the secondary role of writing: even though some writing is done in class via exercises and two compositions - which should be done and later corrected by the students as part of their evaluation – little concern is given to this ability. In fact, there is a silence with reference to writing as a communicative skill in the interviewees' speech, exemplified in S4's utterance seen above, who affirms that practising the language consists of listening and speaking. This meaning is also remarked in S1's statement, who adds that mistakes should not prevent one from speaking and, consequently, learning the language.

4.4. Not Being Afraid of Mistakes

This last assertion also discloses another belief in EFL detected in this investigation, and very present in their discursive formation: you do not have to be afraid of making mistakes. S1's utterance also reveals a teacher's voice, when he states he "*learned*" that. This assumption is grounded on research concerning good language learners (CARROLL, 1977; ELLIS and SINCLAIR, 1989, LIGHTBOWN and SPADA, 2006). These studies are unison to affirm that one of the strategies used by these learners is the willingness of taking risks for the sake of communication. In spite of the fact that this idea is quite strong in these subjects' discourse, this emphasis contradicts what happens in class. As mentioned before, students hardly ever say something in the target language unless when they do the tasks to practise the topic under study. Despite this, during the observation, there have been many attempts of students communicating in the target language. However, they demonstrated a sense of frustration and if they had a real need for communication, they usually switched to mother tongue. This evidences the belief of the importance of the form so as to communicate effectively.

The teacher, in his turn, does not push the pupils to speak in the target language based on the belief that they are not fully ready to go on this enterprise. This type of action may be founded on Krashen's Natural Approach (KRASHEN, 1982), which advocates that effective learning is unconscious and is compared to the way children learn their mother tongue and the environment plays an important role by providing the input for learning. In effect, the teacher does claim that his approach is naturalistic-oriented. This influence can be evident through certain strategies adopted by the

teacher *e.g.* playing a listening passage or pronunciation extracts from three up to five times - when course books generally recommend teachers playing them twice – as well as occasional background music while students do written exercises. By doing so, the teacher may want to provide a non-threatening environment, and thus promotes what Krashen advocates as low emotional filter.

The Natural Approach is also mentioned in the following statement:

DS 18:

> T: /.../ quando as pessoas estão mais relaXAdas' como diz Krashen' quando os filtros emocionais estão BAIXOS' (+) você consegue fazer mais coisa XXX as pessoas não têm medo de ERRAR'(+) não têm medo de ser RI-di ridicularizadas,[37]

The prevalence of this approach in the teacher's discourse can be apparent by the choice of terminology of this theory, such as "emotional filter", which refers to affective elements which can determine language learners' outcome. In most cases, these variables refer to: motivation, self-confidence (highly stimulated learners with a good image of themselves are likely to have better results) and anxiety (learners tend to be more successful when their level of anxiety is lower). According to him, when this filter is low, the teacher can do more things, that is, make them speak more by using the target language.

Therefore, this filter has a straight connection with the fear of making mistakes, already mentioned by S1, when he states that one should speak (in the target language), even if they are not confident about the way of doing so (see DS 15). Thus, being afraid of making mistakes is seen as a blockade in learners' progress:

DS 19:

> S1: /…/ eu acho que o grande proBLEma de se estudar inglês(+ +) as pessoas (+) geram um bloqueio na sua mente' é o medo de ERRAR,[38]

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[37] See DS 18 translation in note 16 in Appendix 1.

[38] See (…).

It is interesting to see how strong this belief is in their discourse – the fear of making mistakes - as both the teacher and the student use the exact same words to express this idea, corroborating once again, the influence of the Constituted Ideology in their beliefs, especially through learning and teaching methodologies like the Communicative Approach and Pragmatics, which put forward that communication should be privileged, and language learning theories like the Sociocultural Approach, which states that language is built on the interaction between the child and the things observed or manipulated (see Section 2.1). This idea is reinforced in utterances like the following:

DS 20

Elas devem escrever sempre, mesmo quando a escrita parece apenas rabiscos[39]

DS 21

Pelo contato diário com textos, os alunos já são capazes de revisar e corrigir erros.[40]

Based on this argument, students should handle language, *even when* they are not ready for that, as well as they are able to monitor their mistakes, once they are given conditions – in this case, the contact with texts – so that they can correct themselves.

Although these two statements sound contradictory, they postulate that errors are part of the learning process. On the other hand, these formulations unveil a certain discomfort that errors can cause in this process, which may equal making mistakes and being ridiculed, already mentioned in DS 18. Nevertheless, they believe that students should not be refrained at the expense of communication. Indeed, the belief the teacher has concerning errors in the classroom shows how this matter is still unsolved. Grounded on his teaching formation, the teacher makes the following statement:

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[39] *They must always be writing, even when writing is just scribbling*. (CAVALCANTE, M. **Todos podem aprende**r. Nova Escola. São Paulo, ed. 190, Mar. 2003. Available on: <http://revistaescola.abril.com.br/lingua-portuguesa/alfabetizacao-inicial/todos-podem-aprender-423838.shtml>)
[40]Through daily contact with texts, learners are able to revise and correct mistakes. (Op. cit.)

DS 22:

> T: ((errors)) uma hora'(+) essa ficha cai,[41]

This utterance confirms the influence of innatist-oriented methods and approaches that emphasize oral practice in his imaginary, which advocates that errors are a natural event in the learning process and eventually will be apprehended. However, his speech is also affected by the behaviourist trend, which asserts that errors should be avoided. These contradictory discourses produce a conflicting utterance as follows:

DS 23:

> 1 T: /.../ mas (+) e:h (+) eu corrijo, (+) esse é o meu papel, (+) agora'(+ +) por outro lado' eu sei que eu tenho que ter MUITA paciência que na HORA certa' essa coisa vai ser revertida, ANTES'(+) não, ALIÁS' não faz a MÍNIMA diferença, (1.5) ((lower the voice)) a MÍNIMA diferença, (+) a sua correção ou não'(+) você tá numa sala de aula, (+) você TEM que fazer alguma coisa.
> 5 R: Ahn tá,
> T: ESSA é a área MAIS difícil.[42]

Despite the presence of the belief affirming that learning has a natural order and errors are part of this process, and for this reason, there is not much a teacher can do with respect to them, he also feels uncomfortable if he ignores students' mistakes. The last assumption is very strong in his discourse and is probably grounded on his experience as a language teacher. As he asserts above, his job as a teacher is to correct students' mistakes and he believes that this is what he is expected to do. All the same, this belief contradicts the teaching theory he acquired in his teaching formation, which postulates that correcting learners is an innocuous procedure.

