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Área de Concentração: Língua Inglesa e suas Literaturas

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LANGUAGE AND
CULTURE IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING**

CRISTIANO SOARES DE LIMA

MACEIÓ

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CULTURE IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING**

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

Orientadora: Prof^a. Dr^a. Márcia Rosetti de Oliveira Albuquerque

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CRISTIANO SOARES DE LIMA

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LANGUAGE AND CULTURE IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Orientador:

Marcia Rosetti de Oliveira Albuquerque

Profa. Dra. Márcia Rosetti de Oliveira Albuquerque (PPGLL-FALE-UFAL)

Examinadores:

E. de Gusmão Verçosa

Prof. Dr. Écio de Gusmão Verçosa (PPGE-CEDU-UFAL)

Maria Inez Matoso Silveira

Profa. Dra. Maria Inez Matoso Silveira (PPGLL-FALE-UFAL)

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And whoso knocketh, to him will he open; and the wise, and the learned, and they that are rich, who are puffed up because of their learning, and their wisdom, and their riches—yea, they are they whom he despiseth; and save they shall cast these things away, and consider themselves fools before God, and come down in the depths of humility, he will not open unto them (The Book of Mormon – 2 Nephi 9:42).

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RESUMO

Esta pesquisa é uma contribuição para a discussão da questão da relação entre língua e cultura no ensino de língua(s) estrangeira(s). Discute-se o lugar de questões culturais no ensino de língua(s) estrangeira(s) e como elas podem contribuir para um aprendizado mais eficiente de línguas, bem como para a formação de estudantes/cidadãos mais criticamente conscientes. A discussão sobre língua e cultura está relacionada à questões como globalização, hegemonia, mutabilidade lingüística e cultural, mas especialmente com sua presença no contexto educacional. Consideram-se, então, análises, perspectivas teóricas, estudos e livros que abordam este tema, estando, este trabalho, baseado principalmente na Lingüística Aplicada, atentando, também, para perspectivas de alguns autores/as, pesquisadores/as e linguistas como Bhabha, Crystal, Fiorin, Hall, Porto e outros como suporte para a pesquisa. Como corpus da pesquisa, faz-se uma análise de um livro didático de língua inglesa, observam-se 18 aulas de inglês em um colégio da rede particular de ensino de Maceió e aplica-se um questionário ao professor e outro aos alunos da série cujas aulas foram observadas. A análise do livro didático se deu a fim de atentar para a ocorrência da relação entre língua e cultura nas lições e como essa relação se dá. A observação de aulas teve como meta a percepção do lugar e da importância de questões culturais na prática de ensino do professor e verificar que tipo de conhecimento está sendo trabalhado. O questionário, por sua vez, procurou examinar se a prática de ensino e se as idéias sobre um ensino que relacione língua e cultura se interrelacionam, bem como observar como os alunos vêem a língua inglesa em sua relevância na contemporaneidade e em suas vidas, adotando-se, desse modo, a perspectiva qualitativa para nortear este trabalho. Este estudo conclui que a) o professor não conhecia bem as teorias e abordagens que embasam o ensino de línguas; b) os alunos tinham léxico e análise de estruturas lingüísticas (de modo a estarem aptos a corrigi-las) como os principais focos do ensino, não sendo capazes de usar, em conversas simples, o que era ensinado em sala de aula; c) abordagens tradicionais eram principalmente usadas em diferentes tipos de exercícios; e d) o livro didático analisado, apesar de seu discurso sobre ensinar um “Inglês vivo”, através de diálogos que supostamente ilustravam situações brasileiras cotidianas reais, estava, na verdade, voltado ao ensino lexical e gramatical em situações que eram ora incompletas, ora incoerentes ou que apontavam para uma realidade inglesa.

Palavras chave: ensino/aprendizagem de línguas estrangeiras; língua, cultura e discurso.

ABSTRACT

This research is a contribution to the discussion concerning the relationship between language and culture in Foreign Language Classes (FLC). It discusses the place of cultural issues in FLC and how they can contribute to a more efficient learning of a foreign language and also to the formation of critically aware students/citizens. The discussion about language and culture is related to issues like globalization, hegemony, linguistic and cultural mutability, but it is especially related to the educational field. This work takes into account analyses, theoretical perspectives, studies and books that deal with this theme, being mostly based in Applied Linguistics, relying on researchers and linguists such as Bhabha, Crystal, Fiorin, Hall, Porto and others as a support to this research. The research corpus is composed of an analysis of an English schoolbook, transcripts of 18 English classes and a questionnaire applied to the teacher and to the students of the observed classes. The qualitative ethnographic perspective is adopted in order to support this work. The analysis of the schoolbook aimed at verifying a possible relationship between language and culture within its units and how that relationship occurs. The class observation's purpose was checking the place and the importance of cultural issues in the teacher's teaching practice as well as checking the kind of knowledge the students were offered. The questionnaires, handed by the end of the observation period, intended to analyze the teaching practice and the teacher's beliefs concerning the relationship between language and culture, as well as to consider the students' purposes and their beliefs about the role of the English language in their lives. This study concludes that a) the teacher was not acquainted with theories and approaches that support the teaching of foreign languages; b) the students were mainly taught lexicon and how to analyze (in order to be able to correct) linguistic structures, but they were not able to use, in simple conversations, what they were taught in classroom; c) mostly traditional approaches were used in different kinds of exercises; and d) the analyzed schoolbook, despite its discourse of teaching "real-live English", through dialogues that supposedly depicted real Brazilian everyday situations, was actually concerned with the teaching of lexicon and the practicing of grammar rules in situations that were either incomplete, incoherent or that pointed to an English reality.

Keywords: foreign language teaching/learning; language, culture and discourse.

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1 INTRODUCTION

If it were assumed that a “pure” culture existed, which of the following should be called as Brazilian: the Portuguese, the African or the Indian? The most popular answer might be the Portuguese culture, considering it was the major influence during the colonization period. However, a grassroots point of view may elect the African culture as fulfilling the demands of a “pure” origin and presence in the Brazilian context, due to the many characteristics in the language, religion, food, habits adopted by the Brazilian culture. And some other answers could refer to the Indian culture as the only one that could claim to be thoroughly Brazilian, because this was their land in first place.

In fact, none of those cultures may be considered Brazilian in origin. As a matter of fact, the most sensible answer to the question of purity is, of course, the simple recognition of the Brazilian culture as it is - a mixture of all of them. In other words, the Brazilian culture presents elements from the Portuguese culture, from the African and from the Indian as well. And it also could be added to this list of cultures, the Italian influence, considering the strong and important role that it played in the Brazilian culture.

Such fact is a reality that can be verified throughout history - a reality that is shared by different people (mostly historians). Peter Burke, for example, in his book “Hibridismo Cultural”, provides some information that contributes to this discussion and supports this idea of Brazilian mixture. Burke (2006, p. 50) mentions two authors and researchers (Karl Von Martius and Gilberto Freyre) who respectively stated that Brazilian history could be written in terms of “fusion”, as both of them call it, among three races, and that Brazil is the harmonious fusion of diverse traditions.

There are also a broad number of further information and evidence that confirm this wide and diverse mixture that contributed to the formation of the Brazilian nation, people and culture. Brazilian History books provide information about slavery (in the case of Africans and Indians), colonization (German, Italian, Japanese and others) and migration. It all started, as it is well known, with the advent of the Portuguese and their attempts to dominate the Indians, as described below:

Brazil was discovered by accident (SIC) when a Portuguese expedition to India, led by Pedro Álvares Cabral, swung too far westward in 1500. [...] In 1549 the Crown sent an expedition to establish a royal government in Brazil. This expedition included six Jesuits, the first of the regular Catholic orders in Brazil. The Jesuits and the royal government collaborated to firmly establish a centralised government and a missionary church whose primary goal was the conversion of the indigenous population. This proved to be difficult and the Jesuits began bringing “Indians” (Columbus’ highly inaccurate term) to live in Jesuit controlled villages designed according to a European model. The Indians often chose fight rather than the regulated life of the Jesuits. It was clear by 1570’s that the Indian population was not a dependable source of labour for the expanding sugar complex, thus African slaves became the primary source of labour in Brazil¹.

It is evident that Brazil does not present a “pure” culture; but could it be possible to exist a “pure” culture anywhere, considering the invasions, colonization, influence and so forth in most countries (or in every country) around the world? Most nations (perhaps every nation) present similar past stories – at least when it comes to wars and attempts of conquering, dominating and ruling new territories – a fact that puts nations in contact, being, this situation, very likely to originate different kinds of mixture in all corners of the world. As Santos (2006, p. 39) states²: “Regardless of the amount of differences among countries, all of them share common historical processes and have important similarities in their social existence” (DS 1). Then, unlike it might be believed, it is not probable that a “pure” culture can exist somewhere in the world.

Looking back at history, it can be seen that this mixing of people, languages and cultures happened a very long time ago, but, nevertheless, it continues to happen nowadays. It is obvious that the reasons that originated this mixing are rather different of the ones that exist today. It could be said that, in the past, this mixing raised as a result of all those overt attempts of expanding the territory of a people – a physical, a geographical extension and expansion.

One of the examples that could be provided about this fact was the existence of Alexander, The Great – one of the greatest strategists of all times. It is known that Alexander and his army used to learn the language (and the culture) of the people that they conquered. So, if it were considered that language and culture are two linked elements, Alexander and his people would be, in fact, acquiring new habits, new ideas, new behaviors, etc., as they conquered new lands and learned new languages.

¹ This information can be seen on the following website: http://www.ucalgary.ca/applied_history/tutor/eurvoya/brazil.html.

² All translations into English (hereafter named as “DS”), under the section “Discursive Sequences”, at the end of this Master thesis (on page 116), are my responsibility.

Obviously, then, this situation of invasion, slavery, wars, conquering and ruling new territories was a fact that did not happen only in the Brazilian territory or in isolated parts of the planet. Conversely, it was something that was commonly seen around the world. Hall, in his book “A identidade cultural na Pós-Modernidade”³, presents similar situations that happened in different parts (countries) of the globe. One of them concerns the British people. According to him (1997, p. 64-65), “The British people are constituted by a large number of conquerings of such nature – Celtic, Roman, Saxon, Viking and Norman” (DS 2).

Another case that this author (Ibid, p. 67) discusses concerns Western Europe. According to him, Western Europe does not have “[...] any nation composed by just one specific people, culture or ethny. All modern nations are cultural hybridisms” (DS 3). Then, mentioning Ernest Renan, Hall presents some facts that happened in different localities of the Earth:

[...] “the European leader nations are essentially mixed blood nations: France is [at the same time] Celtic, Iberic and Germanic. Germany is Germanic, Celtic and Slav. Italy is the country where... Gaulisian, Etrusean, Pelagians and Greeks, not to mention others, intersect each other in an undistinguishable mixing. The British islands, as a whole, present a mixing of Celtic and Germanic blood, whose proportions are difficult to define”. And these “mixtures” are relatively simple when compared to the ones from Central and Eastern Europe (Ibid. p. 70). (DS 4)

It is interesting to point out at this moment the Eastern situation – more specifically, the case of Japan. This country, in spite of all resistance and reluctance that it had in the past to accept Western elements in its national Eastern culture, eventually adopted several foreign elements, mostly in the Meiji period, when the ancient and the modern were at war, when there was a great clash between two philosophies: the Western and the Eastern; a clash caused due to the fact that, at that time, the emperor of Japan wanted his nation to become modern and “civilized”, which affected, then, several sectors of Japanese life and culture. As it is well known, Japan had always been an isolated nation with a feudal system. In the late 1800s, however, that country would enter the modern world – a world in which some ancient values were no longer needed,

³ The original title is “The question of cultural identity”.

like the samurai, for example, becoming, these warriors, then, a disposable force, once Japan was about to become a nation of laws (written laws)⁴.

Throughout the time, contacts with different cultures made many people from different nations search for ways of getting back the “purity” that their country supposedly had once - for fear of losing completely their identity as nations. That was the case seen in feudal Japan, particularly with the samurai, who believed that their country was changing too fast and forgetting their roots, traditions and ancestors, which was one of the reasons for engaging in fight against modernity.

It is not difficult to see nations believing in and defending ideas of “pure” or “original” folk. Isolation, then, was the “miraculous” answer that different nations along history found to this question of purity. Throughout history, it is not unusual to see nations trying to live isolated from the rest of the world in order not to become “impure” and supposedly “lose” their national characteristics to other nation(s), as it was the case of the Spanish people in the XVI century, who were forbidden to study abroad, lest they should not be “contaminated” by heresies⁵; the case of XVII century France – searching for the purity of local traditions – and the case when Germany created linguistic societies which had, as one of the main ideals, the purity of the language. The searching for “purity”, then, has always been present in human history – a discussion which is well summed up by Hall (1997, p. 61), who states that:

Sometimes, national cultures are tempted to turn to the past, to retreat, as a defensive measure, to that “lost time” when the nation was “great”; they are tempted to restore past identities. Such attitude constitutes the regressive, anachronic element of the history of the national culture. [...] this same return to the past hides a strife to mobilize the “people” in order to ban the “others” that threat their identity. (DS 5)

Even nowadays, different measures to achieve this goal can be seen. One example is the creation of projects whose aim is to hinder people from using (or force

⁴ In order to understand a little more about the history of Japan, particularly the XIX century Japan – the end of the Meiji era – a period when three kinds of forces could be seen with three different kinds of people: the emperor, the shogun and the samurai, and also to better understand the role that Japan played on this issue of getting modernized (and that invasions and mixing played in Japan), it is interesting to check the documentary “History VS Hollywood”, of the movie “The Last Samurai” (2003).

⁵ Check the book “Cultural hybridity, cultural exchange, cultural translation: reflections on history and theory” (2003), by Peter Burke, for more detailed information on this subject.

people not to use) foreign elements – mostly words⁶ – or to have a particular behavior, as it was the case of some famous dictatorial governments that can be seen along the history of this and of other countries. Such facts only prove that the mixing of people is an unavoidable reality and that “purity” does not exist anywhere.

However, regardless of how clear such issues might be, there are people who insist in striving for utopian ideas – apparently for two main reasons: a) because they want their nation to be always the same – supposedly homogeneous – and b) because they fear the fallacy of being “contaminated” by their “neighbors’ culture and language” to the point of losing completely their own. People who cultivate such belief(s) tend to ignore the fact that the whole world has already been “contaminated” by other cultures – even with the presence of facts like several technological advances, the shortening of distances, and the promises of globalization luring the nations. Homogeneity, then, is something that is not possible to exist.

There is, in fact, another factor in the present time that plays an important role on this issue of mixing: globalization. History has been showing that when the mixing of people does not happen through wars or through any other kind of physical invasion, it is likely to occur through different processes of globalization, once such phenomenon puts nations in contact – in political, economical, technological terms, etc., but such contacts do not lead any nation to its “unavoidable destruction”, as it is sometimes believed. Then, this “new world”, the capitalistic world and its rules, is one of the factors responsible for placing many different countries and nations in constant relation.

Furthermore, this idea of “being threatened of contamination” conveys a few biased messages. One of these messages is that, if a language, a culture, a people or a nation is being threatened of contamination because of the contact with other nations, contacts with different people would necessarily be dangerous and harmful – at all times. Each nation, then, should remain isolated from the rest of the world in order not to become “impure nations”. A possible second meaning is the following: if it were assumed that a “pure” nation that was being threatened of “contamination” by other nations existed, the idea of supposedly “better nations” would rise. So, if “better nations” existed, it would not be unreasonable to believe in the existence of “worse

⁶ This was the case of project number 1676/99, elaborated by Aldo Rebelo, considering harmful to the Brazilian cultural patrimony “every and any use of words or expression in foreign language” (4th Art.) – “todo e qualquer uso de palavras ou expressão em língua estrangeira”.

nations”; creating, then, explicit divisions of classes and levels of superiority among nations and people.

As a matter of fact, there is no “pure” (neither “superior”) nation, people, language or culture. Any nation is forged by various factors along the time; every country is forged by different cultures at the same time – both the country(ies) which is/are colonized as the one(s) that colonize(s) and there is no law or action able to stop such contacts. As Burke (2003, p. 14) states: “Cultural globalization entails hybridization. We cannot get rid of the global tendency for mixing and hybridization, no matter how hard we react to it [...]” (DS 6).

In the present time, it is not unusual to find discussions concerning the importance of these cultural issues on the educational field. It is not unusual either to find statements about the importance of not separating language and culture when teaching a foreign language, but, sometimes, it is not explained why such association is necessary (to a better learning). In addition, sometimes, teachers themselves are not sure how to comprise these issues in their teaching approaches.

Having such facts in mind, it is important to explain and to understand what culture is, a discussion that can bring issues related to power, purity and mixing, globalization etc, eliciting why it (culture) is important in foreign language teaching, in order to better develop this study. In addition, another relevant discussion concerns language itself and the relationship of these two subjects in Foreign Language Teaching (hereafter FLT). In other words, before claiming that language and culture are to be, must be or should be always linked or that they have to be separated, it is necessary to understand what language and culture are and their respective roles in societies.

Once again, it is relevant to reiterate that different issues like invasion, mixing and globalization, which have close relation with this subject of the association between language and culture, are also brought about. These discussions provide understanding concerning the relation between language and culture, as intrinsic parts of human life, in order, then, to make clear the place of cultural issues on the educational scenario.

As cultures are an important part of any society, being related to languages, it is interesting to pay attention and to discuss if and how they are approached in FLT, considering the existence of discourses that preach the singular importance of the relationship between language and culture to achieve an efficient learning of a language, a teaching that is said to contribute to the understanding of different issues of the contemporary world and also to form critical students/citizens.

By what can be heard nowadays, foreign language teaching scenarios have been regarded mostly as places where questionable activities and practices are performed, that is, teaching practices that usually have a single approach as the only focus of every class – generally the exclusive and explicit teaching of grammar rules (analyzing bits and pieces, but not actually using the language – paying attention to the possible meanings that arise when they are in use).

Taking such scenarios and discourses into account, another matter of concern for this study is also analyzing closely what has actually been taught in FLC (Foreign Language Classes) and how it has been taught, discussing the importance of the relationship between language and culture towards an efficient foreign language teaching/learning, and paying attention to the possible presence of this relationship in classroom.

In order to develop such work, three lines of research are developed: a) the analysis of a sixth-grade English schoolbook, in order to observe the kind of approach and material used in the elementary school; b) a nine-day classroom observation in the seniors' grade, which corresponded to eighteen classes observed, whose purpose was to analyze the kind of teaching approach developed and to verify what possible cultural knowledge the students had developed after five years of study in the school where the analyses took place and c) an application of a questionnaire to the teacher, purposefully handed by the end of the observation period, so as not to interfere in his teaching approach, and whose goal was to consider the teacher's approach to teaching in the light of his answers in the questionnaire. Another questionnaire was handed to the students, and its aim was analyzing their ideas concerning the English language learning and hegemony and the possible importance of this language in their lives.

This research is justified with the argument that it is considerably relevant, to the FL teaching, a better understanding and recognition of cultural knowledge in the educational context, so as to provide to FL teachers and students a clearer view and tools to deal with globalization challenges. The recognition of the presence and influence of other countries' cultures in national territories is useful in classroom as a way of bringing to light reasons for both trying to reject or to adopt a FC (Foreign Culture), while, at the same time, such approach takes the foreign language teaching to a higher level of seriousness – a level which is not concerned in filling hours in the educational curriculum with activities that are either regarded as “entertaining” or as not meaningful.

The chapters that constitute this research are organized in the following way: chapter 1, “Thinking language and culture”, is divided in two parts. The first concerns language and deals with concepts of language, linguistic hegemony, new ways of domination, linguistic contacts, exchanges, variation and with the idea of what language learning is. The second deals with concepts of culture, types of culture, cultural hybridism, as a consequence of the modern world, implications that this hybridism pose to nations and also the value of these issues in the educational field.

After discussing language and culture separately, the second chapter deals with the relationship between language and culture, taking into account the possible meanings and implications of this association on the educational scenario – more specifically when teaching/learning a foreign language – paying attention to different theoreticians’ views about the subject. Finally, the third chapter contains the analyses developed at a private school of Maceió/Alagoas.

It is important to state that, in 2007, the school where the analyses took place decided to change its teaching methodology, in terms of not adopting any specific schoolbook, in order to teachers themselves feel free to work with different and varied subjects and activities. Taking this fact into account and aiming at obtaining different perspectives about the position of this educational institution regarding the FLT, it was decided that it would be more interesting and profitable to this research to analyze one aspect of two different grades (one in the elementary school and the other in the high school), aiming, then, at perceiving what was being taught in FLC, how it was being taught and also to examine what knowledge, what learning the students retained along the years at this school. Summing up, the elements to be analyzed are: a sixth-grade schoolbook⁷ and 18 classes on the seniors’ grade⁸.

When it comes to FLT, different opinions about what is best to achieving efficient learning are commonly heard, and the discussions get even more serious when the importance of the association or dissociation between language and culture are concerned. There are those who claim that the teaching of culture should be dissociated from the teaching of language, because it would not be necessary to develop such

⁷ The 6th-grade was randomly selected. It is important to highlight that the school where the observation took place adopted the same set of books for years.

⁸ The period of class observation lasted two months – it started on February 13th 2007 and it ended on April 18th 2007. Such grade was selected because, as it is the last grade before taking the University Entrance Examination (vestibular), perhaps the teacher could deal more openly with different controversial subjects, and with varied cultural themes as well, than he would supposedly be able to deal with on other grades. All the materials handed in classroom (evaluations, analyzed texts, extra activities, etc.) are present in a section called “APPENDIX”, at the end of this Master thesis.

teaching approach so as someone could learn a language. Teachers who support this perspective believe that language and culture should be studied as two completely different subjects and that the teaching of culture should perhaps be comprised by the teaching of Literature – for them, what is important is learning the structures of a language or its functional issues.

In fact, cultural issues can be separated from a study that focuses linguistic structures, but the point is that actual language learning and teaching does not only concern structures, but it concerns the use of different discourses – a language is not actually learned by simply analyzing its structures. In other words, despite the possibility of language and culture be conceptually separable, in practice, they are always together. If they are studied separately, it is possible that efficient foreign language learning is not achieved, as language, culture and discourse have close relation.

Along with that point of view of separating language and culture, the subject of linguistic neutrality and, sometimes, discourses about equality among different languages, people and nations can also be found. However, paradoxically, discourses about “better” nations are easily heard in different corners of the world, which brings down this idea of “equal nations” – nations that are always respected and whose values are always accepted by other nations. Despite being something desired by many people, equality (among languages, nations etc.) is an ideal that is not likely to exist given the present (capitalistic and globalized) reality of the world, a reality that esteems the standing out of more developed national realities.

There are other opinions, however, which regard language and culture as two linked features, which should be taken as equally important when teaching a foreign language. Such opinions do not dispose of the ideological power that any language possesses and dispute the idea of “better” nations. Taking such complex scenarios into account, which position to take when learning/teaching foreign languages?

Taking that question into consideration, it is valid to state that there is not “the best” approach to teach languages, but the association between language and culture in class can only add up to the educational life of the subjects involved in this process of learning and teaching.

In view of that, it is important, then, to develop a discussion on this subject, especially in what the intertwining between language and culture is concerned, both in

ordinary life and, mostly, in foreign language classes, paying attention to what possible consequences, derived from this association or dissociation, might arise in societies.

In a time when discourses concerning the primordial relationship between language and culture in FLT are more and more intensified and that several professionals involved in the educational field decided “to adopt”, then, such perspective, several times only in their discourses, but not in their actual teaching practices, for many teachers are not sure how to develop classes that articulate cultural issues with linguistic teaching, the understanding of what cultural teaching is might have been misunderstood and, as a consequence, the teaching of foreign languages might have been mistakenly conducted and developed.

Nowadays, at several schools, the teaching of foreign languages still remains as that same kind of teaching practiced a long time ago – restricted either to the method of grammar and translation or to the teaching of functional issues – but with a different discourse – a discourse of a teaching that comprises language and culture or which asserts the unquestionable and singular value of the communicative approach – when what is actually being taught in classroom are those very same grammar rules that were once so (explicitly) emphasized.

It is through the study of discourses that the teaching of languages can acquire a better chance of being regarded as a real and serious school subject, for it opens up spaces to develop relevant discussions and reflections on different issues that constitute the contemporary world, providing to the teacher, at the same time, a better understanding concerning the importance of putting language and culture together in classroom.

By the discussions developed in this Master thesis, it is, thus, the objective of this research work to attain a better understanding of the relationship between language and culture in FLC. It also aims at contributing to a discussion which may lead to reflexions on different cultural aspects, globalization and other issues of the modern and contemporary world, so as to help students and teachers to deal with different social demands, as far as education is concerned, and minimize cultural bias by making learners aware of their own perceptions and those of others.

The overall aim of the reflexions developed on this study is discussing and analyzing the relationship between language and culture in foreign language classes, paying attention to both what is said in books and by authors that approach this relation – as a significant contribution to the educational field in terms of learning a language

more efficiently – and also observing and analyzing what is actually presented in classroom, establishing a parallel between the practice observed in classroom and the theory about the relationship between language and culture whenever possible.

In view of the broad objective, the following specific aims are designed to be attained intow: to discuss concepts of language and its role(s) in societies and in education; to discuss the idea of culture and its role(s) in societies and in education; to discuss how language and culture are linked and the importance of this relationship in education; to analyze a schoolbook, taking into account its approach towards language and culture.

Based on Applied Linguistics, the analysis of the corpus selected for this study considered theoretical perspectives, studies and books that deal with the relationship between language and culture in FLT. The research work is basically divided in three parts, aiming a better organization of the points to be discussed. In the first part, in chapter 1, language and, then, culture are the main two topics. Firstly, issues like concepts of language, hegemony, purity and the idea of what language teaching means are approached. After this first topic, cultures become the main focus of the discussion, which deals with different types of cultures, cultural hybridism and the notion of culture in the educational field.

Having dealt with these two fundamental subjects to the field of language education, discussions concerning the relationship between language and culture in FLT are performed, constituting, then, the second part of this work. Finally, on the third part, as this research adopts a qualitative perspective as its methodological approach, based, therefore, in interpretative methods, three different sources of data, collected at the private school where the observation took place, in Maceió/AL, are analyzed: the introduction and eleven chapters of a schoolbook, the observation of English classes and the application of open-ended questionnaires, both to the teacher and to the students, whose aim was collecting perspectives on teaching approaches.

As for the schoolbook analysis and the classroom observation, both focused checking statements of teaching “real-live” English, the idea of a “differentiated” and “singular” efficient teaching approach, among other possibly controversial statements, and comparing these discourses, which claim efficiency in the offered methodology, with what is actually inside the lessons and seen in classes, also establishing parallels, when necessary, with concepts that deal with the relationship between language and culture in FLT. The observation of the classes was a non-participant mode, focusing

issues related to the teaching approach adopted by the teacher as well as if and how language and culture interrelated in classes⁹.

The triangulation of data is an important tool for this (kind of) research because, from these three different sources of information and analyses, a more reliable conclusion towards the analyzed data can be achieved. In addition, the collection of such data, in this process of triangulation, may help to understand, at least minimally, different teaching realities performed at several Brazilian schools, which may share similar processes of teaching. As Freedle (1981) states:

The triangulation is based in multiple comparisons of a single phenomenon, group or unit at two or more points in time or they purport to use multiple perspectives to measure a single phenomenon at a single point in time [...]. Triangulated inquiry offers stronger potential for generalization through built-in mechanisms which rule out rival hypotheses.