This uncertainty can be explained by the fact that authors in this field fail to give an overtly satisfactory answer to this matter. Lightbown and Spada (2006), for example, claim that the teacher's main function is to assure that learners make the most of their learning experience, by enabling them to perceive recurrent errors. But they do not enlighten when, how and if to correct, which are crucial questions to teachers. Brown (1994), in his turn, says "the teacher needs to develop the intuition, through

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[41] See SD 22 translation in note 18 in Appendix 1.
[42] See SD 23 translation in note 19 in Appendix 1.

experience and solid eclectic theoretical foundations, for ascertaining which option or combination of options is appropriate at given moments" (p. 222). In the end, he concludes that students' language deviancy is a difficult area to be dealt in teaching and learning process and he adjusts this contradiction by taking the measure that he assumes to be expected by the students, *i e.* correcting them.

Students also manifest different positions with respect to error correction. At one end of the scale, there are some students who affirm that errors should be ignored for the sake of communication. This has been already stated in S1's statement, when he postulates that students should speak in the target language even when they are uncertain of the way they should do that (see SD 15). This is also noticeable in the following utterance:

DS 24

> S2: Falar você ainda vai gagueja:ndo sai né'[43]

It is interesting to notice the resemblance of the formulation with the statement in DS 20, which supports the same approach to writing skills.

Conversely, at the other end, there are learners who believe that errors must be corrected:

DS 25:

> S6: Mesmo que ((the teacher)) diga (+) não é pra me dizer que EU estou certa, (+) NÃ:O, (+) é pra me dizer onde É que eu estou errada,[44]

DS 26:

> S4: /.../ acho que o problema maior é o erro entendeu"
> R: Ah tá, não fa/
> S4:   você FALAR e ver o que você tá errando /.../[45]

So again, some students' statements are not only influenced by the school discourse, in which learning equals full acquisition, but also by Rajagopalan's concept

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[43] See SD 24translation in note 20 in Appendix 1.
[44] See SD 25 translation in note 21 in Appendix 1.
[45] See SD 26 translation in note 22 in Appendix 1.

of homogeneity of the language. In this sense, they seek language development by aiming at a perfect performance, reflecting their idealization of the native speaker in their imaginary.

This notion is acquainted for whoever deals with EFL teaching and learning and by not regarding language acquisition as a constituent element of their psychism (advocated by Revuz) - or, in other words, their identity, students' performance is affected and this fact may explain their attitude in class. Taking back the learners mentioned above, the former group who uphold communication tries to speak more in English throughout the lessons than the latter, which supports the relevance of accuracy and demonstrates hesitation and lack of confidence to communicate in the target language, remaining in silence as a regular basis. This leads to statements like S3's utterance, when she suggests that through intense practice, the learner is able to have enough confidence of speaking in the target language (see DS 8). So, in order to avoid mistakes, some students try to do some repetitive work so as to memorize the correct structures. The role of memory is dealt in further detail in the next section.

4.5. The Relevance of Memory in the Language Learning Process

The role of memory in EFL is another assumption noticeable in the interviewees' utterances, which is exemplified in the extract below:

DS 27:

S4: Eu acho se você ouvir bem' você (+) fala (+) naturalmente (+ +) você vai lembrar, eu tenho a memória mais auditiva por isso ouvir é mais importante pra mim,[46]

This belief has been current in teaching methodologies throughout the foreign languages history and has been present in the both teacher and students' discursive formation, *i.e.*, the relevance of memory in the language learning process. For instance, in a lesson about past tense, the students were challenged to memorise a group of

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[46] See SD 27 translation in note 23 in Appendix 1.

sentences by heart. Despite the difficulty of the task - manifested by the hesitation of the students to take the challenge - it was an instant of fun as students were teasing one another by checking if they were repeating the sentences accurately. After this moment, the teacher says:

DS 28:

> 1 T: /.../ it's imPORtant to have a memory, if it's (+) difficult for you to REMEMBER' you have to read (+) three times' (+) FOUR times'(+) FIVE times, (+) You have to remember, (+ +) MEMORY is imPORtant, (++) you don't have to have a fanTAStic memory /.../ mas que você precisa lembrar (+) DUAS' três frases pra contar a sua história' precisa, /.../ precisa (+)
> 5   TREINAR um pouquinho mais a memória,[47] (Lesson 11)

In his discourse, memory is considered fundamental in the learning process as it enables students to "tell their story". Apart from echoing the school discourse, which highly regards the role of memory in learning, his utterance also reveals a behaviouristic orientation in his discursive formation, as he advocates that memory is a result of repetition and training. By doing so, errors are avoided and thus good habits are formed. In this way, although meaning is taken into account – so as to tell a tale – it plays a secondary role as the language structure seems to be more relevant so as to convey meaning better.

It must be reminded here that this study aims at scrutinizing the beliefs present in the *corpus* and by no means does this study imply to say that memory does not have a part in language learning. As already mentioned, learning beliefs are important features once they allow teachers and students to understand the teaching and learning process and take actions accordingly.

Another fact that calls my attention in this formulation is that the teacher here mixes language codes, *i.e.*, he starts speaking in the target language and ends his utterance in the mother tongue. Although his first intention may be to make himself better understood, it also seems that the target language permits him to be more straightforward ("*you have to read three, four five times*") as when he turns to the mother tongue, his tone is softer ("*precisa treinar um pouquinho mais a memória*" ["*you need to practise a little bit more of your memory*"]). Due to the fact that the aim

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[47] See SD 28 translation in note 24 in Appendix 1.

of this investigation concerns beliefs and their relation to learning strategies, this study cannot go further on mixed codes. Nonetheless, this aspect deserves to be dealt in future studies.