Due to the small number of students¹⁰, all the English classes took place in the teachers' room, rather than in a proper classroom. In fact, there was no other classroom available. Apart from the fact that the teachers' room was not big, there were other problems in this room: a) the white board was too old and dirty, making it difficult to write and to erase anything; b) the acoustic of the room was not good for the room was located in a point where all the noise that came from other classrooms and from the courtyard penetrated easily in it, decreasing, then, the value of the listening activities and c) there were two noisy fans on the ceiling, which added to the problem just mentioned.

In a non-recorded interview, the teacher stated that, in order to prepare his classes, he used two different books. One of the books was used specifically because of its exercises, whereas the other was used to teach grammar issues (for grammatical explanations). The references of the books are respectively the following: FERRARI, Mariza e RUBIN, Sarah G. **Inglês – de olho no mundo do trabalho**. São Paulo: Scipione, 2003. NEUZA, Eliana Maria Clara. **Inglês para o ensino médio**. 1. ed. São Paulo: Saraiva, 2003.

⁹ Despite having 16 chapters, the 11 analyzed chapters present enough data to characterize the kind of approach adopted in the book, not being necessary, then, to analyze the remaining chapters.

¹⁰ There were only 4 students attending to the English classes: 3 girls and 1 boy.

Finally, a last point of interest concerns the teacher's education. From this non-recorded interview, it was learned that he was not graduated in Arts (Languages), but he was still taking Meteorology at UFAL. The teacher stated that he has been teaching English for about two years, that he had also taught Portuguese, Mathematics and Chemistry and that he has never been abroad, but that he graduated in English at "System" (a private foreign language teaching school).

2 CHAPTER 1- THINKING LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

2.1 Language and Language Policies

In English, the word “language” conveys two different meanings: a) it may stand for a system of linguistic elements that were “conventioned” by the members of different communities; roughly speaking, this meaning of “language” can be interpreted as the national language of a nation; and b) language may be understood as the individual ability to communicate using a (national) language. However, some languages like Portuguese, Spanish, Italian and French, for instance, have one specific word for each one of these two different meanings mentioned above: *língua/linguagem* (Portuguese); *lingua/linguaggio* (Italian); *lengua/lenguaje* (Spanish); *langue/langage* (French); whereas, in English, these two different meanings are expressed only through one word: *language*.

Even these basic initial information on “language” (*língua/linguagem*) have to be clear in this study in order to those involved in the educational field, more specifically those in the area of language teaching and learning, regard and see the educational process from different perspectives of language, brought by different researchers, which can help in the process of reflecting on what language is and what language teaching can involve.

Lyons, for example, in his book “Lingua(gem) e Lingüística: uma introdução”, mentions different authors who provided definitions concerning this issue. According to him (1987, p. 3), Sapir believes that “Language is a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires through symbols that are voluntarily produced” (DS 1); then, Lyons mentions Bloch and Trager: “Language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols through which a social group co-operate” (DS 2). A third author that Lyons mentions in his book is Hall, who states that language [lingua(gem)] is “the institution through which human beings communicate and interact¹¹ with each other through commonly used oral and audible arbitrary symbols” (DS 3) (p. 4).

It is also relevant to point out briefly the perspectives of two important names on this field of language studies: Saussure and Chomsky. According to the former,

¹¹ In this research work, interaction is regarded as conversations in which the participants involved take turns to speak and what is said in each turn is coherently related to what was said previously, guiding the subsequent messages in the light of that understanding.

language was something that belonged to society; it was a purely abstract social phenomenon, but which was sometimes updated in the linguistic behavior of the members of different linguistic communities. Saussure did not believe, then, in languages as a cognitive ability as Chomsky does.

The latter researcher claims that languages are intrinsically linked with the cognitive. According to this theoretician, every human being is bearer of what he calls the “universal grammar”, which is the ability to learn any language, as long as subjects receive and are exposed to the necessary feedback from the environment (society) that surrounds them. Chomsky also defends the “linguistic competence” ability, a typical knowledge concerning a linguistic system, which may or may not be exercised by someone – which concerns the subjects’ knowledge regarding a particular language.

Before continuing the discussion about language and some of its characteristics, it is relevant to observe a point that comes with Sapir’s statement concerning language as a “purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires”. Taking into account this point that language communicates ideas, emotions and desires, the notion of language can be better discussed if the concept of discourse takes place, for these issues listed by Sapir can only be given meaning according to different contexts, as discourse is the union of three issues: language, subjects and context. There can be no discourse without language, for this is the material part of discourses and no language can be meaningful only within their systems. Orlandi (2005, p. 22) defines this idea of discourse:

Discourse Analysis establishes another theoretical division placing language and discourse in relation. In its theoretical scheme, neither discourse is seen as freedom in act, totally bereft of linguistic conditionings or historical determinations, nor language as totally closed, without flaws or equivocations. The linguistic systematicities – which, in this perspective, do not reject the semantic as if it were external – are the basic material conditions upon which discursive processes develop. Language is, then, a condition to the possibility of discourse. (DS 4)

In this perspective, it can be understood that language and discourse share the same space, remaining, then, side by side, although they are not the same. As already mentioned, there can be no discourse without language (or contexts), that is, bereft of conditions of production (and reception). In Discourse Analysis, the production of meaning is essential to the notion of discourse, for it comprises the relationship between

words, sentences and texts with the different meanings that they may have, according to different contexts.

Two different researchers, who discuss issues related to the discourse, are Charadeau & Maingueneau (2004, p. 171), who state that “[...] in fact, there is not a discourse uncontextualized; as a matter of fact, meanings cannot be attributed to utterances which are out of context” (DS 5). And they also point out that “discourse cannot be regarded as discourse if it is not related to instances that pose themselves as personal, temporal and spatial points of references, indicating which attitude is adopted in relation to what is said to its interlocutor” (DS 6).

It has to be clear, then, that whatever is the belief that people have concerning what language is, the role that discourses play in societies can not be ignored, as no language is used (in social contexts and interactions) simply as closed and restricted systems – there is always meaning in communication. In this perspective, languages can only communicate ideas, emotions and desires because of the existence of the discourse.

Unlike it may be believed, language is not a ready-made and closed code with restricted and limited use. Rather, it is much more complex than that. It is a rich system that enables its speakers to perform different kinds of interaction and to express any kind of message. It is beyond any doubt that language plays a primordial role in human social life. As Bakhtin (2004) believed, language has no social function if it is not related to social practices.

Hence, language, as a fundamental part of social life, has always had paramount importance in human life and history and, also because of this fact, it is not unusual that, eventually, a certain language becomes overvalued to the detriment of others, that is, the rise of hegemonic languages, in certain or in all periods of time, according to some theoreticians like Bagno (2002), for example, can be seen – a reality which is, of course, linked to complex issues like power, economy, technology, etc., which will still be discussed.

It is relevant to point out at this moment Crystal’s (2005, p. 22) and Bagno’s (2002, p.79) similar perspectives concerning the existence of hegemonic languages. The former claims that “The need for a *lingual franca* is obvious [...]” (DS 7), but an intriguing (and rhetorical) question to be asked is: this “need” is obvious to whom?! Crystal holds the standpoint that the power of the English language and culture in the world is something obvious, natural and that it should be, then, accepted by everyone. He may affirm so because he shares the first world’s position, which, if passively

accepted by other nations, can entail benefits mostly to first world countries – Crystal’s statement constitutes, then, an alleged discourse.

As for the latter, who emphasizes that “Each historical period had (and has) a particular international language that worked (and works) as an auxiliary instrument of communication among people of different places, languages and cultures” (DS 8), it can be perceived that this belief conveys the idea that this “instrument” of communication, as it is simply an instrument, that is, a mere tool, would not entail any effect in the world, for this is a supposedly “neutral” and harmless (instrumental) international language, which, as a matter of fact, is not true, for this idea of “instrument”/tool of communication shares the same nature of Crystal’s alleged discourse of “obvious” need for a particular language that is spoken in different corners of the world without entailing any consequence to the nations that use such “neutral tool of communication”.

This title of “common language” is not attributed to any language of the world until the country where that language is spoken presents different kinds of evolution so that its language can ascend as the “common language”, as the hegemonic language of the world. First world countries which have broad industrial development and a powerful economy, and that consequently play a hegemonic political role in the world, impose their languages as one of the main “channels” of communication among countries. In other words, simply because first world countries find themselves in a more developed level (economically, technologically speaking, etc.), they believe they have the right of dictating (or the obligation to dictate) particular guidelines to the rest of the world and that they should, then, be worshipped. Such position can be perceived in the following statement:

A language does not acquire a truly global status until it fulfils a role whose importance is acknowledged in all countries [...] the use of a mother language itself can not grant global status to this language. In order to acquire such status, a language has to be used by different countries in the world. These countries will be responsible for granting a special place to that language inside their communities, even that those communities present few or no native speakers (CRYSTAL, 2005, p. 20). (DS 9)

Different societies may understand and may try to explain this “special place” about which Crystal talks as something natural and harmless – something related to certain “restricted places” where the presence of a foreign language may be stronger, as the jargon used on the internet, for example, or even certain professional areas that

adopt words in a foreign language, like the Information Technology area (IT) – which presents a wide jargon that derives from the English language, but that, eventually, could be spread to other areas that do not constitute any branch of IT, in order, then, to find an explanation for his (biased) discourse.

If that were the case, the fact of the existence of borrowings would be clearly explained and, perhaps, linguists and purists would not have to argue constantly about the use of foreign words in a mother tongue, but the point is that Crystal does not seem to be referring to the use of borrowings when he claims that “countries will be responsible for granting a special place to that language inside their communities”, but his statement points to a differentiated special appreciation and treatment towards that foreign language, that is, he is talking about worship, which, according to that statement, should only be directed to those who have power. In other words, the expression “special place” implies the message that a certain language is special and, then, better than another. It also implies that a supposedly superior reality should be worshipped, that everyone should accept anything that is transmitted in that language and save what is best in the national country so that that “special” world can reclaim it.

A similar idea can be found implied in the part when he states: “the use of a mother language itself can not grant global status to this language. In order to acquire such status, a language has to be used by different countries in the world”. By this excerpt, Crystal distinguishes languages that are greatly spoken in particular countries, that is, languages that have a great number of native speakers, like Chinese (Mandarin), for example, but whose countries have no power to make themselves recognized around the world as an important language, acquiring, then, hegemony, from those countries that do not have a large number of native speakers, but that have the power to make themselves and their languages hegemonic, respected, imitated and worshipped.

Furthermore, it is also important to state that many countries of the world “grant” “special places” to certain foreign elements inside their communities not because they wish to recognize them as “special”, but sometimes countries do so because there is no other choice. Certain countries are more subjected to globalization and to particular ideologies than others. If certain nations strictly deny such position of adoption of a particular foreign hegemonic language, they may be seen as lagging behind and they may run a significant risk of being kept apart from some kind of relation with foreign countries or from some possible development that they might consider profitable to their nation.

At different occasions, hegemonic countries themselves impose their languages to other countries, not through wars, as it used to happen in the past, but through some new and subtle means of invasion – the media is just one of the examples that could be provided. So, sooner or later, different countries, mostly third world countries, are led to accept that self-proclaimed “special and superior reality”. In addition, first world societies use to adopt a position of prejudice towards those who do not accept their demands and their capitalistic policies. Hegemonic countries consider everyone who does not join their “way of life” as inferior and primitive, as feudal Japan was once regarded.

Mattelart (2005, p. 18) defends an interesting position concerning this issue. According to him, “Everything that is far from the modern or Western matrix [...] is ranked and listed as inferior and obsolete. The answer to overcome the lagging behind is accepting the already tested model” (DS 10).

As a matter of fact, linguistic hegemony itself happens to be closely linked to the hegemony of the country where that particular language is spoken. A country stands out in the global scenario because of political, economical, social factors, etc. and, as a result, the language of the people of that country becomes more valued. In other words, it is necessary that a country presents a sound evolution in many of its sectors – industrial, technological and economical development, for example, in order to that country (and to the language of that country) to become globally prominent. In the present time, globalization and the spread of the capitalistic system, among many other issues, contribute to place a language as the hegemonic language of the modern time. Power is the key word to this fact.

Without a strong power-base, of whatever kind, no language can make progress as an international medium of communication. Language has no independent existence, living in some sort of mystical space apart from the people who speak it. [...] When they succeed, on the international stage, their language succeeds. When they fail, their language fails (CRYSTAL, 2003, p. 07).

As it was seen in the introduction, nations used to conquer their hegemony mostly through wars – invading and conquering territories with military force, which, of course, is a clearly different kind of power. Nowadays, that situation is not as easily seen as it was in the past. However, it obviously does not mean that it ceased to happen

in the world. It just means that military invasion is more likely to take place (especially) when economic interest is involved. An example is the situation between the US and some Middle Eastern cities and countries like Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine, etc., but the point is that the main mean of conquering territories nowadays occurs through the political and economical power that a nation may have (or impose) over others. Nowadays, supremacy can become a reality through the developmental power of different sectors of a country and it is maintained, spread and imitated also through (the power of) discourse.

Having in mind, then, that different periods of history have had a hegemonic language (starting with the Greek language hegemony, followed by Latin and recently by French), what language is said to be “essential” nowadays, that is, what language is used in first place in many countries around the world when someone is in a certain locality and the person does not know the mother tongue of that place? Which language is used with greater frequency when someone wants to divulge something that can achieve many different parts of the world and that can do it faster, and which foreign language is more frequently found in the mass media (in general)? And it is known that without technological help these days, people would be “stuck in time”.

The answer for all these questions is “the English language”. Not because it is a “special language”, but because it has achieved a considerable importance in many different areas in several countries of the world due to the fact of the wide development of the American society in different fields of their nation throughout the years. For this reason, then, it has become the international language; it has become the language of the foreign affairs, economy, technology, etc. But it is clear, of course, that certain areas are more influenced by the hegemony of the English language than others – as it is the case of the already mentioned IT field (a technological area). Renato Ortiz’s statement (1996, p. 28) about English confirms this reality: “It (English) penetrates distinctive domains – IT, sky traffic, scientific colloquies, interchange among corporations – in order to become the official language of the international relations” (DS 11).

Explaining how and why the English language rose as the hegemonic language of the world, Crystal (2005), in his book “A revolução da linguagem”¹², outlines a historical look about this issue, presenting and discussing ten domains in which English became prominent along the time: “Politics”; “economy”; “press”; “advertisement”;

¹² The original title is “Language Revolution”.

“radio press”; “cinema”; “popular music”; “international trips and security”; “education” and “communications”, a situation that only occurred because of four types of power: the *political power*, which emerged as colonialism in the XVI century; the *technological power*, which was associated to the Industrial Revolution of the XVIII and XIX centuries; the *economical power*, which, in the XIX century, overcame the power of the Great Britain; and the *cultural power*, which can be seen everywhere even, and mostly, nowadays¹³, turning English, then, into a global language.

Crystal (2005) believes that there is only one reason for a language to become global – the power of the people who speak it. But, as the notion of power is attached to varied kinds of forces present in different sectors of a country, each one of these different kinds of power exercise influence on this hegemonic status that any language can achieve. He also believes that:

Language status [...] is intrinsically linked to military, economical and cultural power, and, as these variables change, languages can ascend or descend. Futurologists do not find difficulties in predicting scenarios on which Arabic, Chinese or Spanish, for example, become the next global language. Spanish is, in fact, the mother language that more rapidly develops in the world nowadays. But, taking into account the predictable future, it is not likely that another language can substitute the global role of English. The factors that placed English in its position are still too present nowadays (2005, p.33). (DS 12)

It is beyond any doubt, then, that English is still the language with the greatest prestige nowadays, but any language can have a hegemonic period, as Crystal believes. However, this period and this hegemony do not occur simply because of the desire of a certain people. As it was explained, a language becomes hegemonic because of many different factors that its country may present. Both in the past and in the present, there have been languages that have been “ahead” to the detriment of others; that is, it is evident that certain languages hold more prestige and “importance” than others especially because of the power that a nation has at a particular period of history.

Bagno (2004) asserts that the English language is spoken by 1,2 billion people around the world, and Klintowitz¹⁴ (2005) asserts that “It is estimated that 1,2 billion people around the world speak English as a second language and that another billion study this language”. By mastering English, someone may get as much information as

¹³ Such information can be seen on the topic “O Passado” of the above mentioned book.

¹⁴ Information collected on *Veja* magazine (January 19th, 2005) under the article “A vanguarda do atraso”.

(s)he wants, considering the fact that, as English is the hegemonic language nowadays, different discussions are written and diffused in that language, aiming at spreading those information faster than other languages would do and to as many people as possible.

Because of this fact, it is sometimes popularly believed that, by mastering the hegemonic language of a certain period, people can be able to understand some of the issues that the globalized and capitalistic world imposes to nations. A certain part of the population, especially those who hold a less privileged financial reality, believes that, simply because people, by using their speaking and reading ability on a foreign language, can have access to different discussions, cultures, information, etc. that constitute the contemporary world, they are able to critically analyze different realities – which may not be necessarily so, for this ability alone may not be enough. In other words, the ability to speak or to read in a foreign language does not necessarily qualify someone to critically analyze different realities and understand, at least a little, globalization and capitalism, but one of the major issues that can help in performing such tasks is the understanding of different uses of the discourse.

The role that globalization and capitalism play on this issue of hegemony is very strong and present nowadays. They demand people to be bilingual, to be able to speak at least two different languages. Then, studying a foreign language these days (mostly English) has become part of the modern life – if someone intends to stand better chances of being accepted in this modern and competitive capitalistic society. Globalization and capitalism, then, are not as harmless as they might be thought. In terms of domination (or other issues of similar nature), they may be as effective as the wars that used to happen in the past – the invasion of countries with physical presence – because language and discourse are considerably powerful and they can be subtle ways of coercing, keeping existing hierarchies and diffusing ways of life – science, costumes, new habits, entertainment, etc.

Then, it can be perceived that there is another issue related to language that contributes with this question of power: ideology, taken in terms of “particular perspectives”, as Fiorin (2005, p. 33) says. As regards to this issue, this researcher states that “Particular perspectives cannot be separated from language, for ideology, taken as something inherent to reality, is inseparable of language” (DS 13) and Norman Fairclough (1989, p. 3), in his book “Language and Power”, states that “Ideologies are closely linked to power [...]. Ideologies are closely linked to language [...]”; “[...]”

language contributes to the domination of some people by others, because consciousness is the first step towards emancipation” (p. 1), also stating that

There are [...] two ways in which those who have power can exercise it and keep it: through coercing others to go along with them, with the ultimate sanctions of physical violence or death; or through winning others' consent to, or at least acquiescence in, their possession and exercise of power. In short, through *coercion* or *consent*. In practice, coercion and consent occur in all sorts of combinations. The state includes repressive forces which can be used to coerce if necessary, but any ruling class finds it less costly and less risky to rule by consent. Ideology is the key mechanism of rule by consent [...] (FAIRCLOUGH, 1989, p. 33 – 34).

Before going any further, it is necessary to understand what ideology is. In that same book, “Language and Power”, Fairclough (1989) presents two definitions of ideology. The first states that “*ideology* is interpreted as ‘any social policy which is in part or in whole derived from social theory *in a conscious way*’” (p. 94). On that same page, the second definition, based on the Marxist tradition, is presented as “‘ideas which arise from a given set of material interests’ in the course of the struggle for power”.

According to Fiorin (2005, p.29), ideology is “a perspective, that is, the “way of seeing” of a social class regarding reality; it is how a class organizes, justifies and explains its social order” (DS 14). A third and final explanation regarding this issue is well presented in Mészáros (2004, p.65), who states that:

[...] ideology is neither illusion nor religious superstition of misguided individuals, but it is a materially supported and specific form of social conscience. As such, it cannot be overcome in class societies. Its persistence is due to the fact that it is objectively constituted (and constantly rebuilt) as inevitable practical conscience of class societies, related to the articulation of sets of values and rival strategies that try to control the social metabolism in all of its main aspects. (DS 15)

Bearing these ideas in mind, Fairclough’s (1989) words become clear when he states that “an understanding of the social order is most conveniently and naturally achieved through a critical awareness of the power of language” (p. ix). However, as such awareness may lead nations (or different people) to rebel themselves against different kinds of oppression and submission (from their or from foreign governments), as “consciousness is the first step towards emancipation”, hegemonic countries strive against this possibility of underdeveloped countries achieve this consciousness – and one of the ways that those who hold a high position in social hierarchies use, trying to

prevent societies from achieving critical awareness (concerning processes of domination, for example) is through the power of (alleged) discourses.

Zozzoli (2002, p. 275-276), in her article “Língua materna e língua estrangeira: o discurso da dominação e o ensino de línguas”, presents an interesting standpoint about this new form of domination and/or colonization that can be seen in the modern and capitalistic world. According to her:

Even nowadays there are cases of linguistic and cultural domination without invasion, which are, in my perspective, new ways of colonization. [...] The difference between the old and the new methods is that the possession of the land and the submission of the naturals occur in a different way (DS 16).

Discussing the issue of hegemony, the idea of neutrality that a language supposedly has and this new form of presence that a nation may establish over others, Ortiz (1996, p. 98) asserts that “Many authors refer to English as a *língua franca*, implying, then, a certain neutrality in relation to linguistic exchanges. When compared with other languages, English would be more flexible, concise, pragmatic and modern” (DS 17).

In spite of the facts that linguistic exchanges are inevitable and that the English language is the contemporary global language, the idea of linguistic neutrality, as already discussed, is a fallacy. Such idea seems to be, as a matter of fact, a way of diffusing hegemonic languages and cultures to other people and countries, aiming the colonization of nations. According to Schütz (2006)¹⁵, the influence that a language may have over others occurs merely, or mostly, on the lexicon. He bases his assertion exemplifying the case of the French-Norman presence in the Anglo-Saxon nation that lasted three centuries:

The most important element of the *Middle English* period was, without any doubt, the strong presence and influence of French in the English language. This massive flow of French-Norman culture in the Anglo-Saxon nation, which lasted three centuries, resulted mostly in a considerable amount of vocabulary. This demonstrates that this influence normally does not surpass the level of vocabulary enrichment, no matter how strong the influence that a language holds over another is, hardly affecting, then, the pronunciation or the grammar structure. (DS 18)

¹⁵ This information can be found on the following website: <http://www.sk.com.br/sk-enhis.html>.

The presence of foreign words in mother tongues is not neutral, for they definitely affect discourses, although they may be harmless to the pronunciation and to the grammar structure of languages. As Orlandi (2005, p. 96) states, “[...] ideology takes place in languages. It is part of the linguistic mechanism [...]”; “[...] there is no neutrality even in the most apparently daily use of signs” (Ibid. p. 9) (DS 19). Then, this contact may not be as innocuous as it might be thought in terms of colonizing minds and “ruling by consent”, as Fairclough stated. It may even function, sometimes, as one of those new forms of colonization that Zozzoli refers to.

As Ortiz (1996, p. 99) asserts: “Language is not just an instrument of communication, it is also an instrument of power” (DS 20). As English is, in fact, the hegemonic language of the present time, but I dispute the idea that languages are mere “instruments”¹⁶, the use of English words in a mother tongue provides an idea of credibility, exclusiveness and modernity. In other words, the use of loan words grants to someone the image of a globalized and modern person, that is, (s)he is likely to have more credibility for using those words than using the respective correspondents in his/her mother tongue. Such attitude does not constitute, then, a neutral use, rather, it is a political (and ideological) decision, although that may be an unconscious decision, but which is a consequence of the meanings produced by the coveted ideals of the other nation.

Furthermore, as Lynn Mário (1983) defends in his article, “O que significa saber uma língua estrangeira?”, the use of words and expressions in a foreign language can provide the illusion that a person masters that language, for it provides intellectual credibility to the speaker. However, this use can be just the result of a certain technological time, whose outcome is cultural, social and which also may derive from different linguistic contacts among different countries.

As it could be perceived by the discussions developed up to this point, the basic use of languages is fulfilling communicational needs – something that goes beyond simply memorizing structures or linguistic functions – but, for those who see languages as instruments, their use concerns the transmission of different ideas, information, etc. Besides that, domination is part of the linguistic discourse nowadays.

¹⁶ Perhaps Ortiz was not fortunate with the use of the word “instrument”, but it is assumed here that the idea that he wanted to convey, in lack of a more suitable word, was “way” or “mechanism” that has communication as its basic function (referring to language), but that can also be a way to achieve power.

In order to achieve an efficient language teaching/learning, language teachers cannot have restricted knowledge – a kind of knowledge which concerns specifically linguistic structures or functions. It is imperative to be aware of the points discussed here – the value of discourse, the meaning of ideology, hegemony and capitalism, different ways of domination, etc. so they can offer their students a differentiated kind of teaching, making them think about the present reality.

Even though the contribution of several teaching approaches, like the method of grammar and translation, the audiolingualism method, the Total Physical Response method, etc. cannot be denied to the field of language teaching/learning, what comes to question nowadays is the need for a teaching method that can go beyond primary questions of transmission of grammar rules, as different times demand different approaches, as long as efficient language teaching/learning, taking into account, of course, particular demands of different periods of time, is not being successfully achieved, or as long as a particular teaching approach is not corresponding to the expectations of what “real” education is (and what kind of discussions actual educational processes involve).

In the educational field, the notion of language (and the issues that this subject comprises) is usually regarded as vocabulary and grammar study. Such knowledge is believed to provide the necessary means to achieve the mastery of any language, regardless of the importance of contextual situations and discussions of relevant past and contemporary events, as if such knowledge and instruction a) either had no importance at all, as the aim of foreign language teaching would supposedly and exclusively be attached to the ability of being able to “speak” or to “read” in that language (by learning grammar rules – the only means that would enable someone to know a foreign language), neglecting, then, discussions on global issues, or b) as if it was a matter that did not particularly concern foreign language teaching.

Concerning this particular issue, Lynn Mário (1986) points out that learning grammar rules was believed to be enough for someone so (s)he could master a foreign language. However, this knowledge may be more profitable for those who already know the language or to the ones who can communicate, at least minimally, in that language. That is the case, for example, of the formal learning/teaching of mother tongues. It is known that native people, who can already communicate in their respective languages, learn the rules of that language that they already speak. Teaching grammar rules to people who cannot speak at all a foreign language might, then, be useless teaching.

According to Lynn Mário (1986), there are two answers that are traditionally given to this question of what language learning/teaching is, which he considers to be fallacies: a) to know lexicon and b) to know grammar rules. In fact, these issues are obviously important in language learning, even because one cannot actually know any language if (s)he completely ignores words in that language. However, language teaching/learning goes a long way beyond that. As already explained, to actually know a language does not only mean knowing words and grammar rules, but it also and mainly comprises being able to create and to understand different discourses in different kinds of contexts. It also means knowing that languages have particular (cultural) ways of signifying (communicating), understanding these particular uses and being able to perform them appropriately.

Hence, the role of language teaching is not restricted to the simple teaching of lexicon and linguistic structures, for these points are only parts of a major (and more relevant) process, which also concerns language policies. Through a differentiated approach, students may realize more easily why it is important to learn languages nowadays and why they are involved in that process – discussing events that happen to be of global matter and significance through the study of discourses, as a support to the study of languages.