The relevance of memory to language learning is endorsed by the Communicative Approach, which is very present in the discursive formation of the subjects in this study. Although it criticises rote learning (in which language acquisition is promoted via memorization), this theory claims that language should be learnt through automaticity (learning by the means of automatic processing, in which language structures are acquired inductively). This methodology acknowledges the significance of memory in this process, especially at initial stages (BROWN, 2001). In accordance with this teaching practice, this transition should be smooth: learners must move from more analytical learning towards a more subconscious language development. Indeed, this approach accepts drilling exercises in order to automate language forms (ALMEIDA FILHO, 1993). Memorization thus plays a key role for language command.

On that account, it is understandable that the lack of memory is also responsible for student's low progress:

DS 29:

> S6: /.../ eu tava de férias e não pratiquei, (+) realmente eu não pratiquei, Então' quando eu voltei agora eu senti uma dificuldade eNORme (+) coisas que eu já vi, (+ +) A memória' né"[48]

In S6's imaginary, language practice and memory have a close connection: as she has not practised and revised the target language, she blames memory for her poor performance. As we can notice here, this student does not distinguish what practice or having good memory is, taking one by the other. As she has not practised on holiday, she is the one to blame for the difficulties she had to learn. This discourse echoes the behaviourist viewpoint of memory, *i.e.*, learning as a result of practice and repetition, which is also clearly present in the other subjects' discourse in this study.

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[48] See SD 29 translation in note 25 in Appendix 1.

Her utterance is also crossed by the concept of memory put forward by cognitive-based approaches: memory as consequence of mental activity, in which learning is a building up process. That is to say that "through experience and practice, information that was new becomes easier to process" (LIGHTBOWN and SPADA, 2006, p.39). Otherwise stated, memory is reactivated by previous activities features, thus, enabling the automaticity of the language.

However, the role of memory goes beyond these borders. According to Pêcheux (1999), memory fails to be homogeneous, but it "is a mobile space of divisions, disjunctions, shifts and retakings […] A space for unfoldings, replies, polemics and counter-discourses"(*op. cit*., p. 56). In other words, memory allows the emergence and changes of utterances. Hence, memory here is not psychological but the one that is historically inscribed through which every discursive formation is associated to. This enables the flow of utterances that have already been said, whose origins lie on the discursive memory and not on the subject (BRANDÃO, 1997). In this sense, in every utterance, there are other voices that speak through it and every discourse is placed in accordance with the discourse of the Other and, when the conditions of productions are changed, new meanings are produced (*op. cit.*)

4.6. Learners' Responsibility for their Learning

As seen above, S6's discourse echoes another belief found in EFL methodologies, that is, the student's responsibility for their own learning (as seen in section 1.2). This assumption is probably founded on Learning Psychological theories that advocate that learning is promoted through interaction (see section 2.1.4), and it is one of the strongest beliefs present in this study. All the interviewees (both the teacher and the students) state that the learners are responsible for their language development and the teacher is a facilitator in this process:

DS 30:

> S1: Eu tenho MU:ITA facilidade ((to learn the language)), (+ +) muita facilidade mas (+ +) como (+) todo aprendizado' como toda língua que tá sendo (+) e:h aprendida'(+) requer muito esforço muita dedicação, (+) estudo'[49]

DS 31:

> T: /…/ a gente tá ali pra EXPOR o conteúdo lingüístico (+) e FACILITA:R (+) e criar condições para que o aluno aprenda, agora' COMO ele vai aprende:r e POR ONDE ele vai começar' é uma coisa extremamente pessoal,[50]

The teacher takes for granted that the teacher's role implies working as a facilitator and an input provider and, by employing the term "we", the teacher lays hold of the collectivity to give support to his position. In other words, it is not only him who asserts this formulation, but every teacher's prior function is to supply learners with input, and students, in turn, should find their path to learning. This concept can have roots on studies concerning learner's autonomy, whose driving force grows out of learners being in charge of their progress (LITTLE and DAM, 1998). Although this idea of autonomy expresses a sense of freedom, this notion of autonomy clashes with another discourse, predicated by the teacher:

DS 32:

> T: /…/ quando o aluno não OUVE o professor' quando ele tem idéias diferentes' quando ele quer fazer uma OUTRA coisa' aí então' ele acaba se prejudicando/.../[51]

The origins of this discourse, that is, the teacher being in charge of learner's outcome, may rest on the realm of mother tongue teaching methodologies, noticed in the following formulations:

DS 33:

> *"Qual é a alma da escola? É a equipe de professores e de gestores que dão continuidade às idéias e aos planos coletivos e respondem ao interesse dos alunos."*[52].

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[49] See SD 30 translation in note 26 in Appendix 1.
[50] See SD31 translation in note 27 in Appendix 1.
[51] See SD32 translation in note 28 in Appendix 1.
[52] "*What's the soul of the school? It's the teachers and supervisors' team who carry on the ideas and collective plans and meet the students' interests.*" (DIDONÊ, D. **O papel da avaliação**. Nova Escola. São Paulo, ed. 199,

DS 34:

> "*Eu tinha um grupo de professores que sabiam o conteúdo mas não sabiam como ensinar.*"[53]

As noted above, the discourse that crosses this teacher's speech - the educator being in charge of students' results - is grounded on formal schooling. If the pupil fails to learn, the teacher is the one to blame. As a matter of fact, learner's autonomy is not accounted in this realm, once the autonomy identified in the various articles about teaching and learning the mother tongue collected in this research was mostly in reference to school administration[54]. This may lead to a conflict when students first arrive in a language classroom. This condition can be noticed in the teacher's utterance:

DS 35:

> T: No Básico 2 eles são mais DEPENDENTES de você né" eles têm MUITO menos e:h EXPERIÊNCIA e maturidade lingüística' (+) eles precisam de uma coisa mais (+) ahn (1.5) o planejamento precisa ser melhor, precisa ser MAIS amarrado,[55]

The fact that they are not used to being autonomous about their learning may lead the teacher to say that students at elementary levels are *less experienced and linguistically immature.* From the teacher's perspective, learners do not have experience in foreign language instruction to know how to enhance their learning and this condition leads them to be *more dependent.* Indeed, due to the fact that teacher is regarded to be the one responsible for students' performance in formal schooling, when students come to language lessons for the first time, they are inserted in a different domain and usually lean on the teacher to get adapted to this new environment, fact already evidenced in S3's discourse, when she states that the teacher