2.2 Culture, what is this?

Just like language, which has paramount importance in countless aspects of humanity, culture also has enormous significance in any people's life and history. It is as difficult to think about a people without certain typical beliefs, practices, behaviors and values, as it is difficult to think about a people without any means of communication. In order to better understand different human behaviors and ways of life, cultural study and knowledge is required. Only through such study one's culture can actually be given access, mostly in a world in which cultural concerns and differences among countries and people seem to be intensified every day, earning higher and higher levels of attention. As Tavares (2006, p. 17 e 18) states:

[...] it is through culture that we can know ourselves, the Other and read the world in which we live [...]. As human existence is essentially cultural, it is unquestionable the need of a closer and more careful look at it, in a world, as Abdala Júnior (2002) asserts, more and more driven by interactivity and interconnection, but also in a world in which the borders are still strongly present. (DS 21)

Unlike it might be believed, culture does not only concern visible and tangible elements like food and clothing, for example, but it also comprises invisible aspects, being something which is historically constructed. Lameiras (in TAVARES, 2006) defines culture as the main point around which the lives of societies, and of the subjects, are articulated. Mattelart (2005), in line with Edward Burnett Tylor (1871), believes that culture is every faculty or habit which is acquired by human beings, as members of societies.

Before going any further, it is imperative to state that such perspective points to an idea that only inside societies (only in and through social life) the notion of culture can exist and be understood. In fact, this is the most reasonable meaning that can be attributed to this issue. Cultures comprise all aspects developed, acquired and practiced by humanity inside their respective (and variable) social circles, following, then, particular and relative patterns of life and reality.

According to Santos (2006) there are two basic conceptions of culture. The first is concerned with any aspect of social contexts, dealing with everything that characterizes the social existence of a people, nation or group within a society; and the second deals with knowledge, ideas, beliefs and their existence in social life. From the

two following views that this author provides, a general idea of what culture is can be achieved.

Culture is more linked to studying, education and schooling. Sometimes, culture is mentioned to designate only artistic manifestations like theater, music, painting and sculpture. At other occasions, when the contemporary culture is mentioned, it is almost identified as the means of communication like radio, cinema and TV. Culture may even refer to parties and traditional ceremonies, legends and certain people's beliefs, or even their way of getting dressed, their food, their language [...]. On the other hand, I have been talking about culture in a more generic way, being concerned with everything that characterizes human population (Ibid. p. 21-22). (DS 22)

Culture is a dimension of the social process, of the life of a society. It does not concern only a set of practices and conceptions like it could be said about art, for example. It is not just a part of the social life like it could be said about religion, for example. It cannot be said that culture is something independent of social life, something that has nothing to do with the reality where it exists. With such perspective, culture concerns all aspects of social life, and it cannot be said that it exists in certain contexts but not in others. Culture is a historical conception, either as a conception or as a dimension of the social process. That is, culture is not something natural, it is not deriving from laws of Physics or laws of Biology. Conversely, culture is a mass product of human life (Ibid. p. 44-45). (DS 23)

Culture is, then, one of the main characteristics of human existence. Language and culture clearly are two elements that are deeply embedded in (and dependent of) human existence. Actually, these two elements are so close to each other that even certain similarities between them cannot be avoided to be seen: both language and culture are a) social conventions – historically built and developed; b) they are dynamic and heterogeneous and c) they may become hegemonic.

As for the first similarity, languages and cultures are, in fact, socially constructed. Each nation continually produces particular languages and cultures according to their respective social and historical contexts, even if certain similarities among different languages and cultures exist. In this perspective, cultures are not likely to be something natural (as Santos said, “deriving from laws of Physics or laws of Biology”) - as the human biological predisposal to speak and to learn languages, commonly referred as “Language Acquisition Device”. Cultures are, then, “built” along the time, developed, adaptable and mutable according to the meanings produced in social relations.

The importance of culture in human life and history is so strong and present that parts of society might believe that all aspects of human life are governed by cultures, as

if a) humanity had no independent will and life, being always constrained to comply to all the “demands” of their respective cultures and social groups and b) human race had nothing that could be regarded as actually natural.

Nature, in human beings, is totally interpreted by culture. Differences that could seem to be more linked to specific biological properties like sexual difference, for example, can never be perceived “in raw state” (natural), for, so as to say, culture takes them over “immediately”: the sexual division of roles and tasks in societies fundamentally results from culture to culture, thus, they change from a society to another. Nothing is purely natural in human beings. Even the human functions that correspond to physical needs like hunger, sleep, sexual desire, etc., are informed by culture: societies do not exactly present the same answers to these needs (CUCHE, 2002, p. 10-11). (DS 24)

Are human beings, then, completely controlled and determined by that that they themselves were “conventioning” along the time? Not necessarily. The point is that, according to their particular ways of life, each nation uses to follow particular “cultural rules”, being, sometimes, regarded as “keystones”. However, human existence and different human behaviors are not a consequence of cultures, but it is just the opposite: based on their respective social life, relations, divisions, beliefs, etc., cultures are “established” so that there can be “order”, a certain “standard” in varied social groups, but that does not mean that every single person is obliged to follow those cultural “rules” and always act according to them – that is the exact case of formal language (written or spoken), usually learned at schools: they exist, but people are not obliged to follow them at all occasions. Cultural “rules” may, then, be the very foundations to better understand different societies and social groups, but they do not control, neither necessarily rule, human existence along with all their actions.

As for the second similarity between language and culture, being both dynamic and heterogeneous elements, it can be perceived that, in spite of different cultural aspects be practiced in different generations, like carnival or even particular ways of compliments, for example, they are not immutable. In fact, they have changed a lot, for cultures are always changing; they are always in constant contact and reconstruction, once considered the fact that “Every culture is a permanent process of construction, deconstruction and reconstruction. What varies is the importance that each phase has, according to the situations” (CUCHE, 2002, p. 137) (DS 25). This author, then, believes that cultures cannot be seen as immutable heritances, but as constructions that take place because of different relations of different social groups.

Santos (2006) contributes to this discussion with the belief that the main advantage of cultural studies is the possibility of understanding different processes of transformation of contemporary societies. According to him, “Cultural studies demand us to consider the constant transformation that societies go through, a transformation of their characteristics and of the relations among categories, groups and social classes inside them” (SANTOS, 2006, p. 44) (DS 26), also stating that:

The fact that cultural traditions can be identified does not mean that they do not change, that they do not have their own dynamicity. Nothing that is cultural can be immutable, for culture is part of a reality where changings are a fundamental aspect (Ibid. p. 47). (DS 27)

Examples of different cultures that changed along the time are a) the case of feudal Japan, a time when women used to work on the field, taking care of the plantation – sowing and picking food, whereas men used to be trained for battles; b) the case of the Chambuli – a community where women used to hold the economic power, sustaining the essential to the welfare of the group, whereas men mostly dedicated themselves to ceremonial and aesthetical activities and c) the case of Brazil not long ago – when men used to work in factories or on agricultural fields, for example, whereas women just used to take care of the house and of the children.

However, just as it happens towards languages, there is a belief that all cultures should remain “pure” and immutable. But, as human beings can change (in several different ways) along the time, there is no plausible reason to believe that their cultures, which are not natural elements, should be always the same. As regards this point, Cucho (2002) defends the reasonable view that, as a result of all global cultural contacts, all cultures, in varied levels, are mixed cultures, being constituted by continuities and discontinuities. He does not believe, then, that the world is divided in two parts: “pure” cultures on one side and mixed cultures on the other.

Cultures basically change for two main reasons: a) because societies (consciously or not) “modify” different cultural values that they have in order to achieve different purposes and fulfill new necessities, or in order to fit their cultures into new ideologies, for example, and b) because of external influences – because of influences from other regions, people or nations – briefly stated, because of cultural contacts. In addition, new discoveries, the complexification of societies, etc. contribute in this process of cultural changing.

As Santos (1996, p.135) states: “[...] cultural identities are not frozen nor, even less, immutable. They are always temporary and fleeting processes of identification” (DS 28). However, whatever are the reasons for cultural changings, it is important to state that these changings (or cultural exchanges) happen as a consequence of different social relations and because of massive social attitudes and positions and not because a handful of people want their cultures to be what they want them to be.

As it was briefly discussed in the introduction, every country is forged by different people and nations and this mixing contributed enormously to the existence of varied cultures inside one same territory. In other words, it is very likely that ethnical diversity inside a territory can create a wide cultural diversity, which does not mean placing countries in such an alarming situation of inevitable destruction. New York and London, for example, present a considerable ethnical diversity in their respective territories, but this reality does not seem to be a problem to any sector of these metropolis, except, perhaps, for those who feel hatred or fear towards strangers or foreigners.

Taking Brazil as an initial example, there is an interesting fact to be noticed regarding the cultures of a country. Every Brazilian region presents different cultural aspects. Taking into account the cultures of Rio Grande do Sul, São Paulo, Goiânia, Bahia and Alagoas, for example, just to mention a few, it can be perceived that the culture(s) of these regions have significantly different traits, but do they mean a problem to Brazilians or are they somehow harmful to the nation? Obviously not.

As regards this specific point of cultural diversity, it can be stated that every country in the world presents several different cultures at the same time. There is no such thing as THE Brazilian culture, THE American culture, THE Italian culture, etc., but, actually, there are Brazilian cultures, American cultures, Italian cultures and so on. Simply stated, there is a plethora of different cultures inside the same territory. Santos (2006, p. 18-19) explains well this reality:

[...] the national population has been constituted of contingents deriving from several locations of the world. All this is reflected on the cultural terrain. There are cultural realities inside our society that can be considered, and they often are, as strange cultures. [...] It is important to take into account the cultural diversity inside our society; this is, as a matter of fact, imperative to better understand the country in which we live. Even because this diversity is not only made of ideas; it is also related to the ways of participating in social life, it is an element that constitutes the social relations in the country. Such diversity is also constituted of different ways of living,

whose reasons can be studied, contributing, then, to eliminate biases and persecutions that reach certain groups of people. (DS 29)

According to this author, then, as each cultural reality has its own internal logic, those realities have to be studied so that they can make sense to people of different cultures. This is a plausible idea once, as cultures are constructed based on particular realities, it is imperative to study and to understand, at least minimally, the history of the constitution of a people, language and culture so that specific and particular realities, customs, conceptions, beliefs, ways of life, etc. can be better understood.

However, there is a point that Santos (2006) defends that has to be thought and dealt with care. He believes that cultural studies contribute in the strife against biases, offering, then, “a firm platform towards respect and dignity in human relations” (SANTOS, 2006, p. 9) (DS 30). Actually, the “firmness” of this “platform” is relative, for it is necessary to analyze if the result of such study that this author refers to really works (for sure) in practice. It is more reasonable to state that such studies may alleviate potential problems of prejudice, only minimizing different cultural biases, rather than conveying slight (or sometimes overt) ideas and messages of eradication of different kinds of biases – a position which is not difficult to be seen when this issue is in question.

As every culture is historically built and developed according to specific and particular ways of life, which, sometimes, may be alien or intolerable to people who do not share the same reality, sometimes, radicalists tend to see alien culture(s) as wrong, defending, then, ideas that affirm that such cultures should be “erased from the face of the Earth”, or others of similar nature, whereas others use to state that cultural studies can completely solve this problem. There are indeed many different cultures that seem to be odd to several people and that are not, thus, easily accepted or that are totally jilted, mostly by people and nations that do not share that particular reality, or cultures that, when “accepted”, are not actually well seen and admitted in the world; rather, they may be, at most, tolerated – a behavior that is clearly biased, for toleration is not a synonym for acceptance. Conversely, it means indifference, underestimation or despise. Examples of jilted or “tolerated” cultures could be a) the Iraquian culture, where it is not unusual to see people who live and die for their religion, where women wear veils, apart from other practices that may be regarded as “unacceptable”; b) the typical festival in Spain where images of important figures are set on fire and c) the culture of the Amish

community¹⁷, a Christian Anabaptist religious group known for their conservative culture.

Having such facts in mind, it is more reasonable to believe that a better understanding of “alien” cultures, and a possible decrease of cultural prejudices, may be more efficiently achieved through cultural studies; through efforts in understanding how different societies work and upon which values they are based. That is also why historical knowledge (about people, countries, cultures and languages) is valuable for those who teach foreign languages. Only through this knowledge biases may be minimized.

As Santos (2006, p. 16) states: “It is only possible to actually respect cultural diversity if the insertion of these particular cultures is understood inside the world history” (DS 31). This author seems to share the same perspective being developed here, for he believes that the behavior of the subjects of a culture is influenced by particular styles that are expressed through language, beliefs, customs, art, etc. and that cultures are likely to be negotiations of meaning, which occur inside the global system, and that can not be actually understood without historical analysis (concerning the trajectory and the position of this group in the global system).

Teaching foreign languages (and cultures), then, is more than just informing about a country, about visible and tangible aspects of a nation and transmitting certain views that may be fallacies and stereotypes. It comprises the development of discussions that can lead people to understand, at least basically, different social orders and agreements.

Taking all these facts into account, the reason for the existence of multiple cultures in the world might have got clearer. It is exactly because of this wide number of different cultures in the world that, sometimes, it may be difficult to the population (by itself) understand realities that are far different from the usual Western culture, mostly when these kinds of discussions are not commonly performed at schools.

Cultural studies might contribute, then, to the understanding that cultures can be significantly different from each other, making people perceive different cultural nuances and realities that are completely opposed to their national culture, but which are not necessarily wrong. They just constitute different ways of seeing (and understanding) reality. But it goes without saying that such knowledge is definitely not a guarantee that

¹⁷ A faith group that attempts to preserve the elements of the late XVII century European rural culture.

people will respect, accept and eliminate all kinds of prejudices towards different cultures. In spite of the fact that cultural studies are a helpful way not to develop wrong or misunderstood preconceptions about people, nations, etc., there will always be those who fear, reject or despise realities, behaviors, practices, etc., that are distant from their particular ways of life.

Cultures that do not share the same reality can sometimes be easily rejected and despised, whereas similar cultures can get in touch more easily and exchange varied features among them because cultural exchanges share the same reality of the loan words. They are just a way to diversify and enrich national characteristics, being unlikely to have such destructive impact to national cultures, for they (both cultures and loan words) are in constant transit, mutation, renovation and creation. In other words, people tend to accept more easily what is similar to their realities and fear, hate, avoid or reject what is alien to them. Such behavior is just another common and natural attitude (among so many other attitudes and behaviors) inherent to human beings.

On the other hand, it has to be admitted that much of what is popularly believed to be “cultural garbage” is present in this process of cultural exchanges. But how can people sort out what might be useless and what might be interesting and important to their respective cultures? Uselessness and importance are very difficult to be sorted once, when this issue is in question, subjectivity is a primordial factor to the selection of foreign cultural features.

Another important issue to be (re)taken into account here, when this subject is approached, is the case of ideology and the new ways of colonization. Just like languages diffuse ideologies and can colonize minds, so cultures do/can. It is important, then, to be alert and to develop a critical look towards foreign cultural elements, both the ones that are regarded as “useless” and the ones that are regarded as “interesting” or “important” that arrive in the national culture. Examples of foreign cultural features that can be seen here in Brazil are: a) the fast food “restaurants”; b) the baseball game; c) the October Fest; d) the celebration of Halloween and even the famous carnival party.

The first example, the fast food “restaurants”, a typical North-American food habit, mostly and initially directed to people who could not afford spending much time having a normal meal at home or at normal restaurants and who had to rush because of their work, is, nowadays, a reality and a fad in many parts of the world. However, in Brazil, these restaurants are not mostly directed to the adult part of the population who may not have time to have a normal meal, and who may be forced to eat snacks without

even taking a seat because of their short time. Conversely, the majority of the costumers, who have their “meals” while they are sitting, are teens who, sometimes, spend a considerable amount of time in these establishments.

The second example, the baseball game, a typical North-American game, is slowly starting to get some space in the national territory. However, in spite of being a typically American game, the instructors of this game are not Americans. Many are either Brazilian or Japanese. An interesting point to be thought about the practice of this sport in the national territory is: will it ever become as famous or practiced as soccer or as volleyball or as basketball or will it be a sport just like tennis, which is mostly directed to and practiced by the elite of this country?

The third example, the “October Fest”, is a celebration whose roots are based on German traditions and that occurs in the south region of this country – particularly in the city of Joinville, Santa Catarina. During this party, many people can be seen wearing typically German clothes, drinking beer and eating typical German foods.

The fourth example, the Halloween party, popularly regarded as a typically North-American celebration, just like some of its characteristics as the “Trick or treat” and “Jack-o’-lantern” games, but which is actually a mistaken belief, for this is a celebration whose origins go back to Celtic traditions 2000 years ago and those were games created in Ireland, rather than in North-America, can be seen in different parts of the world nowadays like Ireland, UK, Spain, Brazil, etc.

The Irish tradition of Halloween used to present a man, who would lead a procession, in order to collect offerings from agriculturists so that their harvest was not cursed by demons. In England, beggars used to ask for food and, in exchange, they would pray for the dead members of the family that helped them. In Spain, some candies and nuts used to be placed upon graves in order to ward off evil spirits. In Brazil, this day, which probably took place because of private English language teaching institutes and because of the media, is celebrated with dancing parties where people get dressed as vampires, ghosts, demons, etc., reminding even the carnival celebration – a time when people use to play tricks on each other and use to wear fantasy suits. Unlike it might be thought, carnival itself is not only a typical Brazilian party – and it is not a Brazilian celebration in its origin. Rather, just like Halloween, this celebration was borrowed – not from North-America, but from Europe:

Just like other European institutions, carnival was taken to the New World, mainly to that part that was colonized by the Mediterranean Catholics. The use of fantasy suits and masks was a traditional European custom, and even some favorite fantasy suits were based on European models, from Hussards and harlequins from Rio to pierrot and PUNCHINELLOS from Trinidad. The samba school parade from Rio that can be seen nowadays follows the tradition of the ceremonial procession and of the allegoric cars from Florence and from Nuremberg of the XV century; even political references in Europe, for example, in the XVII century Spain (BURKE, 2006, p. 34-35). (DS 32)

These facts, then, explain the origin and the customs of some varied cultural characteristics and celebrations that are shared by different nations. How can one sort out what is “useless” from what is not? It is from these very contacts, both the “useless” ones and the “important”, “necessary” or inevitable ones that hybrid cultures rise. Actually, It is impossible to avoid what are believed to be “useless” cultural contacts, even because beliefs of the following nature only confirm this reality¹⁸: “The history of all cultures is the history of cultural borrowings” (DS 33) (Edward Said); “All cultures are the result of a profound mixing” (DS 34) (Claude Lévi-Strauss), and “Nowadays, all cultures are border cultures” (DS 35) (Nestor Canclini). But what are hybrid cultures and how are they created?

As it might have been perceived by the discussions developed up to now, hybrid cultures are two or more different cultures that get in touch and that, because of those contacts, present changes in their respective cultures. There is also a belief that, sometimes, by the contact between two different cultures, something else can be created. In others words, when a particular culture (culture “A”) gets in touch with another culture (culture “B”), a third element can be created, a culture which is usually referred as “third culture”. This third culture (or hybrid culture) has elements that are, at the same time, deriving from the national and from the foreign culture. And thus it is neither completely regarded as national nor as foreign – it is a mixing, being sometimes despised because of its very condition of creation.

It is evident, however, that this belief is not shared by everyone. The opposite belief is that discourses of “third cultures” only rise when hegemonic countries, like the USA, for example, want to impose their culture, with a friendly and “neutral” appearance, to other countries (mainly underdeveloped countries) – an attitude regarded as a typical colonizer’s discourse, once such discourses do not easily come up when two developed countries are in question or when two underdeveloped countries get in touch.

¹⁸ These excerpts can be found on the book “Hibridismo Cultural” (2006), by Peter Burke.

According to Canclini (2006, p. XIX) hybridity can be understood as: “[...] socio-cultural processes in which discreet structures or practices, which existed separately, combine with each other in order to create new structures, objects and practices” (DS 36). According to him, hybridization names combinations of ethnical or religious elements, products of advanced technology and modern (or post-modern) social processes. By what was discussed, it may be evident, then, how this process of mixing among different cultures occur, originating, then, hybrid cultures. As every culture is a permanent process of construction, deconstruction and reconstruction, as Cuche (2002) stated, hybrid cultures can be originated because of this fact. Moreover, ethnical diversity inside one same territory is another factor that contributes to the creation of hybrid cultures.

[...] this process occurs in a non-planned way or it is an unpredictable result of emigrational processes, touristic and economic or communicational interchange. But hybridization frequently rises because of individual and massive creativity. Not just in arts, but also in the daily life and in technological development. What is sought is a patrimonial *reconversion* (a factory, a professional capacitation, a set of knowledge and techniques) in order to reinsert it in new conditions of production and market (CANCLINI, 2006, p. XXII). (DS 37)

According to Canclini (2006) there are even some “cycles of hybridity”, a theory proposed by Brian Stross (1999), which states that people tend to migrate from more heterogeneous forms to more homogeneous forms and, then, to others which are relatively more heterogeneous along history, but none of these forms are actually pure or completely homogeneous. However, one of the most important reasons (perhaps the main reason) for contacts, mixing or hybridity among different cultures is hegemony itself, which turns to be one of the possible consequences of globalization, constituting, then, the third similarity between language and culture.

Actually, cultural hegemony, just like linguistic hegemony, is a consequence of the hegemony of a people, country and nation. If a nation is hegemonic, it is likely that its language becomes hegemonic at some point in time. If cultural hegemony becomes a reality because of the hegemony of a people, which may cause linguistic hegemony, this fact proves, then, the intrinsic relation between language and culture. In short, and simply stated, it could be said that, firstly, a nation becomes hegemonic, then, its language becomes hegemonic and, then, as cultures can be diffused by languages,

cultures can become hegemonic as a consequence of linguistic hegemony – but not necessarily following this exact chronological order.

Many people share this belief that languages are one way of diffusing cultures. Tavares (2006, p. 21) is one of the examples that could be mentioned. According to her, “When culture is approached, we cannot neglect its close relation with thoughts and with languages” (DS 38). As it happens towards languages, hegemonic countries lend more characteristics of their language and culture(s) than they borrow, because what comes to question at this point is hegemony and hierarchy among nations and social groups and classes.

Mattelart (2005), for example, believes that cultural imperialism refers to a set of unequal relations, from which the hegemony of a particular perspective derives. Sometimes, certain borrowed elements do not even make sense to the receptive culture because certain cultural characteristics are “developed” based on the history of a people or nation and certain circumstances of “creation” may not be shared by a different society.

Such adoption may occur because, as there is a myth about “better and worse” nations and people, countries regarded as “inferior” do not desire to be seen as “bad countries”. They seek, then, their acceptance and respect by other nations, and a possible “solution” to this “problem” of being different is adopting features of hegemonic countries in order to try to acquire a supposedly “better identity”, even that these elements do not make sense to their nation, deciding, then, to give a “special place” (as it was already seen and discussed in the previous part concerning language) to certain foreign elements inside their national communities.

Mattelart (2005, p. 75) affirms that cultural imperialism: “[...] is an ethnocentrism transformed in ideology, which presents itself as salvation to subordinate groups” (DS 39). This same author mentions Lanternari (cf. MATTELART, 2005, p. 75), who asserts that: “The basic idea is that either the “other” people follow the Western civilization or they will become unworthy of being regarded as respectable entities” (DS 40). Hierarchy is, then, one of the elements that originate thoughts of subordination on people’s minds. If there is some kind of hegemony in different localities, some kind of subjection will be likely to exist. However, regardless of hegemonic presence, people themselves can decide if they want to obey and to be completely determined by (hegemonic or non-hegemonic) social groups and by their

rules - their “keystones”. It is interesting, then, to highlight two ideas that Cuche (2002) defends concerning this matter. According to him:

Cultures are born of social relations that are always unequal relations. Since the beginning of the times, there has been hierarchy among cultures, which are a result of social hierarchy. To believe that there is no hierarchy among cultures is to assume that cultures could exist independently, without having any relation with each other, which does not correspond to reality (CUCHE, 2002, p. 143-144). (DS 41)

[...] a dominated culture is not necessarily alienated, totally dependent. But this culture, in its evolution, cannot afford not to consider the dominant culture (this is a mutual fact which does not occur in the same level), but it can resist in bigger or smaller degrees to the hegemonic cultural imposition (Ibid. p. 145). (DS 42)

This same author (Ibid, p.145) also states that: “In a given social space, there is always cultural hierarchy” (DS 43). However, it is obvious that cultural hierarchy is not the only existing reality in the world. Cultural hierarchy is just one of the many kinds of existing hierarchies, even if sometimes people seek to deny or to hide such reality. This fact is well presented in Santos (2006, p. 18):

Human cultures and societies interrelate unequally. International relations present differences of power in all senses, which, in fact, sort out people and nations. This is a clear fact of contemporary history and cultures and it is not possible to think about culture if these inequalities are not taken into account. It is necessary to perceive them and to try to overcome them (DS 44).

However, this idea of overcoming social inequalities and hierarchy are not likely to cease to be just an ideal to be achieved, as there will always be those who try to keep different social layers and there will always have people accepting it passively and thinking of it as normal. It is not likely that the ones who hold a high position will give up their own “welfare” so that the lower class can ascend in life, creating, then, a possible coexistence of equal classes around the world. Actually, discourses of such nature are also part of the colonizer’s discourse.

Santos (2006), for example, believes that there is no cultural superiority or inferiority, nor there is any natural law that could establish such status, but he highlights the existence of historical processes that relate and establish true and concrete marks among cultures, and Cuche (2002) defends a significantly relevant opinion concerning

this point, for, as historical processes create and highlight several differences and layers among nations and social classes, it may be clear, then, that characteristics like equality, respect and acceptance among different people are not always possible to be achieved. Ideas that affirm the converse of that are, then, one way of diffusing ideologies, of inculcating and reinforcing fallacies so that people can accept what is pushed to them, contributing, then, to keep the existing social layers.

A dominant culture cannot totally impose itself towards a dominated culture just like a group can do towards another weaker group. Cultural domination is never thorough and certain and, because of that, it always has to bring a process of inculcating this domination, whose outcome is never univocal; sometimes, the outcome can be “mean effects”, opposed to the dominant expectations, for receiving domination does not necessarily mean accepting it (CUCHE, 2002, p. 146). (DS 45)

Hence, people who believe in and who accept ideas of submission, “better” and “worse” nations, etc. generally present low self-esteem and tend to overvalue foreign elements to the detriment of their own national characteristics, becoming, then, easy targets to the power of ideology. The educational field is the perfect terrain to perform debates and discussions concerning all the issues approached and developed up to this point. The role of schools is beyond the number of students that it graduates; the role of foreign language teachers is not being entertainers neither is being exclusively grammar rule transmitters nor being “preachers” of “better” and “worse” cultures (cultural fallacies); the role of initial education, for this is where citizens are supposedly formed, is beyond introducing formal language and other kinds of knowledge that usually have to be rethought, and sometimes abandoned, in later stages (of Academic life, for example).

3 CHAPTER 2 – LANGUAGE AND CULTURE IN FLT

Having in mind the importance of language and culture (and their close relation) in human life, attempts of separating these two issues only cause distortions in language teaching, for, if such separation occurs, the teaching of foreign languages, as one of the examples that could be mentioned, may get restricted to the practice and training of mechanical structures – either regarding systematic or functional issues. As it was already mentioned, language and culture can be separated in theory, but not in practice. As Byram (1994, p. vii) stated, “Since language and culture are inseparable, we cannot be teachers of language without being teachers of culture – or vice versa”.

When a foreign language is studied at schools (or anywhere else), the culture of that language appears at the same time, because languages are closely linked to their respective cultural and social aspects. However, cultures are not actually expressed through language itself, for any linguistic material is neutral if the discourse is not regarded as a primordial issue for the existence of languages, as far as provisions of meanings are concerned.

In this perspective, the relationship between language and discourse conveys a mutual benefit to these two elements in relation: the discourse depends on languages (on their linguistic material) so as it can exist, but languages themselves are meaningless without the discourse. Cultures, then, are directly linked to discourse, but they also have a certain relation with languages, once this relationship between language and discourse is considered.

It is interesting to consider, thus, an important aspect for a more efficient (foreign) language teaching/learning: the discourse; for, in spite of not being inherent to languages as a linguistic feature like adverbs, punctuation and graphic signs, for example, it is an element whose existence is closely attached to the existence of languages, taking into account the production of meaning among interlocutors, which is based on social, political, cultural and economical aspects – contexts that constitute human life. This points, then, to a link between three inseparable elements: language – discourse – culture.

Brandão (in TAVARES, 2006, p.73) shares this same perspective, asserting that: “[...] expressing culture is not a function of language, but of the discourse” (DS 1), mentioning Charaudeau (1989) to support her argument, who believes that the discourse is the responsible for expressing cultural issues, once neither words, in their

morphology, nor the rules of syntax carry these cultural issues, but such task of expressing culture concerns the uses that different communities perform with words, aiming at luring and persuading. In this perspective, a fourth element is also considered in that block of three linked elements previously presented: ideology, which is expressed both through language and through culture. From the insertion of this fourth element in that former set, the following pairs of combination are achieved: language – discourse; discourse – culture; culture – ideology.

However, there are teachers who dispute this point of view about the role (and importance) of discourse in education, teaching, then, foreign languages without considering such relationships presented above, whose importance lies on the fact of seeing the (teaching of) discourse as the central point that allows the development of classes that comprise issues that are not merely functional or systematic. In fact, there are two major outermost attitudes in pedagogy concerning this issue: the first consists in not to discuss cultural aspects, neglecting their value(s) and relevance in and for language studies and also the significant contribution that effects of meaning provide to the formation of the students, whereas the second attitude adopts cultural teaching to the point of overvaluing or overemphasizing foreign culture(s) to the detriment of the national culture. However, the teaching of culture only becomes meaningful if the teaching/studying of discourse is constantly present in language classes, for only thus effects of meaning can take place, being an asset to understanding and analyzing different realities, mostly when these realities are the students' realities.

As regards to the first attitude mentioned above, the complete refusal of cultural discussions does not contribute to the development of an efficient language teaching and learning, nor is it helpful to the students in terms of creation or development of a better awareness about different positions and realities of different countries and people, as such behavior denies the possibility of broader understanding concerning socio-political human behaviors, beliefs, practices and even stereotypes. However, if the teacher is not concerned about social, political and cultural aspects, if the teacher's objective is just to teach words bereft of contextual situations – that is, situations that are based on the students' realities – then, the teaching of language(s) could be dissociated from the teaching of culture. Medeiros (in TAVARES, 2006, p.61), for example, discusses this issue on her article “O método café crème e os estudos dos fenômenos culturais”. According to her,

If the concept of language can be understood as a system of signs, of rules, a closed and ready-made object, a code that is used by a linguistic community to express their ideas, language teaching focuses the understanding of how language works, without taking into account the socio-economic and cultural contexts in which the speakers are inserted. [...] However, if language is regarded as a means of interaction used by the people of a given society, to make themselves understood and to be understood, language teaching cannot be separated from culture. (DS 2)

It is also important to point out what Moita Lopes (1997) states concerning cultural teaching. This author questions the use of this teaching for the ones who only seek to be able to read specific texts and collect specific information, like a text on medicine or on Physics, for instance. In other words, the issue of “teaching culture” has to be rethought when it comes to the use and to the meaning that such teaching can have in (and to) people who have just instrumental motivation. The teaching of culture – and the teaching of discourse – have to be thought, then, in terms of what the necessities of the students are; but, as foreign language education (inside schools) is being the focus here, this reality defended by Moita Lopes does not apply, for the teaching of foreign languages at regular schools supposedly goes beyond this specific practice of instrumental teaching.

As for the second attitude, the practice of overemphasizing foreign cultural aspects (when they are presented in class) or comparing them with the national culture in a way of placing the latter in an inferior position is not helpful to the students either and, actually, do not constitute real cultural teaching. As Zozzoli (2002, p. 276) states, languages and cultures can be studied from a critical position rather than presenting a position of submission and worship: “There is a possibility of teaching and learning other languages and knowing other cultures without having to worship such languages and cultures” (DS 3).

From the point of view of intercultural studies, countries are regarded as equally valuable and, as such, they should be studied emphasizing the relevant points of each. Considering that that is, in fact, an ideal situation, which is not replicated in real life interactions (where some are more definitely valued than others), there is no point in denying reality – one of the main points, in which educational setting is conceived, is to promote activities and discussions that make clear the reasons, the historical contexts that caused the dominance of a culture over others and what kind of consequences might rise from this situation (also considering issues such as cultural imperialism, different

issues concerning Eurocentrism and the role(s) of globalization). As far as human beings' qualities and shortcomings are concerned, all cultures are the same; what makes them superior has to do with political and economical power.

Another important issue to be pointed out is the mistaken belief that the achievement of linguistic competence is the final step to the mastery of a foreign language, for such knowledge would allow one to be proficient enough in a language in order to understand what is said in that language, how something is said, when something should be said and why, conveying, then, the presupposition that linguistic competence comprises and requires almost perfect cultural understanding. In this perspective, this competence may be erroneously regarded as part of a "perfect approach or ability" that seeks to achieve such knowledge (understanding a foreign language and culture almost perfectly).

According to Elisabeth Medeiros (in TAVARES, 2006), it is necessary more than just achieving linguistic competence in a language in order to efficiently (not perfectly) learn that language. According to her, when people use language, they express ideas, opinions and ways of seeing that are shared by other people, for language expresses, incorporates and symbolizes cultural realities. However, this is not the only point comprised by languages, as they also concern political issues, which have, then, to be present in language studies. It is necessary to know, thus, at least minimally, how the other society "works", at least in terms of linguistic and cultural behavior, which, then, entails the consideration and the insertion of discourses.

The teacher, thus, in his/her classes has the opportunity of focusing different aspects between or among different cultures, but that does not mean that s/he has to focus only foreign elements simply because s/he teaches a foreign language, for one of the uses of foreign language classes is exactly the possibility of exploring similar points and shared beliefs that those cultures may have, emphasizing that none is better, but that they are just different or similar. Such attitude does not entail a suggestion of neutrality, acceptance of or even tolerance for the other nation, but what is in question is understanding how cultures are built, how they can change and how to critically see and think about them.

On her article "Ensino de língua x cultura: em busca de um aprendiz artesão, autônomo e cidadão", Maria Stela Lameiras (in TAVARES, 2006, p. 29) states that:

Relating culture and language teaching is recognizing the importance that this association plays before a “language teaching policy” directed to different cultures, creating in the learner a passage to the world of the other, and aiming, at the same time, at affirming his/her own cultural identity. (DS 4)

In spite of cultural studies be a possibility of knowing, discussing and reflecting upon different cultures (and also towards the national culture), the common belief that the students (or that any other people) have to affirm their own identity when studying other cultures or languages is not a valid measure to cultural studies or to anything else, for this is an aspect that is well defined in anyone, even in those who try to deny their own nationality, seeking a supposedly “better” identity.

This idea of affirming the national identity when studying a foreign language can be regarded as cultural weakness or inferiority, as a person would have to affirm his/her own nationality once s/he is dealing with a possible hegemonic and supposedly “better” and “stronger” culture or language. Concerning this point, Porto (1999, p. 242) defends a perspective, originally from Guiora and Acton, which regards foreign language learning as something that “entails a clearly defined identity, a strong sense of self, a *healthy ego*”, which is also why students do not need to “affirm” their identity when studying a foreign language.

Another controversial point on this issue of studying different cultures and languages is the idea of peaceful coexistence of and respect among different cultures. Lameiras (in TAVARES, 2006), for example, believes that, from the coexistence of varied cultures, the respect concerning several differences that, in fact, exist among different people may and should arise. However, in spite of this belief of hers be, in fact, the ideal situation for any people, country and culture, it has to be clear that respect among different “worlds” is more likely to be a personal desire than a reality, for this peaceful coexistence of differences may never come to existence, regardless of the possible contributions of cultural studies. Sometimes, the fact that there are (cultural) differences can be accepted, but people may not accept the (cultural) differences themselves, for it is not uncommon to see humanity judging other cultures according to their own particular reality. Such idea is well presented by Tavares (2006, p. 21), who believes that:

[...] we will always be capable of rejecting concepts that do not belong to our culture when it is necessary. Then, the understanding of a new culture or of a

culture that is alien to us “[...] is essentially a matter of negotiating the distances between this culture and our culture”. (DS 5)

When interculturality is discussed, it is not unusual to see perspectives that believe in a possible solution to the problem presented above, as it was the case of Santos (2006), who believes that cultural studies offer “a firm platform to respect and dignity in human relations”. Several people in society usually cling to this idea of accepting and respecting totally different cultures, but, as Tavares defends, the fact is that sometimes it is not possible to respect and to accept other people’s cultures in order to walk towards “world peace”, as it is commonly thought, mostly when radically opposed cultural aspects are in question – the Brazilian culture and the Arabic in what women’s rights are concerned, for instance. So, there is a wide variety of aspects in certain cultures that are not accepted, respected or even tolerated, but this fact does not mean that they cannot be studied and discussed in foreign language classes.

From such discussions in classroom, much can be learned and understood (perhaps even adopted sometimes) from different cultures – in a kind of comprehensive approach, which may well promote development in our processes of identification. For example, the awareness of women’s bondage and lack of civil rights in Islamic countries may well awaken the learner to the value of understanding different rights in different countries and the role(s) that different social classes play(s) in these societies. In order to be closer to such goal, discussions and reflexions about the reality in which the students live, the particular reality and history of a national people are the means to achieving a more serious process of language teaching.

The teacher must offer the students not just information about cultural phenomena, but allow critical reflexions about these phenomena. These reflexions about a different culture lead the students to think critically about their own culture, not to undervalue what is Brazilian and praise what is foreign. Conversely, the students will notice that differences constitute a part of a people’s cultural identity (MEDEIROS in TAVARES, 2006, p. 67). (DS 6)

However, it is important to state here that the perception of the existence of differences is already a fact. Instead, what is important to highlight about such study is that one of its uses is the possibility of perception concerning how these differences (directly or indirectly) affect the behavior and the way of life of different societies. It is

indeed important, then, to discuss both foreign and national cultural elements in class – not just the visible ones, of course, but, as Simone Soares and Márcia Schmaltz (in TAVARES, 2006, p. 41) claimed, cultures, and the teaching of cultures, also include invisible aspects, which are as (or more) important to be discussed as (than) other aspects.

The conceptual approach of culture that surrounds foreign language teaching focus, at several occasions, visible aspects, being restricted to presentations of historic events, geographical points, kinds of food, etc., neglecting the invisible ones. Hence, it does not foster the students' sensitivity regarding issues of meaning, which arise when cultures are compared. In other words, it does not prepare them to be intercultural speakers. (DS 7)

Unlike it is sometimes believed, teaching culture is definitely not restricted to the transmission of particular views that each people have towards (an)other(s) – British people are believed to be punctual; Brazilian people are never punctual and are always friendly; Americans live in big houses and drive sport cars, etc. However, much of what is believed to be real about issues of similar nature are just stereotypes and, in fact, do not constitute cultural teaching. These issues can be approached in class to clear misconceptions and several fallacies that revolve around different people, but teaching culture does not restrict itself to this matter. Conversely, rather than subjective and limited views, cultural studies comprise a whole set of issues of global interest, being connected to discourses.

Comparisons and contrasts, for example, turn to be fertile grounds for reflexions about different realities, as they are a way of promoting awareness of the world's present situation; and this overview offers a standpoint from which Brazilian position within the world's politics, economy, society and others can be better understood. Considering that the FL had got many aspects and dimensions different from Portuguese, comparison and contrast may, then, be the starting point for viewing another culture, that is, moving from the context of a native speaker – where most things are seen as natural or are taken for granted – and contextualize that foreign society with the students' own experiences.

As a classroom subject, cultural interaction may also develop a better understanding on cultural differences – not only of the ones being highlighted, but also of other cultures. Following this line of study, students may be able to develop the

necessary awareness to get to know (or understand a little better) different behaviors, habits and even simple and ordinary issues like customs and food.

One of the responsibilities of English language teachers, then, is to be prepared to deal with both language and culture so as not to avoid, conceal or disguise cultural aspects nor overemphasize possible qualities that countries might have. In addition, cultural discussions do not have to be exclusively based on providing information about foreign or national country(ies) in order not to be regarded as “moralistic” teaching or as “something” without specific and useful objectives.

Sarmento (2004), for example, believes that it would be more useful to work with cultural inadequacies, found in the students’ discourses themselves, than simply running over the history and the culture of a foreign country to the students, in order to make them aware of their own different discursive styles. In spite of different information regarding several aspects of a nation be useful to foreign language teachers, who may present, then, a better formation, being, thus, more prepared to deal with specific nuances that might require this knowledge, simply preaching about the history of a foreign country is not necessary indeed to students. Byram (1994, p.5) is another author who supports this idea, for, according to him, “The mere acquisition of information about a foreign country, without the psychological demands of integrated language and culture learning, is inadequate as a basis for education through foreign language teaching”.

There are authors who defend the view that the realization of shared beliefs and contrastant habits and ideas are valuable educational approaches in the ELC (English Language Class) context. Silveira (1997), for example, states that it is important to provide the students with activities which promote the integration of abilities about meaningful themes and which are based, before anything, in the cultural universe of the students. However, what could be considered meaningful to the students? This ideal situation for educational purposes, which Silveira refers to, may be the following:

The intercultural perspective must focus activities and attitudes that promote a true dialogue among cultures. Such process goes through an awareness about the very elements of the student’s culture, preserving his/her own Brazilian cultural identity and, at the same time, promoting criticism and respect towards other cultures, which are transmitted by foreign languages. With such perspective, the development of a foreign language teaching as a way of domination, a culture regarded as superior dominating another culture which is regarded as inferior, must not be sought. ...with such perspective, the most sensible policy is encouraging the foreign language teaching as an

intercultural dialogue and, as Roossel (1983) asserts, any teaching that can make our student to become a subject who is willing to be a citizen of the world must be encouraged, but without losing his/her own Brazilian identity (1997, p. 17). (DS 8)

Nevertheless, there are some controversial parts on this excerpt that need to be observed. One of these parts is the one that mentions “dialogue between cultures” (on line 2), which conveys the same idea of “intercultural dialogue” (on lines 9-10). This idea of “intercultural dialogue” suggests two countries that get in touch, that respect each other and that may exchange some of their characteristics in equal way. That is, it conveys an idea of mutual and equal respect and benefit between two or more countries. However, the existence of contacts of such nature in this globalized and capitalistic world is not always possible to exist. In fact, that picture is more likely to be the image that hegemonic countries want other countries (mostly underdeveloped countries) to believe by this discourse of intercultural dialogues and exchanges.

Another controversial part comes with the words “respect towards other cultures” (on line 5), because of the already discussed impossibility of respecting completely alien realities. And a final issue to be pointed out concerns the parts that refer to the preservation of their “Brazilian cultural identity” (lines 3 and 4) and “without losing their Brazilian identity” (line 12). These two parts remind Lameiras’ assertion concerning the issue of affirming one’s identity, which was also already discussed.

Discussing this issue of contact among the Brazilian culture and others, Possenti (in FARACO, 2002, p. 168) asserts that, “[...] in order to really protect our language, we have to make our economy powerful and our culture so charming that no other culture tempts us” (DS 9). However, it is not only a matter of temptation a country to have foreign cultural aspects; but, actually, it has many things to do with historical facts, globalization and hegemony (among many other issues, of course). Even if our economy were powerful and if our culture were that charming as Possenti exemplifies, it was not guaranteed, and it would not be likely, that Brazil, as a possible hegemonic country, would not “desire” (or would not have) foreign elements in its culture, living, then, isolated from other cultural realities and with full exclusiveness in its own elements, once several factors, like globalization and capitalism, for example, lead countries to get in touch with others.

Globalization, as it is, poses great challenges especially for countries like Brazil, which are not completely independent from the rich part of the world. It is difficult for a country not to be in touch with others; especially in this XXI century with many technological and scientific advances. It is obvious, then, that contacts among countries have inevitably been made throughout many centuries.

Moreover, this idea of “making our economy powerful and our culture so charming that no other culture tempts us” conveys at least two messages that are possible of being interpreted as supposedly “ideal” measures to be followed: a) closing this country in order to avoid (perhaps trying to stop) different kinds of contacts with other countries and b) “tolerate”, despise or perhaps dominate countries whose economies were not as “powerful” and “charming” as ours. Would that, then, be the ideal situation for this country (or for any other)?

Silveira (1997) asserts that English teachers should promote an English language teaching as a way of communication and not as an “instrument” of domination. The students should indeed be taught how to communicate in the English language (both in oral language and in the written one), aiming, as one of the examples that could be mentioned, at achieving a possible differentiation of patterns of life – in terms of knowledge, instruction and job opportunities, for example.

Keeping these issues, asserted by Silveira (1997), in mind, teachers may, then, be able to develop a different and efficient English teaching and students may see a reason in learning a foreign language, making the ELT (English Language Teaching) start to make sense to those who can not see a purpose in such studies, being, foreign languages, then, regarded as real and serious school subjects, that is, the existence of foreign languages as serious school subjects gets justified in the educational curriculum, rather than being regarded as “something” just to complete the hours at schools or as “something” to “entertain” the students with (questionable) “dynamics” and “games”.

The application of these points at schools is a way to improve the Brazilian present educational situation – both in terms of instruction and economy. However, actually, it does not happen due to the way the English language is taught at several Brazilian schools, as one of the possible reasons. As a matter of fact, what can be seen in the educational scenario are unprepared teachers and many professionals from other areas becoming English teachers. What can also be seen is: a depreciation of the teaching profession; many graduated teachers (graduated in Arts) that are not given the

necessary support to develop their work; low salaries; the common sense that one does not learn English at regular (state or private) schools and many other problems.

In order to be recognized around the world as a self determined country, Brazil has to improve greatly, but the fact is that it is essential to the Brazilian population to learn how to explore and to develop their own strength as a nation, because, as Crystal (2005) stated, when the people of a country succeed in the international stage, their language and, consequently, their culture, also succeed. So, it is not possible for any country to achieve a higher level of prestige, globally speaking, if this country lacks evolutions in different sectors of its societies. Here in Brazil, the perfect terrain to start this evolution is exactly the educational one – more specifically with the practice of the teaching of discourse, which is the bridge that allows access to language (as a system of rules) and to culture (one of the means through which ideology is expressed).

Apart from the fact that learning another language brings many benefits to the learner (and to the country itself) and that this learning has a great importance in human development, there is also the necessity of dealing with a globalized world that calls for attitudes, pushes beliefs, imposes certain orders of facts and ideas – discussions that concern any school. The educational value of learning foreign languages is added up to other factors such as the acquisition of particular information on a specific topic, that is, by mastering English, someone can get as much information and knowledge as s/he wants and also, as well presented by Silveira (1997), this knowledge is an important factor for a person to be inserted in certain fields of work (job market opportunities). From a scientific view, it has already been proven that when a person is learning another language this person is improving and increasing his/her cognitive abilities and, consequently, acquiring knowledge.

Porto (1999, p. 243) is the perfect name to support this argument, for she believes that “Educationally, cultural awareness may encourage learners to move towards explanatory and interpretative layers of inspection - beyond mere description - and contribute to the learners’ linguistic, cognitive and social development”. And she also states that

A close examination of the notion of communicative competence reveals that culture is unavoidable in foreign language teaching. Pedagogically, an integral approach to the teaching of language and culture enables learners to become communicatively competent. Educationally, this integration offers a multidimensional perspective on experience (Ibid. p. 247).

A considerably common fact to be perceived at several schools is that many teachers only teach about the language (usage), instead of teaching the language itself (use). Sometimes, it is not realized that languages are being taught without a useful purpose, that is, the contents are based only in the teaching of grammar rules - what someone should or should not do with the language system – and the students are supposed to “learn by heart” all the rules in order to prove that they are “learning the language”.

It is not being said here, however, that the teaching of grammar rules (the linguistic system) is not relevant in language teaching. Conversely, it is an essential part of it; actually, it is inseparable of it. In addition, it is not impossible to see cultural discussions in classes with traditional approaches. However, the point is that the linguistic system – a single and restricted part of language teaching – does not have to become the focus of every class, just because a traditional approach is adopted.

Furthermore, the analysis of pieces of sentences may lose their meaning(s) and become useless (in real face-to-face interactions, for example), which require linguistic and communicative competence, if discourses are not taken into account, for words can only have meaning inside discourses. What matters here is not to teach only systemic issues (grammar and functional issues), but to consider the insertion of these issues into discourses, for only thus contrasts of meaning can be achieved – words and sentences that were once regarded as isolated and not meaningful can start to make sense to the students, implying in a more efficient learning along the time.

Language teaching has to be thought (and taught), then, in terms of efficiency - teach the language in real and useful communication, taking into account different discourses as part of social groups as already explained. It is interesting (and feasible) to teach any language not only for communication but as part of a culture that (and of a people who) communicate through it as a social, ideological and historical element through which other people's cultures can be given access.

Moreover, grammar issues will inevitably be taught with this kind of approach – even if indirectly, that is, non-explicitly. The acknowledgement of cultural discussions, allowed by the teaching of discourse, as an intrinsic part of language teaching, is, then,

imperative to achieve an efficient language learning, bringing several benefits to the learner, as “Cultural awareness might not only alleviate potential communication problems, but it also constitutes the foundations of an approach whose aim is to enable learners to cope with unpredictable communication encounters” (PORTO, 1999, p. 242), which may constitute the first steps towards seeing the foreign language subject as a committed and differentiated issue.

One last important point to be highlighted at this time is: what can foreign language teachers do to make good use of the foreign language(s) that they teach, so as to help students deal with the process of language learning and also with the fact that a foreign culture is producing meaning around them? As the English language is not as far from the Brazilian borders as it might be thought, many indicators of its presence are just around the corner. Educators might find in them a challenge to be faced: help students to tackle meanings beyond literality. In other words, analyze and discuss loan words, habits, customs, beliefs and other aspects and elements that are brought to Brazil from English speaking countries and from other countries as well. The starting questions to be developed and thought in class concern what they mean to the receptive culture, what they are substituting, what novelty they bring, what they are denying, asserting, erasing and so on.

It must be admitted that Brazil has many foreign elements in its language and culture; but what can not be forgotten, in first place, is where Brazil came from. It was never a “pure” country. It never had a pure language or a pure culture. Such facts only confirm that it is indeed necessary to make good use of the foreign elements that Brazil has, paying attention to (its) history, in order to teachers, students (the population in general) not to be mistaken about what is believed to be a “problem” in education and perceive what teaching a foreign language (and learning it) really is and involves.

Language and culture, then, are not only simply linked, but they are, as a matter of fact, inseparable elements, when human existence and life are concerned, as it is popularly believed, and this inseparability is also extended to the field of language teaching as well, despite several and different attempts not to acknowledge this fact. If language teaching continues to be developed the way it has been developed, it is not difficult to predict the future (and the result) of such teaching: failure in the learning and disrespect or indifference both towards the foreign language teacher and towards the school subject itself.

Hence, as both cultural approach in language teaching and the inclusion of the teaching of discourse in education are likely to be the first steps towards a language teaching and learning with a considerable level of seriousness, the importance of such association, in every possible way, is unquestionable, as cultural approach is meaningless without discourse (the teaching of discourse), which happens to be the motor plan to better understand the relationship between language and culture (with all the points that each of these two issues bring with them), for it (discourse) entails historicity, which is essential to the studying of meanings. Can foreign language teaching, then, really neglect such issues? Can students, then, be denied receiving such (cultural) teaching and information?

4 CHAPTER 3 – TEXTBOOK ANALYSIS AND CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

When the English language started to rise as an hegemonic language, it became common sense to believe that the nations of the world should know how to communicate in that language in order to establish “a good relationship” with the English speaking countries, but mostly with the USA, the powerful nation of the moment. At present, this situation has not changed, except for the fact that the number of people who claim that English is paramount in everyone’s life increased a great deal.

The emerging of the USA as an hegemonic country has had influence and a significant impact on the educational field, for many educational institutions appeared in the national territory and found a use on ideas that defend the “unquestionable” importance of a global language in people’s lives. Some of them, however, were, actually, aiming at profit. In other words, the existence of such languages contributes to the spread of language institutes, which may try to attract students by stating that English (in this particular case) is imperative both to their social and personal progresses, as issues like globalization, technology, economy, politics and culture are involved in this (dominant) existence – a discourse which results in economic profit to language institutions and publishers.

It can be perceived, then, that there is also an economic project behind the argument that English is a (primordial) factor that leads to social and personal successes, and, sometimes, an actual commitment with the teaching of the foreign language is put aside. It is also understood that major economic interests are related to the preservation of capitalism, based on first world models, led by the USA, which aims at the reproduction of the dominant ideology.

As it can be assumed, then, all these facts above did not improve the teaching of foreign languages in Brazil. Sometimes, the schools, the materials (schoolbooks) and the teaching methods do not exactly bring what they claim, promising that students will learn useful and efficient English in a matter of few months with great schoolbooks and attractive monthly fee.

Different institutions also try to justify their “efficiency” with the argument that they have “real activities”, dynamics in class and texts that promote learning in the best possible way, through innovative approaches. However, what would “real activities” be?! Are all the dynamics in class really useful?! And, if they are, to what extent are

they useful?! But, first of all, what do people understand for “dynamics”?! And, finally, how are these texts being discussed and analyzed in class?!

Firstly, “real activities” could be considered as all those practices developed in class which: a) may be typical from foreign countries; b) are not simply created to reproduce and practice a certain situation or to focus one particular grammatical element, but they are meaningful to the students; and which c) seek an actual learning of the language, instead of being limited to the mere memorization of grammatical or functional issues. However, the word “real” is significantly subjective, for there is not only one fixed and immutable standard of reality, but, obviously, the meaning of that word changes from person to person.

In addition, just as reality can not be accurately defined, it is evident that not all the dynamics used in class, which usually concern pair work, games, plays, songs and movie activities, etc., are useful, as some students may never see a reason in certain practices that were supposed to be regarded as “real ones”, seeing them only and simply as entertainment.

As for the text discussion, it is not unusual to see, at several schools, the adoption of the “grammar and translation” method, rather than a discursive approach, which is more meaningful for educational purposes, as it not only deals with grammar and translation, but it seeks to provide meaningful contexts to language items..

It is not difficult to find lectures about what is best in the teaching of English. In Brazil, there is a belief that, through the English language, people will be able to avoid being kept apart from society and will be able to ascend in life. In short, the message which is intended to be transmitted to society is the following: the English language is an important “tool” through which one will achieve social inclusion and social ascension.

However, part of this idea is a fallacy, for it hints that, only through the English language, success in life will inevitably be achieved. The book *English Today* is even more radical regarding the idea of social inclusion, for, according to it, “[...] it is vital to know English nowadays so that you can be part of society and participate of it as a real citizen” (DS 1)¹⁹. From this excerpt, it is not difficult to perceive that Arruda believes that a person can only be a “real citizen” if s/he knows English. From this point, it is possible to wonder about those people who are not seen as real citizens – what would

¹⁹ This excerpt will continue to be discussed in pages to come.

they be?! Are they “false” or “virtual” citizens simply because they do not know English?! If this is so, it would be correct to affirm that they can not participate of society or even be considered as a part of it. Social inclusion, then, would be a myth to those who do not know English, as that language would constitute the one and only valid knowledge so that someone can become a (real) citizen. Stating that English is the key to become a real someone is the same of stating that those who do not know that language do not have a real life and that those people are worthless to society or, if they have any value, that they are indescribably inferior to those who know English and who would be, then, “real people”.