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Feb. 2007. Available on: <http://revistaescola.abril.com.br/planejamento-e-avaliacao/avaliacao/papel-avaliacao-424744.shtml>)

[53] *"I have a group of teachers who knew the content but didn't know how to teach"* (GUEDES, P.O grande esforço de ensinar r aprender. **O Estado de São Paulo**, São Paulo, s. n., p.3, 20 May 2007. Available on: <http://www.braudel.org.br/noticias/midia/pdf/estado_20070520.pdf>)

[54] See <www.estado.com.br> <www.abril.com> <www.gazetaweb.globo.com> <www.revistaescola.abril.com.br >

[55] See SD 35 translation in note 29 in Appendix 1.

should give students great attention in order that they feel more confident when using the new language (see DS 8).

Perhaps, that is the reason why the formulation of learner's independence is so reinforced throughout the lessons, *e.g.* by emphasizing the use of the grammar reference when students do written exercises, and the fact that homework is always set but never corrected.

This contradictory discourse upon the learner's responsibility may induce to an uncertainty by the students: they are required to make choices about their learning at the same time that their attitude must be in accordance with what they are expected to do. This assertion directly affects these human subjects' approach towards teaching and learning and this fact is axiomatic by the means of the strategies they use in this process. For example, the teacher suggests students doing the exercises in the activity book apart from the use of grammar reference mentioned above. So, students' autonomy implies them doing what is expected from a good language learner: do extra activities at home such as listening to the audio CD of the adopted material and watching films in English. Maybe owing to their limited "freedom", learners show a certain lack of clear purpose when handling some strategies so as to develop language learning[56]:

DS 36:

> S6: Escutar aqueles ahn CDs né' das liçõ:es em ca:sa, /.../ eu tenho a coleção toda, (+) às vezes eu fico em casa praticando isso (+) ouvindo o tempo todo'e:: filme, (+) tento (+ +) tirar a legenda, se bem que (+) às vezes num funciona /.../ ((laughs))[57]

As already postulated, many of the studies related to good language learners advocate the importance of learner's self-direction. For example, Carroll (1977) postulates that strategies for learning are a question of attitude. In this sense, among other things, language students should "spend as much time as they can in second language activities outside class" (p. 5). Based on what we can observe in DS 36, there

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[56] Information collected during the interviews.

[57] See SD 36 translation in note 30 in Appendix 1.

is an effort to enhance language learning via extra-class activities, evidenced by the fact that she has the *whole collection of audio CDs* and listens to them *all* the time.

However, some conflict can be also noticed in her discourse. Although she does extra activities at home, she does not feel comfortable about the things she learnt to be effective to acquire the target language when she says that she *tries* to take out the subtitles. It is an attempt to improve her English but she experiences a certain resistance to do so as she may believe she will not be able to understand it without them. Notwithstanding, she goes on this enterprise, as in her imaginary formation, this is what a good learner is supposed to do. However, she feels frustrated because her efforts fail to pay off, as "*sometimes it doesn't work*". This frustration is hidden behind chuckling, which is also seen in S2's utterance, after stating that translation is a wrong technique to be employed in language learning (see DS 13).

This demonstrates their embarrassment for not being able to achieve what they are expected to do and, in S6's case specifically, to succeed in her attempts to make progress. In S6's imaginary, she does everything she is supposed to do in order to enhance her learning. The outcome, however, is not what is expected:

DS 37:

> S6: É porque assim' (+) é como se fosse MUITO difícil pra mim aprender inglês,
> R: É"(+) Por quê"
> S6: Num sei, Eu tenho'(+) eu faço tudo igualzinho' (+ +) e eu num tô conseguindo,[58]

Due to the fact that this notion of learner's responsibility is well established in EFL methodologies and consequently, in both teachers and students' discourse, she feels that the problem cannot be either in the activity, material or the strategy as such. After all, she does everything in the same way she is supposed to do. For this reason, she concludes that it may be herself, since she conditions her difficulty in learning to herself: *as **if** it was very difficult for **me** to learn English*. So, in her terms, learning English as such is not really difficult. This situation leads her to confusion and she presents an incongruous utterance, considering good aspects of her learning process that are not, in fact, learning per se:

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[58]See SD 38 translation in note 31 in Appendix 1.

DS 38:

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1 S6: /.../ eu tive facilidade (+) independente de ter sido aprova:da ou reprovada,
    R: Sim,
    S6: Ma::s (1.5) É por aí' assim conversa:ndo, TODOS eles ((teachers)) assim'(+)me (+)
    T: / você teve facilidade em que: (+) sentido" pra você po/ (+) ahã'
    S6:   teve espaço,   ABERTURA, né"
5 R: Pra poder conversar,
    S6:   dizer   quando sempre quando a gente tem (+) TÁ com dificulda:de'(+)
    conversa'(+) PRINCIPALMENTE acho que foram (+ +) três assim que (+) sempre tava ME
    procurando'(+) mesmo que eu não procurasse mas vinha ME procurar,[59]

So, what was easy for her was not the learning process itself (as the fact of being approved or not is beside the point in her formulation), but the approach to teachers. Actually, the teachers' attitude in looking for this student and trying to help her out indicates their astonishment before her incongruous performance, unfolding a gap in the ideology that states that a good language learner uses good learning strategies. Although she does everything teachers suggest her doing, she does not make the expected progress.

This situation corroborates the idea that foreign language learning involves more than acquiring a linguistic system but indeed it entails a confrontation between mother tongue and a non-primary language (REVUZ, 1998). The enterprise of learning a foreign language always implies disruption of what is inscribed by mother tongue and intervenes in the complex relationship between the human subject and their language (see 2.2). This argument has been, by tradition, overlooked by foreign language methodologies (*op. cit.*) and may be the reason why EFL learning has not been as successful as these teaching approaches aim at. For the student in question, the whole EFL learning approach may have been puzzling and she is not able to ascertain real interaction with this process and, consequently, to establish her "foreign language self" (*op. cit.*). In this sense, she does what she is advised to do but she does not evaluate and question the efficacy of these strategies on her progress, and as a consequence, she believes that she is the one to be blamed for her poor progress.