From Arruda’s discourse, it can be understood that the simple knowledge on English comprises all the elements that define social inclusion. However, as we live in a capitalistic world, the importance attributed to the English language becomes a source of financial interest to different English institutions, also considering the popular belief that foreign languages are not learned at regular schools. The ideas that support private language institutions are completely different at elementary and secondary regular schools. Foreign languages, at regular schools, are regarded as trivial, as “something” without importance and that, as it is believed not to be possible to learn them at these institutions, people would have to study foreign languages at private institutions in order to efficiently learn them and, then, become “real citizens”. Many language institutions are not blind to such perspectives and this may be a reason for some schools take advantage of these myths, diffusing what they claim to be an efficient and real method, promising complete mastery of a particular foreign language.

It is indeed possible to achieve an insertion in certain fields of information and expand job opportunities through the learning of foreign languages, but achieving social ascension (and social inclusion) is a different matter. English is not a guarantee of a successful life; but it might be one way of improving someone’s life. As there are institutions that are not committed to an actual language teaching, an efficient learning of a language may never be achieved. Schools that have such position might, then, only help to diffuse fallacies and inculcate certain values and ideologies that may lead to submission and domination.

Hence, all these problems are actually closely linked to each other and they already seem to be part of the common sense, being embedded in people’s minds, who, sometimes, regard these issues as absolute truths. Having in mind the importance, the impact and the possible result(s) that these issues may have on the educational field, and

also the schoolbook importance when one is about to study a foreign language, an analysis and a discussion of two features, concerning foreign language teaching/learning, are of interest for this research: a) different contents and ideas concerning the relationship between language and culture, also considering all the secondary (but important) discussions that come with this main subject just mentioned: linguistic and cultural contacts, supremacy and “purity”, globalization and capitalism, etc., which may be in the schoolbook and, in a second moment, b) the observation of foreign language classes themselves in order to verify what has been taught in FLC and how it has been taught.

4.1 The schoolbook: introductory pages

The introduction of the analyzed book, addressed to the students, where it can be read “Apresentação”, which was written by the author, Cordélia Canabrava Arruda, states that English is a “universal language” and, then, presents some reasons why someone should learn it:

English has acquired the status of a “universal language”. In order to prove that, it is enough to pay attention to everything that surrounds you: *outdoors*, advertisements in general, shops, restaurants, magazines, etc. As it is so, it is vital to know English nowadays so that you can be part of society and participate of it as a real citizen²⁰. (DS 2)

From what is stated, she suggests that English is a global language because elements of this language (words) can be seen just around the corner. In order to prove her point, she affirms that English words can be seen in restaurants, in shops, in advertisements, on magazines and also on billboards. However, a great deal of African, Indian, Italian, Spanish and even Japanese words can be seen in everyday life as well, but none of them has been a universal language. The reasons that the author used to prove her point were (and are) significantly plain and superficial.

As it is known, the reasons that influenced in the global ascension of English are not simply attached to the presence of English words on magazines, shops and advertisements, but this stronger presence of English words in the national vocabulary is one of the consequences of an ephemeral dominant status. In this perspective, foreign words in a language can not even be characterized as an explanation about the supremacy of the English language and why Portuguese presents English words in its vocabulary.

In the last part of the argument, Arruda claims that it is essential to know English nowadays because this language would provide social inclusion to those who master it. She also states that people will only be able to become real citizens, and play a role in society, if they master English. In other words, everything would revolve around the English language – once a person masters it, this same person “automatically” ceases to be some kind of “second” or “third class citizen” in order to become a real citizen, that is, people will abandon the rank of underrated citizens and

²⁰ This excerpt can be found in the “Apresentação” of *English Today* – lines 1 to 5.

will acquire a full citizenship at the exact moment when they master English, starting, only from this point on, to play a role in society.

In addition, as this person masters English, that language will be the path that will lead that person to social and professional success: “[...] it is vital to know English nowadays so that you can be part of society and participate of it as a real citizen”²¹ (DS 3). In this perspective, it is possible to state that, as those who do not master that language are not “real citizens”, they will neither have any importance nor any role in society, as it was previously stated. They would be inferior to those who speak English – a biased assertion that clearly entails that some citizens are “better” than others, making social differences and hierarchical questions explicit.

Furthermore, such ideas are also a way of overvaluing foreign elements (people, language and culture) to the detriment of national values – it is not possible to become a Brazilian citizen until the moment a person learns the language spoken by the North American people. In fact, this could even be regarded as a kind of paradox: Brazilian people will not be treated as Brazilian citizens until the day they learn someone else’s language. This, then, is overvaluing the English language, culture and people. But an intriguing question emerges: how are some socially high-ranked Brazilians, who do not have any knowledge of the English language, treated? Those people are indeed considered Brazilian citizens. The fact is that those who do not have any financial means or power are treated as “something” without relevance for the country, but one of the explanations that are commonly provided for their exclusion as real citizens of this country is that they do not know English.

The idea that those who do not know English are not citizens can not correspond to reality, for, of course, every individual in a country must be a citizen, but the point is that there are those who have more rights than others and there is also the fact that a great part of the population do not know what their rights are and do not know how to practice their citizenship. For this reason, just participating in society is not enough, but it is important to understand society and its rules, at least minimally, so that people can start to play a sound role in it – this is also why studying discourse, instead of just a language, is an important goal in language teaching.

In addition, apart from being a limited view of reality, to believe or to state that social inclusion is the only reason to teach or to learn English does not constitute a fact,

²¹ This excerpt can be found in the “Apresentação” of *English Today* – lines 4 to 5.

for it is obvious that the simple knowledge on English does not necessarily supplies some basic needs, like food and housing. It is also a disputable idea to hint that the only reason for learning English is the existence of foreign words in different places of this nation. It is important to learn that language because it is, in fact, the language spoken worldwide at present, but it is obvious that there are further reasons for learning it.

One of these reasons is that English can be learned because someone identifies himself/herself with that particular language or with a certain community that speaks that language. Another reason is the fact that some jobs demand that knowledge. A different motivation to learn that language may come from the desire to be informed about different subjects and facts that are happening in different regions around the world or even because of simple reasons like, for example, certain groups of people that live according to a certain way of life, which can be achieved by the adoption of certain elements of that language and culture, such as hip hop, for instance.

According to Byram (1994, p. 11):

Some people learn other languages simply out of an interest in languages ranging from a passing curiosity to a technical linguistic fascination. Others may learn a language in order to communicate some day with people in another country. Still others learn for specific purposes: say a foreign language requirement or a need to gain a reading knowledge in a field of specialization.

Other reasons for learning a foreign language are that different people might feel attracted by the “unknown” or they may seek the increasing of their knowledge by learning other languages. Having in mind, then, the fact that the reasons for learning a language can vary greatly, it becomes evident that the insertion in certain fields of information is not the only reason for learning English, but it turns to be a possible consequence of that learning, as it might have been perceived by the examples formerly provided, and social inclusion is not a valid argument, then, to support the idea of why it is important to learn English or any other language.

As for the two last points about feeling attracted by the “unknown” and increasing knowledge, Rajagopalan (2003, p.67) states:

[...] concerning an “exotic” language and a “foreign” language [...], as for the former, our interest in studying it is restricted to a scientific curiosity — the pleasure in knowing the alien and the mythical — whereas with the latter we are compelled by the desire of widening our cultural horizons, of placing ourselves in a particular level in life [...]. (DS 4)

After presenting and defending her points about the English language as a universal language, Arruda tries to focus her arguments on the schoolbook itself. In order to convince the potential users of the book about the “singular value” that *English Today* holds, she presents reasons that may make explicit why her book is so important on the educational field - claiming that *English Today* is a “primordial partner” (DS 5) when it comes to English language teaching and learning.

Considering everything that she stated previously about the English language, it can be perceived that the author regards the book in question as a necessary tool to achieve social inclusion and that it consequently grants, to those who use it, the “title” of “real citizens”. She also states that the book presents dialogues and contexts that depict “real situations of Brazilian’s everyday life” and suggests the idea that people will achieve a more efficient learning of that foreign language through her book. In spite of the existence of these ideas, the book deals with the analysis of grammar rules: “From dialogues that present real situations of our everyday life, in order to, after that, analyze the rules that govern this idiom [...]” (DS 6). From that extract, it is clear that the book adopts a traditional approach; that is, it focuses grammar rules activities, presenting that common belief which states that a language can be learned by the simple analysis of its internal structures (grammar rules) – by simply understanding how the language works.

A similar standpoint is shared by Vera Simone²² (1987), who affirms that people initially learn a foreign language through teaching approaches that focus grammar rules and that people may neglect the study of those rules when they know how to use that foreign language, for, according to her, rules are learned to be disregarded. This author, as a matter of fact, establishes a parallel between the teaching/learning of grammar rules and the scaffolding of a building – they are “necessary in its construction but abandoned once the building is in use”.

Arruda and Vera Simone (Op. cit.) share, then, a similar belief about the teaching of grammar rules. They believe that a language is learned through traditional

²² Professor of Chinese and comparative politics at California State University in Fullerton.

approaches. However, unlike Vera Simone, who believes that a learner has to initially study grammar rules and, then, study something else, Arruda fails to mention what the next step of her book will be, after presenting and studying grammar rules. It is not possible to know if the book will continue to “reinforce” those rules or if it will abandon that kind of teaching approach in order to adopt a different one. The author does not mention whether she is going to work only with traditional approaches or not. She just mentions that the book deals with dialogues that bring “real-live English” and that depict “real Brazilians’ everyday life”.

Furthermore, the presentation of “real-live English”, used in “real situations of Brazilians’ everyday life”, loses its meaning as what is sought and performed is just the analysis of the linguistic system of the English language, that is, texts are just used as pretexts (to analyze the grammatical system rather than meanings). Both authors see language as an independent system that must be mastered.

As far as the methodological approach is concerned, it was noticed that the author used a discourse of activities in which the students could recognize situations that they supposedly face everyday in their lives, but the current teaching approach of the book just works with grammar rules in a different way – showing a discourse which promises innovation, when what is actually taught are those very rules that other books also emphasize. Ahead in that same paragraph, two paradoxes can be found in the author’s statement: “[...] you will find here a live, dynamic, practical English language, perfectly adapted to your real needs as a Brazilian student” (DS 7).

However, before pointing out the two paradoxes, it is interesting to highlight that, when the author says “you will find here”, it sounds as if her book brought something innovative and also something that certain other schoolbooks could be bereft of – supposedly an English language that is “alive” and that is “real”. This idea of innovation (or even singularity and uniqueness of the book) is conveyed because of the adverb “here”. It means that other books might not be as adequate as this one, which confirms that the author considers her book as the necessary tool to learn what she believes to be efficient English, making the students become “real citizens”. Moreover, it may well have been a move to sell that particular schoolbook.

This last point is strengthened considering the following: as Arruda’s book works with traditional teaching (analyzing grammar rules), what would her book have in order to be regarded as so unique and that other books would be bereft of? Would that be just the discourse of bringing situations that the students supposedly face in their

everyday lives (which was not actually true)?! If this is so, the innovation of the book could be seen as an explicitly false discourse – a move to sell a supposedly singular book and achieve, then, profit.

As for the two serious contradictions that appear in that paragraph, the first concerns the teaching approach(es) adopted by the book. Two different approaches are indeed mentioned in the introduction. Firstly, the author states that the traditional approach is adopted, as what is intended to be performed is the analysis of grammar rules: “*English Today* is a primordial partner. From dialogues that depict real situations of our everyday life, in order to, after that, analyze the rules that govern this idiom [...]”²³ (DS 8), but, then, she claims that the book will deal with an English language which is “alive”, which is “practical” and “dynamic”, a fact which makes the communicative approach appear in her speech, creating a conflict between two different approaches, for, as it is known, the communicative approach does not focus grammar rules to the same extent that the traditional approach does in its activities.

Despite the coexistence of these two approaches not to be impossible to exist, they can not be regarded as if they were a single and common approach, and the paradoxical impact of such position by the book is obvious, even because the activities that this book in question brings only concern the traditional approach and not the communicative approach.

As for the second contradiction, it is caused by words that express different facts: “[...] dialogues (in English) that present real situations of our everyday life [...] you will find here a live English language [...] perfectly adapted to your real needs as a Brazilian student” (DS 9). Considering the idea that the kind of English that is presented in the referred book is “a real English”, that is, a kind of English that is “alive” and “original” (used by natives), how can this English be adapted to the Brazilian reality?! How can it be, at the same time, “original” and adapted, considering that something adapted is something that is not original?! But, most importantly, does anything “original” really exist?!

As it was discussed in the introduction of this research work, originality does not exist – even inside one same territory. There is not the English language, the Portuguese language, etc., but there are varieties of languages. In addition, even if something original existed, an adaptation would be an imperfect attempt of recreation or

²³ This excerpt can be found in the “APRESENTAÇÃO” of *English Today* – lines 7 to 9.

reproduction of originality. So, it is paradoxical to say that a “real-live English language” is “perfectly adapted to your real needs as a Brazilian student”. Furthermore, what does the author consider “the real needs of Brazilian students” to be?! From all the analyses, it was perceived that, for her, analyzing grammar rules is all that Brazilian students need.

Finally, the name of the book itself, because of the word “Today”, presents, at least, three different possible meanings: a) “English nowadays” – its role and relevance in the present time; b) “its contemporaneous use” – the old English will not be studied in the book, the literary written English used in Shakespeare’s time, for example, but the spoken or written English used in this XXI century is the focus and c) “learn this language now, without delay” – it may be a reference to the book itself, to its supposed efficiency in making people learn “real” English today, not tomorrow or in another time of the future, a task that perhaps only this book could supposedly accomplish.

Summing up, the introduction of the book is divided in two parts: a) the first two paragraphs deal with the English language situation nowadays, as the dominant universal language of the present time, in spite of none of those paragraphs explain accurately and sufficiently how English achieved such status. In that same paragraph, there is an attempt of answering the question why people should learn that language, which turned out to be not only insufficient, but the answer to that point also contained biased and elitist ideas; and b) the last paragraph is a brief presentation of the book, defending the idea that *English Today* is a “primordial” and, consequently, an “efficient” schoolbook. However, the ideas in that paragraph were also questionable in face of the several methodological inconsistencies found and discussed just above.

4.2 The lessons

By the analysis of the texts in all the analyzed units of the book (units 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12 and 14), many similarities among them could be found concerning what the author called “dialogues that depict real situations of our everyday life” (DS 10). However, firstly, it is important to point out that not all of the units and lessons of the book brought dialogues as it was claimed in its introduction, but they were found only in units 4, 5, 6, 13 and 15, as it can be seen in the “appendix” section of this Master thesis.

In the other units and lessons, the following situation could be seen: unit 1 – written text (describing objects); unit 2 – brief sentences (questions and answers); unit 3 – brief sentences (orders); unit 7 – a six-line-text; unit 8 – brief sentences; units 9 and 10 – descriptions; unit 11 – simple questions and short answers; units 12 and 14 – rote descriptions and unit 16 – text. It was verified, then, that this schoolbook did not focus dialogues as its primordial characteristic, as it had been stated by the author in the introduction. Conversely, the dialogues were found just on a few units of the book.

Analyzing the kind of approach/methodology of the units and how the texts were structured, it could be perceived that they did not have a meaningful reading purpose, that is, they did not bring useful information about a subject, so that one could easily work on the students’ reading comprehension. Rather, they just anticipated the grammar rules to be practiced along a specific unit.

Units 1 and 5 were considerably similar. The text in unit 1 described different things inside a classroom – what was on, under and beside the teacher’s table; the color and place of objects, etc. The activities in this unit, which was a review of some subjects taught in the previous grade, had a confusing order – it was clear that the only aim of the exercises in this part of recapitulation was simply to practice grammar structures. As for the text in unit 5, it was just like the text in unit 1, although it was not about a classroom. Rather, it was a description of a family, from whose picture every character was described (who they were, how old they were and their position on the picture). The activities in this unit were only based on the text; they just practiced the possessive case, which had already been approached in unit 1, which was specifically directed to the development of a recapitulation of different subjects taught in the previous grade.

Units 2 and 3 were similar too. Both were significantly short (each had three pages) and both practiced a specific grammar rule, found in their respective texts – unit

2 “trains” “short answers”, whereas unit 3 focuses “the imperative case”. In the former, simple questions and answers like - “Can you play the guitar?” – “No, I can’t.”; - “Can you swim?” – “Yes, I can.”, are taken as the text of the lesson. They are considered dialogues, because some characters answer “Yes, I can” or “No, I can’t”. As a matter of fact, they are not dialogues because there is not an actual conversation being established among characters. The text is not a conversation because it is not possible to know who asks the “Can you...” questions. The basic issue here is that, in order to establish a conversation, the presence of a speaker and its interlocutor is necessary – in the referred unit, however, the questions just appear as sentences, bereft of someone who can ask them, appearing under or beside the picture of the character who answers those questions.

As for the latter, it is restricted to the presentation of different warning signs that express orders. Above each picture there is a short sentence expressing that order shown on the picture: “Don’t run!”; “Don’t smoke!; No smoking!”; “Don’t disturb!”; etc. The central matter here is not the question of speakers and interlocutors anymore, but it concerns another important element: a context. In fact, there is a lack of contexts in those pictures expressing orders. As for the exercises in this unit, some affirmative sentences, supposed to be written as negative sentences (negative orders), can be seen: “Look now. – Don’t look now!”; “Go there. – Don’t go there!”, etc. – an overtly mechanical practice.

In unit 6, the possessive case is exercised once again²⁴. This unit deals with “whose”, as an interrogative pronoun, with possessive adjectives and with possessive pronouns. In order to introduce the grammar subject, the main “text” (a dialogue) depicts a supposedly “common” family situation in which several objects are spread all over the house and the mother, the main character of the story, keeps asking to whom those objects belong.

The first questionable idea on that text is that the mother does not know who owns many of the objects that appear along the story. The story starts and ends with the mother asking who the owner of a particular object is. There are fourteen (14) objects in the story and she ignores who owns ten (10) of them, including her own comb. It is not being said, however, that the mother should have known every object that appeared in the story, in face of the possibility of making rhetorical questions just to “inform” that

²⁴ This subject, as it could be seen, had already been studied in chapters 1 and 5.

something is not right, but the point is that this situation happened as an excuse to the presence of the question “Whose comb/kite/bracelet is this?” – allowing, then, the practice of a particular grammar structure.

Another point is that, in the lesson, the mother is always complaining; she is always nervous. As a matter of fact, the story starts depicting her in a hysterical way – screaming and with her two arms in the air. Her rage is clearly depicted when she squeezes the toothpaste in anger and, then, punishes her children sending them to their bedroom until she says otherwise. These facts, then, raise important points to be asked: What would such behavior mean to the students? Does this situation really happen in Brazilians’ everyday life?

Strict, complacent, indulgent, cranky parents, etc. can be seen in any culture of the world. So, a similar situation can be seen in the national territory, and this is exactly the point that makes a discussion about that situation to get relevance in foreign language classes. A feasible point, then, to be explored in that textual situation regards the different kinds of education that parents pass on to their children and also the question of parental aggressiveness, based on different cultural realities.

However, as the book does not save any part of its activity section for these discussions, the use of studying that depicted situation might get meaningless if the teacher himself/herself does not raise these cultural issues. There is no use in studying grammar rules always overtly, pushing away discussions that may be interesting to be performed, even because grammar rules can be indirectly taught during class discussions. But, as the approach of the book is clearly concerned with structural teaching, the (exhaustive) use of studying that situation is primarily attached to answering activities about possessives, and the text becomes, then, a pretext to study the possessive case with the façade of being a real situation that the Brazilian students have to face in their everyday lives.

The next points to be discussed, seen in unit 7, regard its six-line-text. Apart from its considerably short length, it has a kind of narrative that may get confusing – because of the way how all the information on the text was disposed and, secondly, because of the verb tense used in its elaboration:

Mrs. Anderson is at the supermarket.

She wants to buy some coffee, some tea, some potatoes, rice, beans, garlic, onions, oil and salt.

There isn’t any milk in the fridge. There is no butter either.

She decides to write a memo.

Here is her list:

Below the text, a picture of “Mrs. Anderson’s” shopping list can be seen. As it can be perceived, the story starts with “Mrs. Anderson” at the supermarket and, then, the narrator of the story makes explicit what she intended to do there (1st and 2nd lines). After that, the story tells the character’s situation at home (before going to the supermarket) – as “Mrs. Anderson” did not have some items in her fridge, she wrote a memo and went to the supermarket (3rd, 4th and 5th lines).

Simply put, the story is divided in two moments: a) when the character was in the supermarket (lines 1 – 3), and b) when she was at home, before going to the supermarket (lines 4 – 6), which may be rather confusing to some readers, as Mrs. Anderson might be expected to be firstly at home and then at the supermarket. In the story, was “Mrs. Anderson” having some kind of flashback while she was on shopping, as she was firstly in some part of the future and, then, back in the past?! It does not seem so. The fact is that the events of the story were inverted, as it was made clear above.

As for the second point, it can be perceived that only one verb tense (simple present) was used along the whole story. Any kind of narrative that seeks to be regarded as meaningful, and not seen as “forced narratives”, has to dispose different verb tenses along the story. In this particular case, the past tense is imperative to avoid incoherence: “Mrs. Anderson is at the supermarket” (line 1); “She decides to write a memo” (at this particular moment, the character was at home – line 5). As the latter sentence also points to now, because of the verb *decides*, how could the character be at home, writing a memo, and be at the supermarket at the same time? If she is at the supermarket *now*, the memo, then, would have already been written. As it is so, it can be understood that what was sought with that text was simply to exercise grammatical subjects and to teach vocabulary.

Apart from these shortcomings, the title of the text: “Things we need in the kitchen” – is not adequate to the events that are depicted. By that title, people may think that the text will deal with different objects that can be of some use in the kitchen, like cutlery, oven, fridge, etc. However, the reading of the text does not confirm that possibility. The text is about a character that goes on shopping and whose only purpose was buying food.

Summing up the problems in the text, it could be mentioned that: the narrative/the events of the story is/are inverted; the story does not have an introduction neither an ending – it just has the development, one single verb tense along the whole story and the title of the story does not fit with the events that are depicted in it. As for the exercises in this unit, one will only find rote exercises: to turn affirmative sentences into negative sentences using “any”, and other exercises that demand the students to use “there is” or “there are” in different sentences of similar nature, activities that prepare the students to create or organize sentences that answer the purposes of formal writing, but which are unlikely to have any meaning on how to use that foreign language effectively and efficiently in the students daily lives. The students are, then, “trained” to be some kind of machines of grammar correction, that is, they are taught how to correct sentences, but not how to use the language.

The next unit, number 8, brings another “text” - “Plans for the weekend”, with brief sentences, which, when put together, should be regarded as a text, and 5 pictures describing the plans for the weekend of a family (“the Millers”). This kind of “text” does not allow one to discuss a particular subject, for the text does not contribute to the development of the students’ communicative abilities, once the subject that is approached deals, in a very superficial way, with something trivial and explicitly simple. Here are examples of sentences that can be seen in the text and that describe quite well how it is structured: “The Millers are going to spend the weekend on the beach”; “They are going to camp”; “The children are anxious”, etc.

Apart from that, this story mixes simple and short sentences, which only describe what the family is going to do, with the speeches (incomplete “conversations”) of two (2) children (Mr. and Mrs. Miller’s children), who only speak at two moments, depicted in two pictures. The first character to speak is a boy, who asks his sister to look at a woman who is windsurfing in the sea and, after that, he tells his mother that he wants to practice windsurf too, but there is no answer to any of his remarks. The second moment when the characters speak is when the boy asks his sister if she is going to swim, who does not answer her brother’s question. She just asks her father if he allows her to go for a swim, but her father does not answer her question either. What happens, then? Clearly, just like the story previously discussed, this unit has an incomplete story – questions are asked, but there are no answers to them.

Whereas “Things we need in the kitchen” had a lack of events, a lack of introduction and ending, “Plans for the weekend” brings questions that will not be

answered – some stories abruptly end in this book. As for the exercises in this section, they are also quite simple and repetitive. They only try to reproduce and retain grammar structures in the students' minds: a) “Follow the pattern and make the necessary substitutions: I) – “you/club” – “Where are you going?”; “I’m going to the club”. II) “you/supermarket” – “Where are you going?”; “I’m going to the supermarket”; b) “Turn affirmative sentences into interrogative sentences”; etc.

Unit 9 has a clear example of rote “text”. Like several other texts in the book, the text in this unit is just an excuse to introduce and practice a specific grammar structure. The situation in the story “Who is your friend?” is repetitive and redundant, except for the last strip – the last two pictures, which are quite out of context in relation to the other pictures drawn before them.

Throughout the whole story, there is a character introducing a friend in each strip. The main character(s) of each situation use(s) the same text, the same words that were used in other pictures, except for the pronouns used to introduce someone, and the “friend(s)” that was/were being introduced by the main character(s) repeat(s) everything already said by the other characters that introduced him/her: - “He is my friend. I like him and he likes me”; - “Yes, I’m his friend. I like him and he likes me”. In a different moment, it can be seen: - “She’s my friend. I like her and she likes me”; - “Yes, I’m her friend. I like her and she likes me”, which makes explicit a clear attempt of using personal pronouns and adjective possessives in order to fix them in the students' minds.

That situation repeats itself in two other pictures. The third picture brings three boys, and one of them introduces his friends and, then, one of those two boys who were introduced “confirms”, repeats the words that were said by his friend, but using different pronouns in his speech: - “They are my friends...”; - “We are his friends...”. The fourth picture equally depicts the situation mentioned above, but, this time, the picture shows a group of girls.

Finally, the last two pictures focus two situations that are not even similar to the previous ones, which actually turn to be an abrupt cut with the purpose of the “stories” depicted previously (introduction of friends), revealing a lack of coherence, as it deals with two completely different situations and themes in the very same story. On the fifth picture there are two people (a father and his son) swimming. The boy asks: - “Dad, do you like to swim?”. And his father answers: - “I love it!”. This situation is not related with any introduction of friends. Actually, it is more connected to swimming and, for this reason, it could be placed in a different section, like unit 11, for example, whose

main topic is “sports”. And, on the last picture, a little girl can be seen kissing her mother and saying: - “I love you, mom!”, but her mother does not say anything (the typical situation already discussed in “Plans for the weekend”).

Then, these two last pictures do not correspond to the topic of the unit “Who is your friend?”. It may be implicit that a father/mother may be one of the friends that his/her son/daughter may have, but the point is that, after explicit situations of introduction of “friends”, two other situations, which do not fit with what had been previously depicted, are inserted in the story, creating, then, an abrupt and clear contextual incoherence.

As it can be assumed just by reading that “story”, the only concern of the activity section in that chapter was related to the development of exercises about pronouns. Just like the “text”, the activities were very repetitive. One example that could be provided is the activity that requires the student to “follow the pattern and fill the blanks with the appropriate pronoun”: “I like you and you like me”; “You like me and I like _____”; “They like us and I like _____”. Another situation is the activity that demands the students to “follow the example and substitute” some underlined words for object pronouns: “I like to swim – “I like it”; “I love my parents – I love _____”; “John loves Mary – John loves _____”.

Such activities are called “drills” and their only aim is fixing grammar structures in the students’ minds. They are based on the Behaviorist approach, developed by Skinner (apud Silveira, 1999), who believed that human beings learn through conditioning. According to the Behaviorist theory, human beings can be “trained” through the scheme “Stimulus – Response – Reinforcement”, meaning that learners react to stimuli that are provided, reinforcing, then, the learning²⁵.

Unit 11 is very similar to unit 2. Both bring simple questions and answers as their “texts”. However, while the text, in unit 2, deals with random “can you...” questions: “Can you swim?”; “Can you cook?”, etc. and focused short answers to those questions: “No, I can’t” or “Yes, I can”, the text in unit 11, deals with sports as its main subject. In the latter, more elaborate conversations can be seen. Unlike unit 2, there are characters asking questions. Here, the questions do not simply “appear” out of nowhere as they did in unit 2. This time, a conversation is held among different characters. However, there are still certain shortcomings in this text/conversation.

²⁵ More detailed information on this theory may be seen in Silveira (1999) and Ommagio (1986).

The first issue is that the conversation that takes place cannot be regarded as “natural”, for every character ignores everything – they keep asking each other who like(s) a different sport. It is as if no one actually knew each other or as if they were playing a game among themselves in order to discover what sport one practices or likes. Taking these two possibilities into account, perhaps it could be explained why most of the questions and answers are so repetitive: - “Do you like soccer, Shirley?”, - “No, I don’t like it. I like athletics”. And, then, the character who asked that first question to “Shirley” says: - “I like soccer, but I don’t like athletics. Who likes handball?”. Then, “Shirley” says: - “I don’t, but Claudia does”. And the characters continue with these kinds of questions: - “Do you like rollerskating, Paul?”; - “Who likes basketball?”.

There is a moment in this conversation when two characters ask questions about three not very common sports to be seen here in Brazil: - “He (Edward) only likes tennis. Who likes baseball?”; - “Peter does. Do you know who likes sailing?”. The point to be thought as regards this matter is: how many Brazilian students, who may use the book in focus, take a fancy for tennis, sailing or baseball, or actually practice any (or all) of those sports, especially baseball, which is a typical North-American game?

In another part of the conversation, one of the characters asks: - “Well, well, who wants to play soccer? Soccer! Not football!”. Considering that that character wanted to play soccer and not football, as he himself said, it means that someone in that group of people knew how to play American football. It also may mean that an American character could be in that group. Perhaps all of them were Americans. Or perhaps someone who had learned that game was in that group, not necessarily an American. But, as the story does not mention anything about these possibilities, it is not possible to know that. The important point to be discussed here is that the story raises a difference between two games – soccer and American football – and the teacher has to deal with that fact. S/he has to be able (and prepared) to explain that difference to his/her students, which may not just be a difference about the rules of those two games, how those games work, but the difference to be explained at this point is also a difference between two different cultures – the Brazilian and the American culture. As the football game is not practiced here in Brazil, as it is not part of this society, the

raising of this point, in a book that claims to be concerned with “real situations of Brazilians’ everyday life”, can be questionable²⁶.

However, as this issue is a fact that can be seen in several other books, this situation turns to be a clear example of the importance of cultural issues in foreign language classrooms and also concerning the formation (education) of the teachers. Such issues have to be explained in classroom in order to the students not to be mistaken or even confused about a subject, culture or people. Does the analyzed book, then, deal with “real situations of our everyday life”, as the author claimed? Is that book “perfectly adapted to your real needs as a Brazilian student”, as it was stated in its introduction? As for the activities in that unit, just like in unit 2, several rote exercises (drilling) can be seen – they just demand the students to complete sentences with a “tag-answer”: “Are you a student?” – “Yes, _____”; “Is your name Lucy?” – “No, _____”. This kind of activity, then, is not much efficient to the learning of a language. They are efficient to practice grammar structures and help memorization.

Finally, units 12 and 14 are also considerably similar in the way they dispose their respective texts. There are pictures in both of them and, below each picture, there is a sentence which explains it. Unit 12, whose text is called “What can you count?”, deals with countable and uncountable nouns. Its text, just like many others throughout the analyzed book, is very repetitive. The exact same situation of a particular object is repeated with different other objects, as disposed below:

“There is a lot of coffee in this cup. It is full.”, and then, there is a picture of a cup full of coffee above that sentence. Beside this sentence, there is a picture of another cup of coffee, but now, it is half empty and, below it, the following sentence describing that picture can be read: “There is not much coffee in this cup. There is little coffee in it.” Then, beside that second picture and sentence, there is a third picture with an empty cup and the following sentence below it: “There is no coffee in this cup. It’s empty”.

Equal occurrences of this fact can be seen with different objects: a basket with/without apples; a jar with/without water; a box with/without coins and a wallet with/without money (instances of drilling). Then, after that “text”, there is the activity section, which demands the students to fill blanks with “much” or “many”; with “little” or “few”, and to fill blanks with a tag question: “Chris lives here _____?”, an activity

²⁶ That is also why foreign language teachers have to be “history teachers” as well, that is, it is important to know, at least basically, different issues on the history of that country, culture and language that is taught, rather than just knowing systemic or functional issues.

that was based on some short questions (“You can’t count liquids, can you?”; “You can count apples, can’t you?”) that appeared before the pictures of the text discussed above.

Unit 14, whose text is called “Who does what?”, is similar to unit 12. However, it is not about countable and uncountable nouns. It deals with different professions. This unit contains pictures of different professionals and, below each one of them, there is a description of that picture: “Dayse Kendal is a teacher. She teaches Geography”; “Louis Phillips is a dentist. He fixes teeth”; “Paul Mackenzie is an astronaut. He makes space trips”.

An interesting point to be noticed is the following: considering that this book is “adapted to the real needs of the Brazilian students”, why, in many different lessons/units, do the characters have foreign names? It is not likely that foreign names are a need to Brazilians (students or not), and it is not likely either that the presence of characters with foreign names can help somehow in the learning of that language that is being studied. Then, it is important to ask that same question again: does *English Today* really dispose an English language which is “real”, which is “alive”, which is supposedly spoken by native Americans, and which is, at the same time, “totally” [sic] fit to the needs of Brazilian students? As for the activities in this unit, they a) demand the students to match the name of different professions with their correct descriptions; b) to rewrite different sentences, putting them in the third person of the singular and c) to fill some blanks with the name of a particular profession which is being shown in a picture.

As it could be perceived, “English Today” has many methodological inconsistencies, when its lessons and teaching approach(es) is(are) compared with what is claimed in its “Apresentação”. In order to prove this point some final serious contradictions, which can be seen in a section called “PRESSUPOSTOS PEDAGÓGICOS”²⁷, in the three last pages of the book, were saved in order to be inserted here after the discussion of the above mentioned issues.

The first paragraph of that section clearly states and reassures that idea, which was just hinted in the introduction – “you will find here...” (DS 11), that this book is a necessary tool to learn English: “This set has, as its main aim, the presentation of a material that is not just efficient, but which is, at the same time, pleasant and totally fit to fulfill Brazilian students’ needs” (DS 12). Different shortcomings can be seen in this

²⁷ This section can be seen in the APPENDIX section of this Master Thesis.

first paragraph. The first matter is that the book places itself as a serious, committed and efficient book, but it does not dispose of enough facts to support such position, which can also be perceived by the statement: “This set has, as its main aim to present a material that is not just efficient [...]” (DS 13). In addition, the supposed efficiency of this book would be ascertained because its main aim is “[...] to present a material that is not just efficient, but which is, at the same time, pleasant, being totally fit to fulfill Brazilian students’ needs” (DS 14), which would explain the idea that, apart from being efficient, this schoolbook is concerned with the student as a person and with his/her learning process.

This idea is more clearly stated in the second paragraph: “It is not possible to get anywhere in the teaching of any subject if all possible needs of the student are not analyzed” (DS 15). That is why this book, which is supposedly concerned in analyzing all possible needs of the students, as if it were possible in first place, is believed to be efficient, easy, pleasant to be used and, at the same time, “totally fit to Brazilian students’ needs”, as it is claimed in the book itself.

By such assertions, the book raises another important point, which is: if the students do not learn the foreign language focused so “efficiently” in the material, it is because they were neither competent nor responsible enough to learn that language. It means that the students, with their effort, or, in this case, “lack of effort”, are the ones to be blamed for not learning English. Neither the book nor its approach(es) should be blamed.

However, it is likely that, if the students succeed in learning that foreign language, it will be (in part or perhaps totally) because of the approach of the book. At a second moment of the “Pressupostos Teóricos”, the book, in order to explain the teaching approach that it adopts, delineates some information about “syllabus”, which, according to the book, would be a program of language teaching in which the content is emphasized. “A “syllabus” is always very explicit and has to be the foundations of a foreign language teaching schoolbook” (p. II). (DS 16)

After explaining what a “syllabus” is, the book outlines a brief history about the foreign language teaching, considering the presence and the adoption of some “syllabus” approaches in the foreign language teaching, in order to explain their importance in language teaching. Then, the following passage can be read:

It is obvious that, in order to be perfect, a *syllabus* could not only be *grammatical*. There should be compatibility between grammar and conventions of language use, as grammatical form and grammatical use are not the same. Such kind of grammatical teaching does not fulfill the needs for a complete language learning (p.III). (DS 17)

The first point to be disputed about this excerpt above is: does “a perfect” approach/syllabus to be adopted in class or does a “complete learning” of a language (either foreign or national) really exist? Obviously not. The second point is: if an approach which is concerned only with grammatical rules is not enough for students to achieve a “complete learning” of a foreign language, it would be interesting to know why this book only focuses usage, rather than the use of that foreign language, or a possible relationship between them.

Curiously, in spite of the fact that *English Today* recognizes the importance and the efficiency of a teaching approach that is not only concerned with grammar rules, it only adopts the systematic teaching – the traditional approach – as its main basis, a fact that became clear by the discussion of the analyzed units, but it could be also perceived by the following excerpt: “We will not necessarily be teaching the grammar of the language, but its structures. It is obvious that we cannot know a language if we do not know its *grammatical syllabus*” (p. IV). (DS 18)

This assertion suggests that it is not possible to know any language if someone does not know the “grammatical syllabus” of that language; that is, its grammar rules, proving, then, the point that *English Today* is actually interested in the teaching of grammar rules, even because what would the structures of a language be if not the grammar rules of that language?! Then, the book supposedly ignores that linguistic structures are actually the (grammar) rules that compose a particular language. *English Today* is right in asserting that one cannot know a language if this person ignores “everything” regarding its system, but the point is that, in spite of this knowledge of undeniable value to the learning of any language, what cannot be put aside is the importance of discourse in learning. Grammar rules and lexicon are useless if the meaning is not given the necessary attention in language teaching/learning, for, as Bakhtin (2004, p. 49) states: “[...] if we are blind to the meaning of a word, we lose the word itself, which gets, thus, limited to its physical reality, along with the physiological process of its production. A word is just a word because of its meaning” (DS 19).

It is interesting to notice that the book states that it does not intend to teach English grammar rules and, right after that, at the same paragraph, it states that a

language can not be learned if one does not know the rules of that language. The introduction of the book also states that it follows a traditional approach. The book, as a whole, then, contradicts itself several times.

Finally, at a third moment of the theoretical designs (“Pressupostos Teóricos”), the book, once again, states that, in the beginning of the process of learning a language, it is important to learn the rules of that language, but some degree of control has to be established in order to learn those rules, listing, then, three points that would constitute that “degree of control” when learning grammar rules. However, only two of those degrees will be discussed here, once they are very similar and controversial points.

According to the book, “It is widely believed today that the task of acquiring a language is also acquiring its grammatical system, however, presenting explicit controls, such as: a) teaching simpler structures before that more complex ones are taught and b) present regular cases before irregular ones” (DS 20). (p. IV).

However, according to the language acquisition theory, when a child, for example, is learning a language, this child is exposed to different language structures at a time – both simple and complex structures. But what has to be understood is that the process of learning a first language (a native language) is, of course, quite different when one is learning a second language, for the structures of the first (native) language are likely to interfere at the moment of learning another language.

Thus, as initial learners may not have any vocabulary on the second language, it is more profitable for them if simpler structures come firstly. So, this point of learning simpler structures may be more attached to the learning of a foreign language than to a native language. But, above anything else, what matters at this time (and what makes sense) to children, or to anyone involved in the process of learning a language, is exactly the production of meaning by the use of several discourses which constitute this process and which comprise the combination of contexts, language and interlocutors.

This situation of firstly teaching simpler structures is commonly seen in the Brazilian educational context. At many schools, for example, teachers use to teach the verb to be, the present tense, the present continuous, the past tense and only then the future tense – in this exact order. But does it really have to be like that? Is the present tense more “easily” learned than those other tenses? Is the future tense the most difficult

tense to be studied and learned? Another point is: what would define an easy and a difficult structure and how could they be sorted, presented and studied in class?²⁸

Douglas Brown (1994, p.350), for example, in his book “Teaching By Principles – an interactive approach to language pedagogy”, does talk about this “explicit control” that teachers have to have when teaching grammar rules. However, he does not mention anything about presenting “easy” structures and, then, difficult ones to the students. What he does say is:

If too much grammar focus is forced on to beginning learners, you run the risk of blocking the acquisition of fluency skills. At this level, grammatical focus is helpful as an occasional “zoom lens” with which we zero in on some aspects of language that is currently being practiced, but not helpful if it becomes the major focus of class work. At the advanced level, grammar is not necessarily “more important” [...] but rather, it is less likely to disturb communicative fluency. [...] Students who are non-literate or who have no formal education background may find it difficult to grasp the complexity of grammatical terms and explanations. Highly educated students, on the other hand, are cognitively more receptive to grammar focus and may insist on error correction to help refine their already fluent skills.

In addition, in spite of the explicit teaching of grammar rules be more “adequate” and required in advanced levels, this author warns that “too much abstract generalization about usage and not enough real-live language use (in classroom) can be deadly for adults”(BROWN, 1994, p. 94), who usually tend to hold on to rules, and for advanced learners. Summing up Brown’s arguments, the study of grammar rules does have its place in foreign language classes, but the point is that they are not the main focus on classes. Brown (1994, p.114) even provides an additional argument about this issue, believing that

[...] **you** are interested in grammar because that is where some of your training has been, but you don’t need to make budding Ph.D.s in linguistics out of your students! Overt grammatical explanation has its place, in the wings, if you will, as a prompter of sorts, but not as the dominant focus of student attention.

Hence, *English Today*, as a foreign language teaching book that claims to teach real and efficient English, turns to be dubious, because of all the shortcomings discussed so far – the contradictions, the biased assertions and hinted ideas, the incomplete and

²⁸ The difference between simple and complex sentences are to be considered under different values which are not going to be deeply discussed, as such discussions do not constitute a major concern for this research.

sometimes incoherent texts, the many rote activities, etc. As for this last point, Brown (1994, p.18) states that:

Rote learning—taking in isolated bits and pieces of information that are not connected with one’s existing cognitive structures—has little chance of creating long-term retention. Children are not good acquirers of language [...] because they associate sounds, words, structures, and discourse elements with that which is relevant and important in their daily quest for knowledge and survival.

Considering this argument, it is not acceptable that *English Today* places the responsibility of success or failure in learning English simply on the student, considering that the book provides many rote exercises and several other disputable issues. There are indeed many different factors involved in (foreign) language learning process. The students are not the only ones who play a role on this issue. As Almeida Filho (1993) discusses in his book “Dimensões comunicativas no ensino de línguas”, different factors like a) the teacher’s teaching approach; b) the student’s learning approach; c) the kind of approach of the schoolbook; d) student’s affective filter; e) teacher’s affective filter, etc. have to be considered in formal (foreign) language learning/teaching situations²⁹, where, depending on the kind of approach, languages can be learned or acquired.

However, such issues are, sometimes (or many times), taken for granted or are ignored by many different teachers, authors, schools, schoolbooks, etc. *English Today* is not the only book with inconsistencies. There are indeed many other books like the one in focus, as, for example, the ones analyzed by Marisa Grigoletto (apud CORACINI, 2003, p. 351 – 361).

The first point that Grigoletto discussed was that the books she analyzed focused the foreign culture, in spite of being books that were written by Brazilians and for Brazilians, that is, Brazilian authors developed, created those books and directed them specifically to Brazilian students, just like *English Today* supposedly was; however, those books did not depict the Brazilian reality as their main subjects. What was seen throughout the lessons were: few Brazilian characters and a colonial discourse. They just seemed to overvalue the American culture, language and people. According to Grigoletto (cf. CORACINI, 2003, p.355 e 356):

²⁹ Almeida Filho disposes this information in a chart, which can be seen on page 12 of the book mentioned above.

The most common characteristic is the random presence of Brazilian characters. The contents, however, are not presented from the specific point of view of the Brazilian people. If that were the case, the schoolbook could help the Brazilian learner to develop a specific perspective to their reflexions about foreign language learning. (DS 21)

It is interesting to point out a disturbing case that appeared in one of those books analyzed by Grigoletto (op cit), which depicted a kind of “common place” to different characters. This author noticed that differentiated perspectives (of Brazilians and of foreigners) were not presented when approaching different themes and texts. According to her (Ibid. p.356), “Particular perspectives (neither Brazilian’s perspectives nor foreign people’s perspectives, for example) are not presented concerning the approach of the subjects in the units and the texts of the books, nor even the construction of a particular place to Brazilians is frequent” (DS 22).

In one of the analyzed stories, there were two characters – a Brazilian girl, who lived in the USA, and another character of Hispanic origin – who were completely integrated to the American society, who had the same habits and behaviors and who shared the same beliefs – even their social concerns were identical. By this example above, it is clear that the book transmits the discourse of equality and homogeneity among nations. However, equality, homogeneity and neutrality, a third value that appeared later in the books that Grigoletto analyzed, are values that are not possible to be found when two or more different worlds (nations, cultures, etc.) undergo comparison. In fact, not even within the same nation there is homogeneity.

The English language is mostly represented as a natural object of communication and transmission of messages. [...] the perspective of neutrality of a language also plays a role in the construction of the unit, for, when represented as a homogeneous, unified and uniform object, the language becomes a feature accessible to everyone in equal measure, allowing perfect communication (Ibid. p.357). (DS 23)

It is obvious that perfect communication among different nations do not exist. It is clear that such discourses are crossed by other messages, which, just as one example that could be mentioned, can point to the already discussed settler’s rhetoric. As Grigoletto (Ibid. p.357) asserts, “In the colonial discourse, the denial of differences is part of the rhetoric of the colonizer’s discourse, for it creates an effect of decreasing the distance between colonizer and colonized and an alleged approximation” (DS 24). Such messages are devious because they are a way of inculcating biased ideas about the

foreign language, culture and people that are being studied and, at the same time, about one's national language, contributing, then, to the reproduction of stereotypes, for people may be lead to believe that certain foreign countries are models to be followed.

Hence, this situation clearly depicts what can be seen in different foreign language schoolbooks. This is a reality that is more concerned with the spread of hegemonic ideals and aims than with educational purposes themselves, creating, then, new adepts to certain foreign languages and countries.

4.3 Class observation

This part contains a detailed record of all that was performed and seen during the class observation period. It also brings some particular commentaries which aim at clarifying specific parts and moments of the above mentioned period.

1st day – 13/02/2007

The teacher started the class at 10:15a.m., playing a track of a CD, whose subject concerned Formula 1, with the title “Who will lead the formula one championship this year?”, but before actually playing the track, the students were given a small sheet of paper with the correspondent transcript of that track so that they could read it while they listened to the text on CD. After the track was played, the teacher repeated the listening, but this turn he played sentence by sentence, translating one by one to the students.

During this activity, the students complained about the narrow space left in the text to translate the sentences. The teacher, then, said that they should translate each sentence on their notebooks, “[...] even because we will do this every class. Some texts will be longer and others will be shorter” (DS 25), he said. Along this observation period, whenever listening activities were performed, the teacher used to stop his flow of translation in order to write some words on the board, assuming that the students would encounter some difficulty to understand those words, putting their respective translation beside those words.

After the translation of the text, the teacher asked the meaning of “will” – “Simple future”, he said³⁰. Then, he wrote the following on the board:

- Simple Future -

Pronome pessoal + will + verbo principal

After writing that information, the teacher wrote all the personal pronouns and the verb “to drive” on the board, combining the pronouns with the verb using the future tense. After that, when all the students had finished writing that information down on their respective notebooks, the teacher conjugated those sentences in standard

³⁰ All the teacher’s statements are translated to English in this study, but it is important to point out that he never talked to his students in English.

Portuguese and, then, he wrote the short form of those sentences (in English) on the white board: “I’ll drive”; “you’ll drive”, etc.

When the explanation was concluded, the teacher talked about the negative and the interrogative forms of the following sentence: “I will get up early”. After explaining these forms, he said: “Well, now let’s do some exercises to relax, ok?!” (DS 26). Apparently, as the teacher said that the students would do some exercises to relax, it is probable that he considers the teaching/studying of grammar rules as boring and tiresome and one way to relax would be practicing, in an exercise, grammar rules, that is, listening to grammatical explanations is complicated, stressful, annoying or even boring, but practicing them would be interesting.

It can be perceived that the teacher adopts an expositive teaching approach. He believes that his role, as a teacher, consists in introducing and explaining grammar rules to the students and talking all the time, as he is “the source of knowledge”, whereas the role of the students is restricted to listening and answering exercises (usually filling blanks with the adequate grammar element).

When the teacher decided to correct the exercise he had written on simple future, the attitude adopted was asking each student to go to the board and answer one of those sentences that he had created. Then, he said: “In order to do something different, let’s make a second question with interrogative and negative sentences and, then, you create sentences in the future and ask these sentences to each other” (DS 27).

As in his exercises, the teacher used to follow traditional approaches, simply asking students to turn affirmative sentences into negative and interrogative forms, to fill blanks with a particular grammatical element, to translate texts, etc., he thought that if the students created their own sentences, making questions to each other, they would be doing something different from that usual traditional pattern that they knew and they would be supposedly following, then, a different approach, as he had never asked the students to interact asking questions to each other until that particular moment.

From this point, it can be said that the teacher did not know how to provide a consistent change in his classroom – from traditional grammar/translation method to, for instance, communicative approach, but he knew that whenever the activities demand students effective participation (creating sentences based on a specific subject being studied in classroom and asking those sentences to a fellow student) they would be doing something different – although it was still grammar practice.

After that moment, the teacher wrote on the board: “What will you do next weekend?”, and asked the students to formulate three sentences about this topic and ask his/her partner about their sentences. Actually, these “three sentences” that the students were supposed to formulate should have been three answers to the question that he had written on the board, but, as the teacher had not explained well his intentions at a first moment, everyone in the classroom was confused. Only when the questions were created, the teacher elucidated that what he really wanted were answers to the question that he had written. Only then he said that the sentence on the board should have been answered (in three different ways).

The students were supposed to take turns asking his/her partner that sentence written on the board and, then, the other student would have to answer that sentence using the three answers that s/he had previously formulated. However, only one student did what had been asked while the others just talked to each other. Then, the teacher changed his mind and asked only two answers of each student, but the ones who had not done the exercise just cheated (or tried to cheat) the teacher in order not to answer what had been asked, saying that they were thinking, writing or almost finishing their task. As the class was about to finish, the teacher gave up waiting for the other students and dismissed the class at 11:45a.m., after correcting the answers of the only student who had done the exercise.

A serious problem can be seen in this position of the students – not making any effort to understand neither to answer the assigned tasks: several students are accommodated and are used to answer “ready-made” exercises (like filling blanks, for example). Many of them do not want to make any effort to think, that is, they just want to receive “everything ready” – a reality that is reflected in all school subjects, not just being restricted to foreign language classes.

The basic purpose of this interaction was the premise of creating answers in order to practice the grammar structure in focus and to verify if all the training performed before had resulted in anything (fixing grammar structures). Even if this exercise had been developed and performed in class, it would not constitute an actual conversation among students, because they would only repeat a fixed structure (“parroting” a predefined sentence), that is, students would not talk to each other and ask what they wanted about a subject that the teacher could have chosen, the students would not be allowed to talk freely, which would, in fact, be real interaction, which

could allow the teacher to perceive if the students were actually learning the language or if some subjects were just being memorized in order to be applied in a test.

2nd day – 27/02/2007

Recorded class

The teacher started the class, at 10:20a.m., asking the students, in Portuguese, as usual, for he never discussed anything with them in English, about their holiday – carnival. He asked where they had been on that holiday, saying, right afterwards, that they would have to do some assignments on that day³¹. After asking the students what had been studied on the previous class, the teacher reviewed the grammar points that he had taught. During this review, the teacher wrote “the formation of the future tense: pronoun + will + main verb” and 3 examples of sentences in the future tense on the board – an affirmative, a negative and an interrogative sentence, stating that this tense usually brings time expressions as: “tomorrow”; “next week”, etc.

Later on, he asked the students about the process to turn a sentence in the present continuous into the future tense – “I am studying now”; “I will study later” – this was the example that he provided, as the students got a little confused to answer his question. Then, he asked the students to take a sheet of paper and write the exercise that he was going to write on the board, saying that he would give extra points to those who answered it. This attitude of giving extra points denounces another educational reality seen anywhere in this country: students “need” external motivation to do some of their tasks.

At 11 o’clock, the teacher played the song “Anytime”, by Kelly Clarkson, another activity that should be handed over, which consisted of filling blanks with missing words that he had written randomly on the board so that the students could put them in their right place as they listened to the song and read its lyrics. After this activity, the teacher translated the lyrics, playing the song a third time and pausing the stereo after each sentence so that he could translate it. Then, the teacher corrected the first question of the exercise and dismissed the class.

³¹ As it can be assumed, on February 20th, there was no class at the school because of the carnival celebration.

3rd day – 06/03/2007
Recorded class

The teacher started the class, at 10:20a.m., saying that he would have to accelerate his pace on teaching the subjects (without explaining the reason), writing the following sentence on the board right after that: “That was a secret which should be confidential”. Then, he asked the grammar function of “which”, and one of the students said that it was a relative pronoun. The teacher, then, confirmed the student’s answer and, while writing some information on the referred subject on the board, he asked about the use of relative pronouns.

Then, the teacher wrote an exercise on the board and, after waiting some time for the students to answer it, he corrected it. Then, he said that there was a certain relative pronoun whose use was different from the ones that he had just explained, which was the reason why he had decided to explain this one apart – *whose*. After that, he explained the referred case and wrote another exercise

After waiting another moment for the students to answer the second question of the exercise, the teacher corrected it on the board and, then, before dismissing the class, he explained what would be done next class: classwork (the students would have to elaborate a dialogue – about anything that they wanted) and, then, a new subject would be taught.

4th day – 13/03/2007

The teacher started the class, at 10:20a.m., reminding the students about what they should do on that day: classwork. The students were supposed to pair off, write a dialogue (as agreed on the previous class) and act it out in front of the class. After that explanation, the teacher wrote on the board:

- Trabalho em dupla: criar um diálogo com o simple future.
- Greetings;
- Expressões de tempo;
- Nomes.

During their assignment, the students always requested the teacher’s help, mostly asking the spelling of words. Then, at 10:50a.m., the students finished their assignment and started their presentations, finishing at 10:55a.m. By the end of that assignment, the teacher said that he would finish the subject taught on the previous class – relative

pronouns, explaining, right afterwards, the case of the omission of relative pronouns. After that, the students answered another exercise and were dismissed at 11:40 a.m.

It is worth to notice that the teacher followed two courses to perform his teaching. The first course was taken when he adopted a communicative approach technique, seen when the students, in pairs, were asked, in a first moment, to create a dialogue, talking about anything that they wanted – it would not be based, then, on previously trained dialogues – with their respective presentations in front of the classroom, so that the other pair of students and the teacher himself could see what the students had decided to talk about, despite language structures still remain as the main focus of the activity, rather than meaning.

At a second moment, when the teacher wrote the instructions to the creation of the dialogues, he stated that the students were supposed to elaborate dialogues using the simple future, and this places the communicative approach technique out and brings the audio-lingual approach in, for the students, then, would have to practice a previously studied grammar structure (simple future). As for the other approach, adopted right after the presentation of the students³², the presence of the traditional approach was perceived, as grammar issues (explicitly) returned as the main focus of the class, with examples of the same nature and with a drilling exercise, which aimed at memorizing the rules.