As we can see, despite being often dissonant, beliefs the subjects have about language learning have a great influence on their strategies choice and on their outcome, which can be effective or not in terms of language development. Beliefs are

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[59] See SD 38 translation in note 32 in Appendix 1.

an essential feature to language teaching and learning, once they allow the teacher and the students to place themselves as subjects in this process when managing the new language. However, it seems that, in order to enhance language instruction, strategies must be meaningful for the students so that they are able to understand the objective of their use and thus go beyond the strategies themselves, contributing to true interaction with the target language and the subject and, consequently, promoting the production of discourses.

CONCLUSION

The central interest of this investigation concerns beliefs that underlie the EFL teacher's and students' discourse through which they signify themselves and the language learning process. These beliefs are fundamental to give meanings to foreign language instruction, once they deeply affect the way the participants of this process deal with the new language. As well as that, these beliefs justify the learning strategies selected by the subjects in this study. As already mentioned, the relationship between beliefs and strategies prove to be not always congruent, but even so, they enable both the teacher and students to give meanings in the teaching and learning process.

Moreover, learning strategies here are not only seen as tools learners lay hold of so as to enhance language development but rather, as ways both teachers and students handle the teaching and learning process. More than judging strategies, they are resources that these participants make use to materialise the beliefs they have in order to give meaning to this process.

In order to drive this research, a collection of discourse sequences have been categorised and analysed in accordance with both Constituted and Common Sense Ideologies that rule EFL learning and teaching. From this collection, the most significant beliefs present in the students and the teacher's formulations were gathered and organised. In a second moment, these beliefs are related to the strategies employed by the subjects of this study.

Through this investigation, it is noticed that the respondents' beliefs are permeated by various discourses, fact that corroborates the heterogeneous constitution of human subjects. They identify themselves with these discourses which form the basis for their interdiscourse, "the memory of all the meanings that were comprised with our interaction with the language" (ORLANDI, 1998, p. 206).

The categories outlined in this investigation unveil a mapping of the human subjects' discursive filiations, which could be classified as follows:

- *Common Sense ideology* is the basis for the relevance of English language to access knowledge;

- *School discourse* puts forward the idea of translation as an important tool to help them master the language and the consequent lack of confidence to use the target language, and the relevance of memory in language learning process;

- *EFL methodologies* give support to language as communication and the idea of learners not being afraid of making mistakes;

- *Learning Psychology and EFL methodologies* underlie the student's responsibility for their own learning.

Yet, this categorization does not mean that beliefs belong exclusively to one group. In fact, these beliefs may be outlined in various settings throughout the subjects' learning history, and for this reason, they may transit in different contexts. However contradictory these categories may seem, they evidence the various discursive formations which provide the respondents of this investigation with meanings so that they are able to handle and interact with the learning situation. As we can see, these discourses pervade not only the language instructional settings but also in broader contexts, which means that these formations are shaped long before they come to a language classroom.

Based on the analysis of this study, the main belief lying beneath English teaching and learning in this investigation comes from the *Common Sense Ideology* concerning the role of this language as a tool to access knowledge and this assumption gives support to the other beliefs in this field. In this sense, due to this alleged relevance, the English language is taught aiming especially at the development of communicative skills in language schools so as to reach world information flow. This assumption seems to have a connection with their motivation to learn the target language, once they believe that the English language allows them to have more opportunities in terms of personal, academic and professional development. During the data collection, the respondents demonstrated to be motivated towards learning as they expressed to be interested in learning the language by regularly attending the lessons and their readiness to do the class activities. Nonetheless, this investigation learns that motivation propels students into doing extra-activities but it fails to determine the close connection between motivation and students' progress. Future investigation can account for this matter.

As already stated, the influence of formal schooling is noticeable in the interviewees' formulations. Beliefs grounded on the *School discourse* illustrate the tradition of considering language learning as an exclusively cognitive activity. In addition, more than acquiring new language, learning focuses on passing the exams. On that account, knowing the language implies being able to do exercises or translating a text, which may justify the preference for writing in order to consolidate the language. This unveils a paradox, once this belief reduces what language really involves, already postulated in this thesis. In effect, the beliefs expressed by the respondents in this investigation imply an instrumental perspective of the language, in which learning a language involves the acquisition of a linguistic code. This perception fails to consider that language learning may involve new identifications and position shifts (GRIGOLETTO, 1998). Otherwise stated, acquiring a foreign language is a complex activity that implies more than the language itself: it entails a whole movement in which the human subject, the target language and the context are in constant interaction.

Another aspect observed in this investigation is the fact that the course book seems to be another tool that restrains the interviewees' action, especially the teacher, once he has to follow its content so as students will be able to do well in exams. For this reason, most classroom activities aim at this objective. The Constituted Ideology that sustains the evidence concerning the reliability of a language course book is so reputable that its contents are never questioned.

EFL methodologies discourse, in turn, is another category that underlies many of the respondents' beliefs and the analysis evidences that features of various teaching methodologies are noticeable in their discourse, in particular the Communicative Approach. The emphasis on oral communication put forward by many EFL methodologies permeates practically all human subjects' formulations in this study. There is a clear preference for speaking activities, although some students' main objective is to be able to read scientific articles for post-graduation courses. The primacy of oral skills is so well established in EFL settings that these students do not seem to question the absence of developing other abilities, such as reading. So they try focusing on improving oral skills by revising questions and answers, or word/sentence repetition so as to improve their pronunciation.

Despite being possible for both beliefs being co-existent in the same discursive formation, the group based on teaching methodologies clashes with the category grounded on school discourse: while the former aims at developing abilities to accomplish classroom activities, the category based on EFL discourse entails developing oral skills in order to be able to use the target language outside the classroom. In this perspective, most activities outlined in the classroom are adaptations of the way language can be used in real contexts. Nonetheless, in informal conversations with students after classes, it was detected that most learners in this study do not try experiencing the language outside the classroom, limiting to the activities based on the adopted material. A possible explanation for that could be the fact that students may feel that what is seen in the classroom does not have a clear connection with the language used "out there", once all the elements in real interactions fail to be present in the communication exchanges which are promoted in class. As a consequence, they do not feel confident enough to deal with the target language in real contexts, inside or outside the classroom. This may explain the evident nervousness learners demonstrate when they have to use the target language in real communicative contexts.