5th day – 20/03/2007

Recorded class

In the beginning of the class, at 10:15a.m., the teacher said what he was going to do that day and, then, he handed a short text to the students. He said that, as the text was an adaptation, as it was not the original text, he was going to write the complete text on the board (which he did not do). He also said that they would translate that adaptation later on that day. Then, he turned to the stereo in order to play the CD which had the text that he had handed. After playing the track, he started to translate the text as he usually did – sentence by sentence and writing a few words on the board every now and then. After that, the teacher stated that he was going to write an exercise in order to finish that subject and start a new one.

After correcting the exercise, the teacher said that he was going to talk about prepositions as the final subject of the 1st bimester. He explained the case of “in”, “on”

³² The presentation of the dialogues did not receive any comment from the teacher.

and “at” as the three main prepositions of time, according to him, and wrote some information on this referred subject on the board. Then, the teacher explained the preposition “at” and continued the class writing and talking about the other two prepositions he had mentioned.

After that, the teacher said that he was going to write a final exercise and that, after its correction, the class would be dismissed, also stating that the subject to be studied next class would be prepositions of place and directions (but he never came to approach this latter subject).

6th day – 27/03/2007

Recorded class

At 10:05a.m., the teacher started the class talking about the activities that the students would have to perform. Then, after a brief revision of what had been seen in the previous class, he continued the subject about prepositions. At this moment, the teacher wrote on the board the following prepositions of place: “in”, “on”, “under”, “behind” and “in front of”, providing a definition to and explaining each one of them, which sounded considerably redundant, obvious and useless, as it can be perceived below:

Prepositions of place (lugar)

In, on, under, behind, in front of.

* In – it means “em” (dentro) - We use it when something is inside something else (DS 28).

Ex: The paper is in the book.

* On – it means “sobre” - We use it when something is upon something else (DS 29).

Ex: The book’s on the table.

* Under – it means “em baixo”.

Ex: The paper is under the book.

* Behind – it means “atrás”.

Ex: The blackboard is behind me.

* In front of – it means “em frente de”.

Ex: The car is in front of my house.

After waiting 25 minutes for the students to write down the information that he had written on the board, the teacher handed over a sheet of paper with an exercise

about prepositions, which consisted of a picture with several objects spread all over a room and the students were supposed to choose 5 objects and say their place. While the students answered the activity, the teacher said that he would, by the end of that exercise, create sentences using some of those objects of the picture and that, after the correction of the exercise, he would play a song.

The sentences that he created were the following: “The letter is on the table”; “The shoes are in the closet” and “The suitcase is behind the chair”. Before playing the song “Freak”³³, of the band “Silverchair”, the teacher wrote on the board some missing words that were supposed to be written in the blanks of a sheet of paper previously handed to the students. After that exercise of filling blanks and translation, the teacher talked a little, in Portuguese, as he usually did, about music with the students (his favorite style of music and the students’) and, then, he dismissed the class at 11:40a.m.

7th day – 03/04/2007

Recorded class

The class started at 10:15a.m. and the teacher, right in the beginning, assigned a work which consisted of creating sentences, using the prepositions studied on the previous class and the following words, written on the board: *the pencils; the newspaper; the paper; the eraser; the stamps; the ruler and the tape cassettes*³⁴. The prepositions to be used in this activity were: “in”, “on”, “under”, “behind” and “in front of” and the students were supposed to look at the picture handed on the previous class and create a place for each of those objects written by the teacher. After this exercise, which lasted 20 minutes, the teacher handed a text named “Tomorrow will be another day” and wrote a comprehension exercise on the board.

After writing the exercise, the teacher read the text and reminded the students that it contained subjects that had already been studied, like the future tense, for example. The teacher, then, asked the students to underline all the “will” words that they could find in the text.

If it is assumed that the teacher asked his students to search for every *will* word in the text as a scanning exercise, but without even reading the sentences in which the “will” words were, in order to collect a specific information about a possible character

³³ Some time ago, the teacher had agreed with the students that they could choose any song that they wanted so that they could “study” (translate) that song.

³⁴ This seems to be a mistake of the teacher; probably caused by lack of attention. The correct form is “cassette tapes”.

or event in the story, such act can not be regarded as part of the scanning theory, once scanning exercises aim at finding useful specific information, rather than specific grammar words that may not constitute important details of the text, as the search for one simple word in a text can be performed by anyone, even by those who do not know anything in a particular foreign language. The purpose of scanning exercises is to check one's reading comprehension and not one's ability to find grammar points. It is assumed, then, that the objective of that exercise performed in class was a grammatical scan.

After that, the teacher read all the sentences that contained “will” and translated them. Following that, he said what the text was about (but he did not read it nor asked the students to do it) and asked the students to underline all the prepositions of time that they could find – another grammatical scan.

Eight minutes later, the teacher showed the prepositions of time that could be found in the text and only then he asked the students to answer the comprehension exercise, which, as a matter of fact, could be considered as a “scanning exercise” – only then the students were allowed to read the entire text. Five minutes later, he provided the answers for the referred exercise and wrote a second question, which was subsequently corrected, dismissing the class at 11:45a.m.

8th day – 10/04/2007

Recorded class

The teacher started the class, at 10:15a.m., writing, on the board, the subjects to be studied for the test, which would be on the following week: “simple future tense”; “relative pronouns” and “prepositions” (of “time” and “place”), stressing, at the same time, that his class would be just a review of the main points studied until that moment. Then, once again, he asked about the formation of the simple future tense and wrote some review information on the board on expressions of time, relative pronouns and prepositions (and their omission), also writing an exercise on these subjects.

After the exercise correction, the teacher asked what sentence(s) could have had the pronoun omitted and why. Then, he stated that the students would have a listening activity which, as usual, consisted of putting words in the right order – the narrator of the track would utter different words that the teacher had written randomly on the board and the students would have to listen to those words and write them in the right order: *place, slowly, world, language, politics, travel, quick, country, small and word.*

However, as there was a problem with the CD, the teacher decided to dismiss the class – at 11:45a.m.

9th day – 18/04/2007

While the students were taking the bimestral evaluation, there were no other classes at the school. As the institution would be carrying out the school games on the following week, all classes would be suspended as well. This was, then, the last day of the observation period. The questionnaires (both the one directed to the students and the one to the teacher) were handed on that day because, then, the teacher would not change or try to adapt his usual methodology (or even the subject(s) to be taught on his classes), aiming at developing a kind of teaching approach that could have been believed to be the one “desired” by the researcher – having in mind the nature of the questions in the questionnaires.

4.4 The classes

By the end of this observation period, it was noticed that the teaching of discourse, which comprise cultural teaching, the study of the language as it is actually used in social interactions, according to different contexts, was put aside so as the grammatical teaching could take over, being, then, the main focus and concern of the analyzed English classes. As it was so, it was not surprising that the kind of knowledge retained by the students was a fleeting one, as most of the students failed the tests, as they were not able to use, in actual conversations, what was exhaustively taught and practiced in class and especially because of their own lack of effort in trying to study the school subjects.

Thus, the students' knowledge was mostly restricted to the analyzing of grammatical structures, confirming, thus, what had been stated in part of the introduction (in the hypothesis) of this Master thesis: the teaching of foreign languages at schools is still mostly restricted to the method of grammar and translation or to the teaching of functional issues – with a discourse that sometimes claims to link the teaching of language and culture.

It was concluded that the students are “trained”, along the years, to be able to create perfectly structured sentences and to correct different phrases, but they are not taught how to actually use the language in social interactions. They have, then, a short-term retention of knowledge, which usually lasts long enough until they have answered what is asked from them in some kind of evaluation, for example, like the vestibular.

A common attitude observed in class was the teaching of lists of words, which, sometimes, did not even have an actual meaning, for those words were bereft of contexts, like it was seen on the first day of class: “Doesn't: 3ª pessoa do singular” and “Given: particípio”; or when the teacher asked the students about the meaning of “will”. It is not likely that this kind of inquiry is helpful at the moment of an actual use of the language, but it is profitable for those who want to clear a possible doubt concerning grammatical terminology in a language that is already known by the speaker.

Teaching language and culture is not restricted to playing songs, translating them, making lists of words and biased or categorical assertions that affirm, for example, that the only ones who can speak a foreign language fluently are those who have traveled abroad, as it was seen along the observation period; but it is, among several other issues, analyzing discourses as they are actually used in societies, trying to

perceive their different meanings in contexts or making (linguistic) comparisons, for example (concerning how and why something is said in a native and in a foreign language).

However, something that has to be taken into account in education are the institutions' and the parents' demands concerning the kind of teaching that is being performed. For many of them, efficient teaching concerns that traditional teaching that prepares students to school evaluations, university entrance exams or to any other contest that requires specific short-term knowledge. And if the teacher does not correspond to these expectations of "efficient teaching", s/he will be the one to blame and will have to face the consequences.

Having these facts in mind, it is important to elicit some intriguing positionings of the teacher concerning the development of his classes: a) he had plans to conduct his classes; b) he tried to be organized, motivating the students bringing songs and tasks he thought would interest them; c) he used to finish his classes telling students what they were going to do next; d) he revised subjects before tests and e) he tried to make students use the material provided.

4.5 About the questionnaires

The questionnaires answered by the students showed very similar answers. All the students stated that they enjoyed activities of song translation, but that they did not like text translation. Obviously, they liked the former because, as the teacher allowed them to choose the song that they wanted for the “listening activities”, it was expected, then, that they considered it an enjoyable activity, whereas they did not like the latter apparently because the texts were always chosen by the teacher; the subject of the text, then, might not interest the students, apart from the fact that, for some people, texts may not provide the same relaxing feeling of listening to a song of personal liking.

An important point to be highlighted concerning that activity with songs, which were sometimes selected by the students, is that, just like any other activity, they must have a useful purpose, which is not simply spending class time or delighting and entertaining the students or simply translating but not discussing them. However, those were exactly the purposes of the songs in the observed classes; even grammar was, in a certain way, put aside as nothing in the lyrics used to be discussed or explained. What could be said that was perhaps being taught was the teaching of vocabulary – if the students made any effort to perceive the meaning of the words (in that particular contextual situation of the lyrics) being translated.

In the first question of the questionnaire, “Do you like to study English?”, “student A” only said that it was important for their future, but she did not say how or in what terms it would be important, neither whether or not she liked it. “Student B” said that, as English, according to her, is “a reasonably easy language” and, as it is spoken worldwide, she liked to study it. “Student C” stated that it was good to study this language because it is “a very beautiful language” and because a great part of the world speaks it. And “student D” claimed that he liked to study it because “English is a language that will be greatly spoken in the future, mostly in the job market” and that he also liked it because he could translate songs and movies.

According to what was answered, it would not matter if “student A” liked to study English or not, but the point is that, according to her statement, they have to study that language because it is an important language – and that is reason enough to study English. Students “B” and “C” shared the same perspective: the main reason that explains their appreciation in studying English is because that language is spoken all around the world. Furthermore, two points that were discussed in this work could be

seen: the conceptions of “beautiful” and “easy” languages, which, as stated before, are fallacies, for no language is more beautiful or easier than another; they just have their own particular structures and peculiarities, which may or may not be similar to others. In addition, it is a known fact that English has been greatly used worldwide for quite some time (this is not something that will only happen in the future, as “student D” stated) – but it may continue to be like that in the future – depending on the hegemonic power of certain English speaking countries, particularly the USA.

Moreover, this language is likely to be more important on the internet than it would be in certain job markets. In other words, English is important *for* certain job markets, as those who can speak it may have better chances of getting employed, but, of course, it is not necessarily important *in* (every) job market.

As regards to the second question, “What activity do you like the most when studying this language?”, all of the students answered that they liked song activities because, according to them, “those activities are dynamic”. One student, however, stated that he liked it because he was able to increase his lexicon. It is interesting to point out that this latter student, whose answer concerned the increasing of lexicon, was the same person who said that he liked to perform translations of songs and movies.

In the third question, however, “What don’t you like to study?”, this latter student wrote that he did not like to translate texts – the exact same answer that the other students provided – it has to be clear that the students were talking about the translation of formal texts, like the ones that the teacher used to translate in classroom.

The answers provided in the fourth question, “Is there anything that you would like to study in your English classes?”, were intriguing because most of the students said that they would like to learn how to actually use the language (conversation), paying attention to how words are actually pronounced. As the students, since the earliest periods of their education, had mostly had contact with one teaching approach, the traditional one, focusing, then, grammar rules (usage), the use of the language itself in actual conversations among themselves was put aside. It is as if the teaching of foreign languages was divided in two parts: the first concerns regular schools, where students are supposedly taught how to locate, explain and correct grammar issues; and the second concerns private language institutions, where students are believed to refine what they had learned at regular schools. In addition, private language institutions are also supposed to be places where students actually and effectively learn (what was left of) the language.

In the fifth question, “Do you believe that the teaching of the culture of the language that you are learning is important? Why and how such study could be developed?”, two students (“students A and B”) only said that the foreign culture/language is/are important in our daily lives, but they did not specify that importance – just like it happened in the first question, some students do not believe to be necessary or do not know how to explain “important” in order to make their answers clearer. The other two students claimed that it is important to know upon what values that foreign culture is structured, because, then, they would be able to better understand it if they had to work in an English speaking country.

However, it is valid to highlight what one of these students (“student D”) said concerning this issue. According to him, “[...] we can learn it (apparently talking about the foreign culture) by studying in a private foreign language course”. In this statement, there is that common idea, also already discussed in this work, that people can only actually learn a foreign language (or culture) if they necessarily study at a private English institution, something that would not be achieved at ordinary regular schools. And some other people, sometimes those who did study at a private English institution, but who failed in learning the foreign language efficiently, use to claim that it is only possible to learn/speak a foreign language (fluently) when people travel abroad.

The sixth question, “How do you see the presence and the influence of the English language/culture in Brazil?”, made the students diverge in their answers. “Student A” stated that this presence and influence is, at the same time, good and bad (it would depend on what was in focus). According to this student, “we should give greater value to our culture”. It is assumed that this student shares the standpoint that many Brazilians use to easily accept the North-American culture simply because the USA is the hegemonic first world nation of the moment, but that, in spite of this fact, we should not seek to reproduce someone else’s culture and forget our own.

A second student (“student B”) seemed to be concerned with the foreigners who arrived in this country and who could not speak Portuguese, having, then, a *lingua franca* to resort to. For this student, the presence of the English language in this country “is necessary”. Apparently, she was not aware that this presence entails impacts that are not only related to providing foreigners the means for communicating.

Another answer referred to the worldwide use of English. According to “student C”, the presence of this language in our country can be attributed to the uses that several nations around the world made with this language. For this student, we have this

presence because we were contaminated³⁵ by the nations that used it. And “student D” answered the question from an educational position. According to him, English is “highly used” here because of the Tourism course, which, according to him, “has been in a great process of development”. He also states that this presence will only get stronger along the time, making, then, people learn that language: “In Brazil, Tourism (the course) is increasing more and more with each “vestibular”. He also says that “English is greatly developed around here. It could be better, though, but, along the time, this presence will increase and people will learn it”.

In the seventh question, “How do you see the English hegemony nowadays?”, the student who provided the answer above (student “D”) said that “Everything is going well, they [languages]³⁶, develop along the time”. It was not clear, however, what “everything” the student was referring to (everything in politics, economy, society?!). In addition, it is an undeniable fact that languages change along the time, but, as for becoming hegemonic, it was already discussed that there are other issues involved in this process.

“Student B” only said that she has no prejudice towards this hegemony and, then, she reinforced the idea (already mentioned by herself in the first question), that “English is easy and Portuguese is difficult”. Once again, it has to be stated that several people share this same perspective, an ideology commonly heard and popularly reproduced in this country – even by those who have never studied English. However, “student C” disputed the perspective of the student above, concerning the easy character of the English language, only stating: “Yes, because English is a difficult language”. But as this student’s answer was not coherent with the question, it is assumed that she did not understand what was asked. And “student D” claimed that “English deserves the power that it has upon other countries, apart from being a really beautiful language; it is part of one of the greatest powerful nations of the world, the USA”.

This latter answer holds a serious prejudice towards the countries that are not hegemonic. According to what was stated, there are nations that deserve power and glory, whereas some others only deserve to be ruled by the ones that have power. And this seems to be exactly the idea that certain powerful nations want others to have, so they can remain in their prestigious positions and continue dictating the rules that have to be followed, but diffusing, of course, the discourse that less privileged countries can

³⁵ This point of “contamination” was already discussed in the introduction of this work.

³⁶ He did not say what develops along the time, but it is assumed that he was referring to languages.

become first world nations (“models”, like they supposedly are) if these (subservient) societies follow their “instructions”, which, actually, lead nowhere but to bondage. As for the last question, “Is there any other comment that you would like to make?”, nobody added anything else that could be inserted in this work.

As for the questionnaire answered by the teacher, some quite interesting answers were seen, but it also had some issues that need attention. As for the first question, for example, “What do you consider to be efficient and inefficient foreign language teaching?”, what the teacher wrote could not be regarded as an answer for this particular question. In other words, his answer was not about the topic above, but it seemed to be about something else – a completely different subject: “In order for the students to have more contact with another language apart from the one they speak. And also in order for them to learn words in another language, which is eventually used in their lives”. The teacher’s answer may mean that only the teaching of vocabulary, a practice easily seen in his classes, could be regarded as efficient teaching, but the teacher may have misunderstood the question, possibly understanding it as something like “In your opinion, what is the reason for studying foreign languages?”, which is obviously different of what had been asked.

In the second question, the teacher’s answer was mixed with the third question. The second question concerned the relevance of the teaching of culture in the teaching of foreign languages and the third concerned the value of such teaching to the students’ education. By what he wrote, it was clear that he considers language and culture as two linked elements: “Yes, it is very important that they (the students) learn the cultures of other countries, so they learn more about these countries and, consequently, learn their languages as well. This can be done through texts, songs, etc.”. As it can be perceived, the teacher believes that the relationship between language and culture is helpful to the students because, from that relation, they would be able to learn about other countries, but he does not mention the importance of this relationship to the educational field.

However, it is not necessary *to learn* (or to absorb) the culture of other countries in order to learn *about* different nations. There are different ways to be aware of how a society is basically structured, like, for example, knowing a little about the foreign culture(s) and not necessarily learning them. It is indeed possible to study and to know about cultures through songs and texts, as the teacher said, (as long as they are analyzed and discussed). Having in mind, then, that the teacher believed in the importance of

placing language and culture together when studying a FL, an intriguing question emerges: why did he never approach that relation in his classes?!

From what was observed, and as it can be perceived by the description of the observation period, the teacher knew about, as already stated, and believed in this importance of putting language and culture together, but he lacked knowledge on theories and approaches about language teaching in order to perform such task.

On the fourth question, focusing his possible contribution in helping the students to develop a critical thought concerning different cultures, he stated that he always tried to help his students regarding the situation of countries around the world nowadays and regarding the English language itself. He said that he always makes comments about everyday facts, so that the students can have their own opinions, ideas and critical thoughts about different subjects: “In my classes, I always try to help my students with grammar, and I always make comments about things that concern the English language and countries. I’m always talking about things that happen every day, so that they can have their own ideas, criticism and thoughts”.

However, at least during this observation period, only one (subjective) comment about English was made. According to the teacher, the only people who can speak (and know) fluent English are those who travel (or who have traveled) abroad, which would automatically exclude himself from the “group” of those who know and who can speak fluent English, as he had never traveled abroad. Such statement obviously does not contribute to the students’ development of critical evaluation. Conversely, it may create in the students a serious lack of motivation to learn that language, as they have never traveled abroad, possibly hindering, therefore, their learning and also a lack of trust on their teacher’s knowledge on English, as he himself had never traveled abroad.

In spite of the clear good intentions of the teacher in trying to help the students at different moments, he does not seem to be aware that his comments sometimes hold serious fallacies and prejudices. What he says may, then, influence the students to have distorted thoughts about the world; that is, he may be (unconsciously and indirectly) influencing the students to cultivate and reproduce his personal opinions, instead of being actually helping them to develop their own.

In the fifth question, “How do you see the presence and the influence of the English language and/or culture here in Brazil? Does this presence play any role in the educational field? What about in your classes?”, the teacher answered:

“Brazil gets an enormous influence from the countries whose official language is English and that is because of our culture as an underdeveloped country. We cultivate the idea that everything is easier in these countries, like, for example, in the job market. I try to explain these issues in order for them to see how the reality is and that it is not just about traveling abroad”.

It is indeed a fact that developing countries are (more) influenced by hegemonic countries, but, of course, not just the former countries are subjected to this influence. All countries, in varied degrees and extents, receive influences. Another point is that such fact, the English influence here in Brazil, does not occur simply because of our culture, as he stated, but because of political, economical, technological reasons and because of different issues which come with globalization. No culture is “created” with the purpose of worshipping other cultures. It is evident that different people and countries can cultivate mistaken ideas towards different cultures, like the one that claims that everything is easy, wonderful and that everybody is rich in the US, for example, but it can not be taken as the explanation for this English presence and influence.

Another point is that this reality that he has been trying to show to his students: “I try to explain these issues in order for them to see how the reality is and that it is not just about traveling abroad” is a subjective reality – it is a reality that comes with his ideology; it is the reality he believes to be the correct one. With that in mind, it is likely that he is not helping the students to have or to develop their own critical thoughts about the world, as he never discussed these issues with his students, listening to their opinions, but he simply made his statements, which may be reproduced by the students later on.

As for the sixth question, “How do you see the English language hegemony nowadays? What meaning do you believe that this hegemony might have in the educational field?”, the teacher answered: “I see that the English language hegemony is related to the development of the countries in relation to the world. The countries that have English as the official language are usually the most developed ones and, then, these countries make more investments in the educational field, among other factors”.

However, such dominant position of English is not linked to the development of different countries in the world, for it is likely that the development of the nations whose mother tongue is not English strengthen their own national elements instead of

someone else's. The hegemony of the English language is more likely to be linked to more and more spread processes of globalization around the world than to the development of different countries in the globe – whose mother tongues may not even be English. If the hegemony of the English language was related to the development of any nation of the world, English would never abandon its (temporary) supremacy.

In addition, there are countries that do not have English as their mother tongue, but that are considerably developed, like Germany and Japan, for example, and there are certain English speaking countries that are not much developed, like Jamaica and India. There are indeed developing countries that present a good educational system, proving that it is not because a country presents a good educational system that it necessarily has to be a developed and first world country. Education can be a first step to start developmental processes, but it is not a guarantee of development.

The processes that led the USA to become hegemonic were previously discussed, but, summing up, this process entails sound evolutions in different layers of a country's society, which was exactly what happened in the USA many years ago, and such situation of supremacy does influence the educational field. One example that could be mentioned is the emerging (and the spread) of language institutes, which, sometimes, contribute to diffuse fallacious ideas, like the one that asserts that the learning of a hegemonic language is the way for one's success in life.

The point, in the seventh question, "Do you think that globalization and capitalism play any role in the educational field? If so, what role would that be?", which is linked to the sixth question, is that education, according to what can be perceived nowadays, is part of the capitalistic system – it must be financially profitable. As discussed in this research, certain educational institutions use capitalism, globalization and other different measures as tools to divulge ideas of "miraculous" and utopian methods and approaches, schoolbooks, etc. in order to attract students ("customers") and sell their materials. Sometimes, education is regarded as a kind of "factory of making money", rather than being considered as the way that may lead (not guarantee) people to become more capable of helping the construction of a better and more developed country.

However, according to the teacher, the countries that have a good educational system are the developed ones, and that is necessarily why they have a good educational reality (because they are developed) – the same idea that he stated in the previous question: "The countries that have the best educational conditions are those that are

more globalized and that, without any doubt, have a great importance in the development of a country's education".

Finally, in the last question of the questionnaire, "What do you believe to be the importance of the schoolbook in foreign language classes?", the teacher's answer was considerably contradictory when compared to what was observed. According to him: "The schoolbook helps a lot in the development of the classes and it also helps the understanding of the students. Then, its importance lies on a better interaction among the students".

Considering that the teacher believes in the importance of the schoolbook, claiming that it has a primordial role in the development of the classes and that it helps in the understanding (and learning) processes of the students, but he never used any book in class, in fact, the students had no schoolbook, a paradox can be seen between his discourse and his actions.

If the schoolbook helps in the development of the classes, but there is no book, the classes, then, would not have a good development, which would, thus, cripple the teaching and learning processes. In addition, if the book helps in the understanding of the students, its absence would definitely affect their learning. Furthermore, as the book, according to the teacher, would provide a possibility of interaction among the students, it would not be possible for the students to interact properly in the lack of a book – not to mention that this absence could even affect the progression of the subjects taught, that is, the classes could run the risk of getting stuck at some point, given this supposed primordial importance of the book.

From what could be perceived by all the answers provided in the questionnaires, and by what was observed during the period of class observation, the conclusions achieved were that the students did not retain much of the subjects studied on the previous grades and that they did not take seriously the study of foreign languages, not making an effort to study the subjects taught or to answer the exercises. As for the teacher, it was noticed that he himself was a few times confused when conducting his classes or when explaining or answering some exercises, for it was clear that, on certain days, he had not prepared himself or his classes properly.

Another point is that some of the teacher's answers on the questionnaire did not match with his teaching practice in classroom, as it was previously discussed. He claimed that he believed in the importance of having cultural knowledge and how important it is to insert this cultural subject in language classes, but, during the

observation period, it was perceived that he was either teaching language structures or diffusing biased and particular opinions about the learning of foreign languages, which can lead to one of the following assumptions: a) the teacher did believe in what he stated, but he was not sure or prepared enough to perform such kind of teaching (being even unaware of his own prejudiced discourses in class), as he lacked pedagogical knowledge on language theories or b) he was simply trying to provide answers that he believed to be the expected ones.

Hence, by the end of this observation period, it was clear that the teacher had limited knowledge on researches, teaching methodologies and on language teaching/learning theories, despite being fluent in English. And this fact points to the following issue: fluency in foreign languages is not a guarantee of quality when teaching a language. So, native speakers, for example, are not necessarily the “best” teachers simply because of their fluency. It is definitely not being said here that fluency is not important. The point is that language teachers must be able to understand the functioning of languages, processes of teaching and learning and also different teaching practices in classroom in order to achieve some goals.

It could also be perceived that many teachers are stuck to what the institution, the parents, the students and the community expect from them. They may be banished or accused of incompetent if s/he does not fulfill several other people’s expectations.

5 CONCLUSION

As it could have been perceived, the English teacher of the private school in which the observation period took place, just like many other teachers, mostly adopted traditional approaches in his classes. In spite of having tried to use, sometimes, different techniques, the teacher did not have enough specific knowledge on language theories and methodologies to try to apply those techniques more efficiently, instead of just being restricted to grammar and translation, making, then, a better use of them in his classes.

Listening activities and text “discussions” had the only and common purpose of translation or study of grammatical elements. Interactions between pairs had the only purpose of “parroting” ready-made and previously settled sentences, constituting, then, a clearly limited approach for pair activities, and the creation of sentences (by the students) aimed only at verifying if they were placing all the studied subjects in the “right position”, having no other objective apart from that. And, as it can be assumed, the questions of the English test, which took place on the last day of the observation period, were mostly about grammar points, presenting, then, questions of the same nature of the exercises answered in classroom – turn affirmative sentences to their respective negative and interrogative forms, filling blanks using the future tense, among other typically Behaviorist practices.