For the same reason, this belief may also explicate why very rarely do students use the target language meaningfully in the classroom. After all, they are a monolingual class and they may feel quite uncomfortable and embarrassed to express themselves through English, as they feel they need the target language command – in the same way they master Portuguese - so as to do it with properly.

As we can see, despite being grounded on different discourses, the beliefs supported by both EFL methodologies and School discourse convert to the same idea, *i.e.,* the full command of the language in order to speak effectively.

On the other hand, as observed in PCN, formal schooling's pursuance thrives students' reading ability once other skills are believed to be unfeasible to be accomplished in class. Despite the assumption of other factors that may cause different realities between both educational settings, this contradiction may be one of the reasons for the discrepancies between the results in regular schools and language institutions, once different emphasis may produce different outcomes.

The belief grounded on both *Learning Psychology theories and EFL discourse*, in turn, is one of the most present in the respondents' imaginary and may be the one which justifies the failure of some students in foreign language instruction more evidently. Theories such as the Sociocultural Approach (see section 2.1.4.) advocates that learning is promoted through interaction and the initiative to go on such an enterprise lies on the individual. Furthermore, research driven in EFL field reinforces the concept behind the student's responsibility for their learning in this domain. In other words, the student's outcome depends on the action they take in order to make progress. For this reason, some students try to do extra exercises, such as listening to coursebook CDs or redoing written exercises in the workbook. But most of this extra work is done based on the material adopted as already mentioned. This may be due to the fact that this material works as a reference for them to study, providing them with guidance so that they will be able to know what to study.

In addition, the concept of the teacher as a facilitator in this process put forward by Innatist-based methodologies, such as the Communicative and Cognitive-oriented Approaches, corroborates this idea of students' self-direction. Nevertheless, although the notion of students' responsibility towards EFL learning is encouraged, the teacher shows to exert a great influence on students' attitude and subsequently on their beliefs. As already postulated, students present different strategies based on the beliefs they have about language learning and, in this process, teachers have an important role, once they are the authority in the classroom. For this reason, they are more likely to effectively pass on learning beliefs and strategies in order to develop the new language. Accordingly, most students adopt similar strategies to learn the language. In this sense, learners' responsibility fails to imply learners' autonomy, once their action is subject to what they are supposed/expected to do. In other words, they have autonomy in their learning as long as they adopt the learning strategies that are believed to be effective either by the teacher or by the Common Sense.

This attitude may lead to some conflict when students fail to get the expected progress as they believe that learning strategies are always efficient. For this reason they hardly ever question the efficacy of the strategy, or sometimes, to establish real interaction with it, as we can see in S6's case. However, this study concludes that more successful students do not adopt similar learning strategies, but rather, they can vary from person to person. Although the teacher makes some suggestions of strategies to

use, students also employ others that the teacher in question has never mentioned. Therefore, this investigation fails to establish if these learning strategies were suggested by another person, *e.g.* a former teacher or a colleague, or if they were employed according to the learner's own approach to language instruction. Irrespectively of the way these strategies are acquired, it seems that only by understanding what the learning strategy is about are students able to find their own way of learning. This understanding can be enhanced by encouraging collaborative learning in knowledge-building. Through a reflexive process of teaching and learning, both the teacher and the students will be able to promote the reversibility advocated by Orlandi (1998a), as mentioned in Section 2.3., by questioning the meanings conveyed, and thus, producing their own meanings, playing an active part in this process.

It should be pointed out again that there is no intention here to judge either beliefs or learning strategies. After all, these elements provide the participants of this process with conditions to undertake foreign language instruction, depicting the heterogeneity of subjects and the contradictions present in discursive formations. Belonging to the same instructional setting, many of these beliefs and strategies are also shared by this researcher. However, by analysing these features, it was possible to establish a distance from the object of study, so as to enable an outsider's look to what is familiar, and, accordingly, to be able to contemplate a greater picture of what foreign language learning and teaching caters for. These aspects are, at many times, overlooked in the language instruction, but this distance allowed this researcher to reflect on teaching practice and the variability existent in the classroom.

The work leading to this thesis has generated other pertinent ideas which can be possible extensions of this research. In future extensions, it will be interesting to include the role of other institutions in broader contexts, such as the school and the media, in order to have a more comprehensive understanding of belief formation. Besides, future studies could comprise deeper investigation concerning ideologies, beliefs and the use of learning strategies observed in this inquiry. As well as the aspects related to motivation already mentioned above, another potential extension concerns the implications of the use of mixed codes in a foreign language classroom.

Through this thesis, I hope to promote teachers and researchers' awareness of the diverse elements that are present in the classroom environment, by illustrating that every action taken by students is a result of their experience and has its logics of its

own. Likewise, this study expects to have depicted how the classroom context is affected by the broad context, by the means of the ideologies that pervade the participants of learning and teaching process. More than prescribing what beliefs and strategies are better for language instruction, which is not the intention nor is the ambition in this investigation, this thesis proposes to evidence the importance of these elements for teachers and students to signify the learning process. As previously stated, learning a language implies more than acquiring a code: the psychism of the speaker of the new language is also affected. As Revuz (1998, p. 227) asserts, "learning a language is always, a bit, to become another".

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

TRANSLATED EXTRACTS

[1] **DS 3:** eh: the major (+) the latest major (+ +) CHANGE in our (+) ((lower the tone of voice)) in our field of work here was the Communicative Approach (+) which is language as communication, /.../ all the materials practically FOLLOW this orientation I mean (+) the LANGUAGE (+) as communication, people must (+) learn to how to communicate at least (+) rea-son-a-bly,

[2] **DS 4:** It's imporTANT (+) for me to know how to (+ +) ASK' it's important for me to know how to (+ +) ANSWER, it's important how to connect these little pieces for example' when you (+) have to do (+) an oral test /…/ for you to be able to talk for two three minutes' do a simple dialogue /…/

[3] **DS 5:** This answer' when we are talking needs to be at the TIP of your tongue, /…/ the (+) speaking part (+) is a part for speaking, (+) it's not a part for silence, question' answer, question' answer,

[4] **DS 6:** /.../ LISTENING' (+) and SPEAKING' (+) I think they're VERY important'(+ +) apart from the grammar part,

[5] **DS 7:** S2: VERY important, ((pronunciation))
   R: Is it"(+) Why"
   S2: (1.5) To:: be able to interact with people without having difficulty'né" UNDERSTAND what the person is   list/ speaking and SPEAK fluently, eh: (+) that's what I look for, né"

[6] **DS 8:** /.../ a (+) greater atention from the teacher' (1.5) that he (+) really explained that exercise and practised and practised'(+ +) so that the learner can (+) acquire like' little by little né" this (+) tranquillity at the time of speaking'of expressing oneself /.../

[7] **DS 9:** /.../ I am embarrassed about making a mistake I (2.0) because I'm like this shy by nature né" so I'm afraid of making mistakes, so I get embarrassed to speak,

[8] **DS 10:** I don't feel comfortable when speaking' XXX I get kind of (+) I have QUESTIONS' (+) lots of things, I have many questions(+) got it"/.../

[9] **DS 11:** I think that we could practise more ((translation))/.../set a text in the (+ +) mix MORE with translation set a give a TEXT and ah try (+) try to transLATE at home (+) use some words /.../

[10] **DS 12:** R: So you think that translation is important,
   S5: Yes, (+) you HAVE to know,
   R: Otherwise::'
   S5: Otherwise you don't express yourself if you don't know things,

[11] R: You think translation is important"
   S2: I do,
   R: Yes"(+) Why"
   S2: To understand the language more (+) I (+) still feel it's necessary, it's wrong' né" ((chuckles))
   R: No no, it's the way you found né" (+ +) to learn,
   S2:Ther are many people who say that until you translate (+) what one is (+) si trying to say speaking (+) you already missed everything,

[12] /…/ tomorrow I'm going to a (+ +) there is going to be a seminar about (+ +) from the people of: (+ +) I think it is: (1.5 I don't know if it's from New Yorf (+) it's (+) from abroad, so everything will be in English, (+) I say' GREAT, bur I'll go ((chuckles)) to see if I can understand something it's a (+) an extra exercise né"

[13] /../ when you learn a language'(+) I learned that you don't need to be afraid of making mistakes, (+ +) you have to speak EVEN if you aren't (+) so sure (+)SPEAK'

[14] sometimes I:: (+) put down on paper (+)to (+) learn how to put it into the past /.../ to see if I can do it without looking, /.../

[15] R: In your opinion for someone to learn English WELL /.../ he needs WHAT'
S4: Practising ((chuckles))
R: But practising WHAT'
S4: e::h listening' speaking' I think practising (+ +) with another person, /.../

[16] T: /.../ when people are more reLAXED' as Krashen says' when emotional filters are LOW' (+) you can do more things XXX people aren't afraid of making MISTAKES'(+) aren't afraid of being RI-di ridiculed,

[17] /…/ I think that the greatest proBLEM when studying English (+ +) people (+) get a blockade in their mind' it's the fear of making MISTAKES,

[18] ((errors)) one day, the penny will drop.

[19] T: /.../ but (+) e:h (+) I correct, (+) that's my job, (+) now'(+ +) on the other hand' I know I have to have a LOT of patience as at the right TIME' it'll be reverted, BEFORE'(+) no, IN FACT' it doesn't make ANY diference, (1.5) ((lower the voice)) ANY diference, (+) your correction or not'(+) you're in the classroom, (+)you HAVE to do something,
R: Ahn yeah,
T: THIS is the MOST difficult área,

[20] Speaking you at least you go on sta:mmering it comes out *né'*

[21] S6: Even if ((the teacher)) says (+) it's not to tell me whether I am right, (+) NO:, (+) it's to tell me where I am wrong,

[22] S4: /.../ I think the biggest problem is the mistake"
R: Ah OK, not/
S4: you SPEAK and see what mistake you're making /.../

[23] I think that if you listen well' you (+) speak (+) naturally (+ +) you'll remember, I have a more aural memory that's why listening is more important for me,

[24] T: /…/ it's imPORtant to have a memory, if it's (+) difficult for you to REMEMBER' you have to read (+) three times' (+) FOUR times'(+) FIVE times, (+) You have to remember, (+ +)MEMORY is imPORtant, (++) you don't have to have a fanTAStic memory /…/ but that you need to remember (+) TWO' three phrases to tell your story' need, /…/ need (+) TRAINING memory a little bit more,

[25] S6: /…/ I was on holiday and didn't practise it, (+) I really didn't practised it, So' when I came back now I felt an eNORmous difficulty (+) things I've already seen, (+ +) Memory' né"

[26] have a LOT of aptitude ((learn the language)), (+ +) a lot of aptitude but (+ +) as (+) every learning' as every language being (+) e:h learnt'(+) it requires a lot of effort a lot of dedication, (+) studying'

[27] /…/ we are there to EXPOSED the linguistic content (+) and FACILITATE (+) and creeate conditions for the student to learn, now' HOW he's going to learn and WHERE to start' it's something extremely personal,

[28] /…/ when the learner doesn't LISTEN to the teacher' when he has different ideas' when he wants to do something ELSE' so then' he ends up damaging his learning/.../

[29] In Basic 2 they're ((students)) are more DEPENDENT on you né" they have MUCH less e:h EXPERIENCE and linguistic maturity'(+) they need something much more (+) ahn (1.5) planning need to be better, need to be MORE connected,

[30] Listening to those ahn CDs né' from homework, /.../ I have the whole collection, (+) sometimes I stay at home practising it (+) lsitening to them all the time'a::nd films, (+) I try (+ +) taking the subtitles, although sometimes (+) it doesn't work /.../ ((laughs))

[31] S6:It's like this' (+) it's as if it was VERY difficult for me to learn English,
 R: Yeah"(+) Why"
  S6: I don't know, I have'(+) I do everything the same' (+ +) and I don't succed

[32] S6: /.../ I had aptitude (+) no matter if I'd been approved or not,
 R: Yes,
 S6: Bu::t (1.5) It's this way' like talking, EVERYONE ((teachers)) like'(+)
 T: / you had aptitude in what (+) sense" for you to/ (+) ahã'
 S6:   had opportunity,   CHANCE, né"
 R: To be able to talk,
 S6:   to say   when whenever we have (+)ARE in difficulty'(+) talk'(+) ESPECIALLY I think there were (+ +) three you know who (+)always want to talk to ME'(+) even though I didn't look for ((them) they always came to ME,

APPENDIX **2**

UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE ALAGOAS
FACULDADE DE LETRAS
PROGRAMA DE PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO EM LETRAS E LINGÜÍSTICA
ALUNA: SIMONE MAKIYAMA

Questionário

DADOS PESSOAIS

1. Qual é o seu nome?

_____

2. Quantos anos você tem?

_____

3. Há quanto tempo você estuda inglês?

_____

4. Qual é a sua profissão?

_____

a) se estiver estudando, informe o ano que está cursando e o nome da instituição:

_____

b) se não estuda, informe o seu nível de escolaridade:

_____

5. Qual é a formação de seus pais?

_____

6. Você estudou em outras escolas de inglês?
    a) Sim ( )   Qual(is)? _____
    b) Não ( )

7. Você fala outro idioma?
    a) Sim ( )   Qual(is)? _____
    b) Não ( )

8. Por que você estuda inglês?

_____
_____

9. Por que você escolheu esta escola?

_____
_____
_____

APPENDIX 3

UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE ALAGOAS
FACULDADE DE LETRAS
PROGRAMA DE PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO EM LETRAS E LINGÜÍSTICA
ALUNA: SIMONE MAKIYAMA

<u>Questionário para o Professor</u>

1. Onde você estudou inglês?
   _____
   _____

2. Qual a sua formação profissional?
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

3. Há quanto tempo você ensina? Em quais escolas lecionou?
   _____
   _____
   _____

4. Qual é a formação de seus pais?
   _____
   _____

5. Qual é a abordagem que baseia o seu ensino? Por quê?
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

6. Na sua opinião, quais são os aspectos mais importantes da língua que precisam ser enfatizados? Por quê?
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

APPENDIX 4
2º. Questionário

Leia as afirmações abaixo e marque a alternativa que é mais verdadeira para você:		Nunca ou quase nunca	Geralmente não	Às vezes	Geralmente sim	Sempre ou quase sempre
Para memorizar novas palavras	Eu agrupo em categorias					
	Eu uso o novo termo em uma frase para ajudar a memorizar					
	Eu associo com algo que eu já estudei					
	Faço uma imagem mental da palavra					
	Faço revisões com certa freqüência					
	Relaciono com uma ação,e.g., para memorizar *open the door*, você abre uma porta.					
Para estudar, facilita se eu	Repetir em voz alta					
	Memorizar frases prontas.					
	Combinar novas frases com as que você já conhece para formas sentenças maiores					
	Estudar a gramática pois acho importante					
	Comparar o inglês com o português					
	Traduzir					
	Procurar usar o novo tópico o quanto antes					
	Fazer anotações					
Quando eu não conheço uma palavra, eu	Tento ver se a palavra se parece com português					
	Tento adivinhar através da frase na qual está inserida					
Quando eu estou falando e não sei como dizer algo em inglês, eu	Falo em português					
	Peço ajuda ao colega ou ao professor					
	Uso gestos ou mímica					
	Não uso a palavra					
	Refaço a sentença					
	"Invento" palavras					
	Uso um sinônimo					

APPENDIX **5**

UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE ALAGOAS
FACULDADE DE LETRAS
PROGRAMA DE PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO EM LETRAS E LINGÜÍSTICA
ALUNA: SIMONE MAKIYAMA

2º. Questionário para o professor

1. Qual a melhor maneira de aprender palavras novas?
   _____
   _____
   _____

2. Qual(is) destas formas facilita(m) a aprendizagem?
   ( ) Repetir em voz alta
   ( ) Memorizar frases prontas
   ( ) Combiner novas expressões com as conhecidas
   ( ) Estudar a gramática
   ( ) Comparar o ingles com o português
   ( ) Traduzir
   ( ) Tentar usar o novo tópico o quanto antes
   ( ) Fazer anotações
   ( ) Outra
   _____

3. O que o aluno deve fazer quando não sabe como dizer uma palavra em inglês?
   _____
   _____
   _____

4. O que o aluno deve fazer quando não sabe o significado de uma palavra em inglês?
   _____
   _____
   _____

5. Como você definiria o aluno ideal?
   _____
   _____
   _____

6. Qual a sua avaliação sobre o material didático?
   _____
   _____
   _____

APPENDIX 6

Guidelines for the interviews

a. Interviews with Students:

1. Como você descreveria sua participação em sala?
2. Você faz algo para poder praticar o inglês fora da sala de aula? Em caso afirmativo, o quê?
3. Você precisa de condições específicas (ex: luz, espaço, etc.) para estudar e de manter anotações das aulas de forma organizada?
4. Como você se sente em sala de aula (relaxado, tenso, etc.)? Em caso afirmativo, faz algo para relaxar?
5. Você gosta de trabalhos em grupos? Por quê (não)?
6. Como você se prepara para as provas?
7. O que você acha fácil na língua inglesa? Por quê?
8. O que você acha difícil de aprender em inglês? Por quê? O que você faz para conseguir aprendê-lo?
9. Como seria um professor ideal?
10. Há alguma coisa que você gostaria que seu atual professor (não) fizesse? O quê?

b. Interview with the teacher:

1. Como você definiria o aluno ideal?
2. Qual a sua opinião sobre tarefa de casa?
3. Como o aluno pode maximizar o seu aprendizado?
4. Qual(is) é (são) o(s) aspecto(s) mais difíceis da língua inglesa? Como o aluno pode superá-los ou minimizá-los?
5. Qual é o ambiente ideal para a aprendizagem? É possível influenciar na atmosfera de sala de aula para promover um melhor aprendizado?