There were only two questions in the evaluation that concerned a text – the first one was about “true or false sentences” and the second consisted of taking out literal sentences of the text and providing them as answers: Question – “Where will he study?”. Answer – “He will study in a public school” (scanning exercise). As this kind of approach was used, certain common practices, which derive from traditional approaches³⁷, were perceived during this observation period, like the use of glossaries, for example, commonly used for text translations, whereas, sometimes, the content of the text is put aside, or the presence of artificial and stereotyped phrases like “Have you seen the book which was on the table?”, present on the third day of the observation period, but also “The book’s on the table” and “The letter is on the table”, present on the sixth day of the observation period.

³⁷ For further information on this subject, check the topic “Abordagem Tradicional”, of the book “Línguas Estrangeiras: uma visão histórica das abordagens, métodos e técnicas de ensino”, by Maria Inez Matoso Silveira, whose reference is at the bibliography of this dissertation.

Sometimes, the teacher wrote one or two question(s) about texts (questions of “true or false”), seen, for example, on the fifth and seventh days of the observation period, but the texts were not discussed in his classes, being, then, merely translated. Questions of “true or false” are more likely to check if a person was able to decode letters and sentences, usually to extract the superficial information which a text might have brought, but it does not mean achieving a deeper understanding of that text, which is achieved through its discussion. Such attitude of decoding texts just contributes to the formation of passive readers, that is, people who can read any kind of text, but who may not be able to understand and interpret different meanings, remaining, then, on the plain and superficial reading/information.

In Brazil, there is a belief that only the teaching of the mother tongue, in this particular case, the teaching of Portuguese, should comprise such approach of reading and (perhaps, for some people) discussing texts. However, discussing texts in a deeper way, giving special and careful attention to them, in the light of their social contexts and considering the readers’ experiences, is a priority in education, being, then, a concern of any school subject that deals with texts (any kinds of texts) – and it would, then, comprise all school subjects.

It is not unusual to see literary documents and/or short excerpts from literary books as the major focus of text analysis at many schools, once their writing is regarded as the “perfect standard” to be studied. Actually, text analysis goes a long way beyond that. Any kind of text allows deeper discussions – both the ones with standard and non-standard writing. It is indeed possible to perform different discussions with one single text, regardless of its literary nature and origin. Reading comprehension does not only concern analyzing and discussing grammatical issues or translating texts, but it also comprises paying attention to, analyzing and discussing the possibility of other meanings and the message of different voices (polysemy); in short, the meanings beyond the surface.

Unfortunately, the reality is far less satisfying. Different professionals who believe that this kind of text discussion and analysis are not necessary or that it just “should be” responsibility of the teaching of the Portuguese language are accommodated or are not able to perform this kind of approach; in some cases, many of them did not have the appropriate instruction on how to develop such work. But, regardless of the possible causes for this inability, the consequence is the same – a

strong probability of the students leave school presenting lame formation, regardless if they study at private schools or if they study at state schools.

The formation of the teacher does have influence on this issue. There are several professionals graduated in different courses, which are not Arts (languages), who are teaching, in spite of their lack of instruction and formation in the teaching field. It is, in fact, exactly the case of the teacher in this study, who, at that time of the observation period, was still studying Meteorology.

Just like it happens with many other professionals teaching foreign languages in this country, the performance of this teacher clearly showed that he is not acquainted with theories and approaches that support the teaching of foreign languages. And another point of relevance about this issue is that teachers who lack pedagogical education in the area might believe that simply because they studied at a private language institute, or spent some time in an English speaking country, they are necessarily able and qualified to teach that foreign language.

After the observation period, it was verified that an efficient language teaching, that is, a teaching that does not strictly demand students to be “machines of grammar correction” was not being developed in those classes, being the linguistic system, then, the only purpose of the classes, confirming the idea presented in the hypothesis of this research work.

The observation showed that the students mostly hold a kind of knowledge that concerns systematic definitions, that is, they could recognize and locate different linguistic structures and elements, being also able to say what kind of element is being asked from them, but most of them could not use those elements in simple conversations, they were unable to perform interactions using the linguistic elements that they practiced so exhaustively in class. They also presented limited knowledge concerning global and cultural issues, remaining, then, on plain and superficial information and discussions – about, for example, the lyrics of songs (if they were beautiful or not, what the song was about, etc.), or texts for teaching purposes kept basically at plain information level. The success or failure in learning a foreign language also depends on what is sought to be achieved: a high knowledge (only) about the linguistic system of a language or the ability to efficiently communicate and signify (reading and speaking) in that language – which also entails grammatical knowledge.

For all these problems, sometimes it is difficult not to think of an educational system treated as merchandise, where many and different issues seem to be thought

only aiming the profit of schools and institutions, rather than the knowledge of the students themselves. Such reality, which is not shared by all educational institutions, of course, is a factor that affects enormously and directly the educational quality of this country. Even the problems that are not considered important, such as the already mentioned case of different professionals who lack the adequate expertise to teach, but that notwithstanding are teaching, are indeed a serious matter and they just add up to increase the chasm of lame formation.

Another serious problem, which is also regarded as unimportant, and which is taken for granted, concerns the kind of teaching performed at state schools and at private schools. It is a common belief that the teaching at the former is necessarily low and deficient and that the latter institutions hold excellence. It has to be admitted that the difference between these institutions is significant (in relation to several aspects), however, this issue concerning the quality of the teaching at these institutions is not an absolute truth. This can be proven just by what was verified and reported on this research work. Not only state schools have deficient teaching, but low educational standards can also be seen in the private sector.

Until the day when foreign languages come to be regarded as part of the school curricula with specific objectives and importance in the students' education, in short, as real and serious school subjects – subjects that are to comprise political, economical, social and cultural issues, in order to better instruct, prepare and educate the students; teachers be given the necessary support and respect to effectively perform their work and institutions become aware of their commitment to real and useful purposes of teaching, for the sake of education – students will continue to be regarded just as “customers” or as secondary elements, leaving school, then, without proper or even basic formation – and that does not only concern foreign language teaching. The association between language and culture in FLT is the starting point for rethinking educational values, not aiming any dubious or questionable revolution, but aiming an educational evolution, seeking a better educational reality and future.

Hence, as cultures are closely linked to human life, to social aspects and to languages themselves, why not to think about, teach, discuss and analyze that (linguistic and cultural) relationship when teaching foreign languages?! Studying the discourse is the means for achieving a rich education and formation, once it can help people in terms of, for example, thinking about the world as a place that holds a wide diversity of beliefs, practices, behaviors, etc. Summing up, a place that holds a wide diversity of

cultures that are never exactly equal to each other, for they are always constituted by different historic processes, and this contributes to develop a better understanding regarding different and varied ideological and political effects of meaning, constantly present in human life. These measures and changings in education may help people, then, in terms of being more qualified professionals and better human beings, for instruction and education are the starting points to follow the path of achieving sound evolutions both in one's personal life and to the life of the country.

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Name of the website: "English Made in Brazil: educational site".

Topic: #311 – "Inquietações frente a estrangeirismos".

<http://www.sk.com.br/sk-enhis.html> - Visited on January 1st, at 3:30 p.m.

<http://www.sk.com.br/sk-ingl.html> - Visited on January 1st, at 5 p.m.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A – Discursive Sequences

Introduction

- 1) “Por mais diferenças que possam existir entre os países, todos partilham processos históricos comuns e contêm importantes semelhanças em sua existência social”.
- 2) “O povo britânico é constituído por uma série desse tipo de conquistas – céltica, romana, saxônica, viking e normanda”.
- 3) “[...] qualquer nação que seja composta de apenas um único povo, uma única cultura ou etnia. As nações modernas são, todas, híbridos culturais”.
- 4) “[...] “as nações líderes da Europa são nações de sangue essencialmente misto: a França é [ao mesmo tempo] céltica, ibérica e germânica. A Alemanha é germânica, céltica e eslava. A Itália é o país onde... gauleses, etruscos, pelagianos e gregos, para não mencionar outros, se intersectam numa mistura indecifrável. As ilhas britânicas, consideradas como um todo, apresentam uma mistura de sangue celta e germânico, cujas proporções são difíceis de definir”. E essas são “misturas” relativamente simples se comparadas com as encontradas na Europa Central e Oriental”.
- 5) “As culturas nacionais são tentadas, algumas vezes, a se voltar para o passado, a recuar defensivamente para aquele “tempo perdido”, quando a nação era “grande”; são tentadas a restaurar as identidades passadas. Este constitui o elemento regressivo, anacrônico, da estória da cultura nacional. [...] esse mesmo retorno ao passado oculta uma luta para mobilizar as “pessoas” para que expulsem os “outros” que ameaçam sua identidade”.
- 6) “A globalização cultural envolve hibridização. Por mais que reajamos a ela, não conseguimos nos livrar da tendência global para a mistura e a hibridização”.

Chapter 1

- 1) “A linguagem é um método puramente humano e não instintivo de se comunicarem idéias, emoções e desejos por meio de símbolos voluntariamente produzidos”.
- 2) “Uma língua é um sistema de símbolos vocais arbitrários por meio dos quais um grupo social co-opera”.
- 3) “[...] a instituição pela qual os humanos se comunicam e interagem uns com os outros por meio de símbolos arbitrários orais-auditivos habitualmente utilizados”.
- 4) “A análise do discurso faz um outro recorte teórico relacionando língua e discurso. Em seu quadro teórico, nem o discurso é visto como uma liberdade em ato, totalmente sem condicionantes lingüísticos ou determinações históricas, nem a língua como totalmente fechada em si mesma, sem falhas ou equívocos. As sistematicidades lingüísticas – que nessa perspectiva não afastam o semântico como se fosse externo – são as condições materiais de base sobre as quais se desenvolvem os processos discursivos. A língua é assim condição de possibilidade do discurso”.
- 5) “[...] de fato, não existe discurso que não seja contextualizado: não se pode, de fato, atribuir um sentido a um enunciado fora de contexto”.

6) “O discurso não é discurso a não ser que esteja relacionado a uma instância que, ao mesmo tempo, se põe como fonte dos pontos de referência pessoais, temporais, espaciais, e indica qual atitude adota em relação àquilo que diz a seu interlocutor”.

7) “A necessidade de uma língua franca é óbvia [...]”.

8) “Cada período histórico teve (e tem) sua língua franca, isto é, uma língua internacional que serviu (e serve) como instrumento auxiliar de comunicação entre pessoas de lugares e culturas (e línguas) diferentes”.

9) “Uma língua não obtém um status genuinamente global até desempenhar um papel importante que seja reconhecido em todos os países [...] o uso como língua materna em si não pode dar status global a uma língua. Para obter semelhante status, ela tem de ser usada por vários países no mundo. Estes devem decidir dar a ela um lugar especial dentro de suas comunidades, mesmo que tenham poucos (ou nenhum) falantes nativos”.

10) “Tudo o que é afastado da matriz moderna ou ocidental [...] é hierarquizado, catalogado como inferior e anterior. A receita para “recuperar o atraso” é curvar-se ao modelo que já foi testado”.

11) “Ele (Inglês) penetra domínios distintos – informática, tráfego aéreo, colóquios científicos, intercâmbio entre multinacionais – para se transformar na língua oficial das relações internacionais”.

12) “O status de uma língua [...] está intimamente ligado ao poder militar, econômico e cultural, e como essas variáveis mudam, as línguas ascendem e decaem. Os futurologistas não encontram dificuldades em prever cenários nos quais, por exemplo, o árabe, o chinês ou o espanhol se tornam a próxima língua mundial. O espanhol é de fato a língua materna que cresce com mais rapidez no mundo atualmente. Mas para o futuro previsível, não é provável que outra língua vá substituir o inglês em seu papel global. Os fatores que levaram o inglês à sua posição atual ainda estão muito presentes”.

13) “As visões de mundo não se desvinculam da linguagem, porque a ideologia vista como algo imanente à realidade é indissociável da linguagem”.

14) “uma “visão de mundo”, ou seja, o ponto de vista de uma classe social a respeito da realidade, a maneira como uma classe ordena, justifica e explica a ordem social”.

15) “[...] a ideologia não é ilusão nem superstição religiosa de indivíduos mal-orientados, mas uma forma específica de consciência social, materialmente ancorada e sustentada. Como tal, não pode ser superada nas sociedades de classe. Sua persistência se deve ao fato de ela ser constituída objetivamente (e constantemente reconstruída) como consciência prática inevitável das sociedades de classe, relacionada com a articulação de conjuntos de valores e estratégias rivais que tentam controlar o metabolismo social em todos os seus principais aspectos”.

16) “Existem ainda na contemporaneidade os casos de dominação lingüística e cultural sem invasão, que são para mim novas formas de colonização. [...] A diferença entre os métodos

antigos e os novos é que a ocupação do chão e a submissão dos naturais se dá de outra forma”.

17) “Muitos autores se referem ao inglês como sendo uma “língua franca”, sugerindo com isso uma certa neutralidade em relação às trocas lingüísticas. Em comparação aos outros idiomas, ele seria mais flexível, conciso, pragmático e moderno”.

18) “O elemento mais importante do período que corresponde ao *Middle English* foi, sem dúvida, a forte presença e influência da língua francesa no inglês. Essa verdadeira transfusão de cultura franco-normanda na nação anglo-saxônica, que durou três séculos, resultou principalmente num aporte considerável de vocabulário. Isto demonstra que, por mais forte que possa ser a influência de uma língua sobre outra, esta influência normalmente não vai além de um enriquecimento de vocabulário, dificilmente afetando a pronúncia ou a estrutura gramatical”.

19) “[...] a ideologia se materializa na linguagem. Ela faz parte do funcionamento da linguagem [...]”; “[...] não há neutralidade nem mesmo no uso mais aparentemente cotidiano dos signos”.

20) “Uma língua não é somente instrumento de comunicação, ela é também instrumento de poder”.

21) “[...] é por intermédio da cultura que podemos nos conhecer, conhecer o Outro e interpretar o mundo no qual vivemos. [...]. Sendo a existência humana essencialmente cultural, indiscutível a necessidade de um olhar mais atento, para ela, em um mundo, como bem afirma Abdala Júnior (2002), cada vez mais pautado pela interatividade e pela interconexão, mas também em um mundo no qual as fronteiras ainda são rigidamente demarcadas”.

22) “Cultura está mais associada a estudo, educação, formação escolar. Por vezes se fala de cultura para se referir unicamente às manifestações artísticas, como o teatro, a música, a pintura, a escultura. Outras vezes, ao se falar na cultura da nossa época ela é quase que identificada como os meios de comunicação de massa, tais como o rádio, o cinema, a televisão. Ou então cultura diz respeito às festas e cerimônias tradicionais, às lendas e crenças de um povo, ou seu modo de se vestir, à sua comida, a seu idioma. [...]. Já eu tenho falado de cultura de maneira mais genérica, preocupado com tudo o que caracteriza uma população humana”.

23) “Cultura é uma dimensão do processo social, da vida de uma sociedade. Não diz respeito apenas a um conjunto de práticas e concepções, como por exemplo se poderia dizer da arte. Não é apenas uma parte da vida social como por exemplo se poderia falar da religião. Não se pode dizer que cultura seja algo independente da vida social, algo que nada tenha a ver com a realidade onde existe. Entendida dessa forma, cultura diz respeito a todos os aspectos da vida social, e não se pode dizer que ela existe em alguns contextos e não em outros. Cultura é uma concepção histórica, seja como concepção, seja como dimensão do processo social. Ou seja, a cultura não é algo natural, não é uma decorrência de leis físicas ou biológicas. Ao contrário, a cultura é um produto coletivo da vida humana”.

24) “A natureza, no homem, é inteiramente interpretada pela cultura. As diferenças que poderiam parecer mais ligadas a propriedades biológicas particulares como, por exemplo, a diferença de sexo, não podem ser jamais observadas “em estado bruto” (natural) pois, por

assim dizer, a cultura se apropria delas “imediatamente”: a divisão sexual dos papéis e das tarefas nas sociedades resulta fundamentalmente de cultura e por isso varia de uma sociedade para outra. Nada é puramente natural no homem. Mesmo as funções humanas que correspondem a necessidades fisiológicas, como a fome, o sono, o desejo sexual, etc., são informados pela cultura: as sociedades não dão exatamente as mesmas respostas a estas necessidades”.

25) “Toda cultura é um processo permanente de construção, desconstrução e reconstrução. O que varia é a importância de cada fase, segundo as situações”.

26) “O estudo da cultura exige que consideremos a transformação constante por que passam as sociedades, uma transformação de suas características e das relações entre categorias, grupos e classes sociais no seu interior”.

27) “O fato de que as tradições de uma cultura possam ser identificáveis não quer dizer que não se transformem, que não tenham sua dinâmica. Nada do que é cultural pode ser estanque, porque a cultura faz parte de uma realidade onde a mudança é um aspecto fundamental”.

28) “[...] as identidades culturais não são rígidas nem, muito menos, imutáveis. São resultados sempre transitórios e fugazes de processos de identificação”.

29) “[...] a população nacional foi constituída com contingentes originários de várias partes do mundo. Tudo isso se reflete no plano cultural. Existem realidades culturais internas à nossa sociedade que podem ser tratadas, e muitas vezes o são, como se fossem culturas estranhas. [...] É importante considerar a diversidade cultural interna à nossa sociedade; isso é de fato essencial para compreendermos melhor o país em que vivemos. Mesmo porque essa diversidade não é só feita de idéias; ela está também relacionada com as maneiras de atuar na vida social, é um elemento que faz parte das relações sociais no país. A diversidade também se constitui de maneiras diferentes de viver, cujas razões podem ser estudadas, contribuindo dessa forma para eliminar preconceitos e perseguições de que são vítimas grupos e categorias de pessoas”.

30) “[...] uma plataforma firme para o respeito e a dignidade nas relações humanas”.

31) “Só se pode propriamente respeitar a diversidade cultural se se entender a inserção dessas culturas particulares na história mundial”.

32) “Como outras instituições européias, o carnaval foi transportado para o Novo Mundo, especialmente para aquela parte que foi colonizada pelos católicos do Mediterrâneo. O uso de fantasias e máscaras era um costume tradicional europeu, e mesmo algumas das fantasias favoritas seguiram modelos europeus, dos hussardos e arlequins do Rio aos pierrôs e polichinelos de Trinidad. O desfile das Escolas de Samba do Rio de hoje segue a tradição dos cortejos e carros alegóricos da Florença e da Nuremberg do século XV. Mesmo as referências políticas na Europa, por exemplo, na Espanha do século XVII”.

33) “A história de todas as culturas é a história do empréstimo cultural”.

34) “Todas as culturas são o resultado de uma mixórdia”.

35) “Hoje, todas as culturas são culturas de fronteira”.

36) “[...] processos socioculturais nos quais estruturas ou práticas discretas, que existiam de forma separada, se combinam para gerar novas estruturas, objetos e práticas”.

37) “[...] isso ocorre de modo não planejado ou é resultado imprevisto de processos migratórios, turísticos e de intercâmbio econômico ou comunicacional. Mas freqüentemente a hibridação surge da criatividade individual e coletiva. Não só nas artes, mas também na vida cotidiana e no desenvolvimento tecnológico. Busca-se *reconverter* um patrimônio (uma fábrica, uma capacitação profissional, um conjunto de saberes e técnicas) para reinseri-lo em novas condições de produção e mercado”.

38) “Ao se falar de cultura, não podemos deixar de pensar em sua estreita relação com o pensamento e a língua”.

39) “[...] é um etnocentrismo transformado em ideologia que se apresenta como via de salvação para os grupos subalternos”.

40) “A idéia de base é que ou os povos “outros” se “moldam” à civilização ocidental ou são indignos de ser considerados entidades respeitáveis”.

41) “As culturas nascem de relações sociais que são sempre relações desiguais. Desde o início, existe então uma hierarquia de fato entre as culturas que resulta da hierarquia social. Pensar que não há hierarquia entre as culturas seria supor que as culturas existem independentemente umas das outras, sem relação umas com as outras, o que não corresponde à realidade”.

42) “[...] uma cultura dominada não é necessariamente uma cultura alienada, totalmente dependente. É uma cultura que, em sua evolução, não pode desconsiderar a cultura dominante (a recíproca também é verdadeira, ainda que em grau menor), mas que pode resistir em maior ou menor escala à imposição cultural dominante”.

43) “Em um dado espaço social, existe sempre uma hierarquia cultural”.

44) “As culturas e sociedades humanas se relacionam de modo desigual. As relações internacionais registram desigualdades de poder em todos os sentidos, os quais hierarquizam de fato os povos e nações. Este é um fato evidente da história contemporânea e não há como refletir sobre cultura ignorando essas desigualdades. É necessário reconhecê-las e buscar sua superação”.

45) “Uma cultura dominante não pode se impor totalmente a uma cultura dominada como um grupo pode fazê-lo em relação a um outro grupo mais fraco. A dominação cultural nunca é total e definitivamente garantida e por esta razão, ela deve sempre ser acompanhada de um trabalho para inculcar esta dominação cujos efeitos não são jamais unívocos; eles são às vezes “efeitos perversos”, contrários às expectativas dos dominantes, pois sofrer a dominação não significa necessariamente aceitá-la”.

Chapter 2

1) “[...] não caberia à língua expressar a cultura e, sim, ao discurso”.

2) “Se língua o conceito de língua pode ser entendido como um sistema de signos, de regras, um objeto pronto, acabado, um código de que se serve uma comunidade lingüística para expressar suas idéias, o ensino volta-se para a compreensão do funcionamento da língua, desvinculado do contexto sócio-econômico e cultural no qual estão inseridos os sujeitos falantes. [...] Se, no entanto, a língua é vista como um meio de interação utilizado pelos homens de uma determinada sociedade para se fazer compreender e ser compreendidos, não se pode conceber o ensino de línguas dissociado da cultura”.

3) “Há possibilidade de se ensinar e aprender outras línguas e conhecer outras culturas sem que para isso seja necessário cultivar-se tais línguas e tais culturas”.

4) “Relacionar cultura e ensino de línguas é reconhecer a importância que essa fusão exerce diante de uma “política de ensino de línguas” voltada para diferentes culturas, suscitando no aprendiz uma abertura para o mundo do outro, ao mesmo tempo em que visa à afirmação de sua própria identidade cultural”.

5) “[...] nós sempre seremos capazes de discriminar conceitos que não fazem parte de nossa cultura, quando isto se fizer necessário. Logo, a compreensão de uma nova cultura ou de uma cultura estranha a nós [...] *é essencialmente uma questão de negociar as distâncias entre esta cultura e a nossa*”.

6) “O professor precisa oferecer aos alunos não apenas informações sobre os fenômenos culturais, mas possibilitar uma reflexão crítica sobre esses fenômenos. Essa reflexão sobre uma cultura diferente da sua faz com que os alunos passem a refletir criticamente sobre a sua própria cultura, não para desvalorizar o que é brasileiro e valorizar o que é estrangeiro. Mas ao contrário, perceber que as diferenças fazem parte da identidade cultural de um povo”.

7) “A abordagem do conceito de cultura que permeia o ensino de línguas estrangeiras centra-se, muitas vezes, no seu aspecto visível, limitando-se a apresentações de fatos históricos, pontos geográficos, tipos de comida, etc., negligenciando seus aspectos invisíveis. Assim sendo, não fomenta a sensibilidade do aluno para questões que dizem respeito às construções de sentido que ocorrem no cruzamento de culturas, em outras palavras, não o habilita a ser um falante intercultural”.

8) “A perspectiva intercultural deve privilegiar atividades e atitudes que promovam um verdadeiro diálogo entre culturas. Este processo passa pela conscientização dos elementos da própria cultura do aluno, preservando-lhe a própria identidade cultural de brasileiro e, ao mesmo tempo, estimulando a criticidade e o respeito pelas demais culturas veiculadas pelas línguas estrangeiras. Nesta perspectiva, deve-se pretender o desenvolvimento de um ensino de línguas não como forma de dominação de uma cultura, tida como superior sobre outra, tida como inferior. ...Nesta perspectiva, a política mais sensata é estimular-se o ensino de línguas estrangeiras como um *diálogo intercultural* e conforme defende Roossel (1983), deve-se promover um ensino que possa fazer do nosso aluno um indivíduo predisposto a ser um cidadão do mundo, mas sem perder a sua identidade de brasileiro”.

9) “[...] para proteger de fato nossa língua, temos que tornar nossa economia poderosa e nossa cultura tão charmosa que nenhuma outra nos tente”.

Chapter 3

- 1) “[...] saber Inglês é hoje em dia fundamental para que você possa fazer parte da sociedade e dela participar como cidadão de fato”. (“APRESENTAÇÃO”, lines 5-6).
- 2) “Há muito o inglês passou a adquirir um caráter de “língua universal”. Basta você prestar atenção a tudo que o(a) cerca: *outdoors*, propagandas em geral, lojas, restaurantes, revistas, etc. Por essa razão, saber inglês é hoje em dia fundamental para que você possa fazer parte da sociedade e dela participar como cidadão de fato”.
- 3) “[...] saber inglês hoje em dia é fundamental para que você possa fazer parte da sociedade e dela participar como cidadão de fato”.
- 4) “[...] entre uma língua “exótica” e uma língua “estrangeira” [...], no caso da primeira, nosso interesse em estudá-la se resume a uma curiosidade científica — o prazer de conhecer o estranho e o mítico — ao passo que, no caso da segunda, somos movidos pelo desejo de ampliar os nossos horizontes culturais, de nos lançar a um nível de vida [...]”.
- 5) Her exact words were “English Today é um parceiro indispensável [...]”.
- 6) “Partindo de diálogos que apresentam situações reais de nosso cotidiano, para em seguida explorar as regras que regem esse idioma [...]”.
- 7) “[...] você vai encontrar aqui o Inglês vivo, dinâmico, prático, perfeitamente adaptado às suas reais necessidades de estudante brasileiro”.
- 8) “**English Today** é um parceiro indispensável. Partindo de diálogos que apresentam situações reais de nosso cotidiano, para em seguida explorar as regras que regem esse idioma”.
- 9) “[...] diálogos (em Inglês) que apresentam situações reais de nosso cotidiano [...] você vai encontrar aqui o Inglês vivo [...] perfeitamente adaptado às suas reais necessidades de estudante brasileiro”.
- 10) “diálogos que apresentam situações reais de nosso cotidiano”.
- 11) “você vai encontrar aqui...”.
- 12) “Esta coleção tem como meta principal apresentar um material não só eficiente, mas ao mesmo tempo agradável, totalmente adequado às necessidades do aluno brasileiro”.
- 13) “Esta coleção tem como meta principal [...]”.
- 14) “[...] apresentar um material não só eficiente, mas ao mesmo tempo agradável, totalmente adequado às necessidades do aluno brasileiro”.
- 15) “Não é possível chegar a lugar algum no ensino de qualquer matéria sem que sejam analisados todos os lados possíveis das necessidades do estudante”.

16) “Um “syllabus” é sempre muito explícito e deve ser a base de sustentação de um livro didático de língua estrangeira”.

17) “É lógico que um *syllabus*, para ser perfeito, não poderia ser somente um *grammatical syllabus*. Era preciso haver compatibilidade entre a gramática e as convenções do uso da língua, já que forma gramatical e uso gramatical não são a mesma coisa. Tal tipo de ensino gramatical não preenche as necessidades de um aprendizado completo de uma língua”.

18) “Não estaremos propriamente ensinando a gramática da língua, mas suas estruturas. É óbvio que não podemos conhecer uma língua sem conhecer seu *syllabus grammatical*”.

19) “[...] se nós perdemos de vista a significação da palavra, perdemos a própria palavra, que fica, assim, reduzida à sua realidade física, acompanhada do processo fisiológico de sua produção. O que faz da palavra uma palavra é sua significação”.

20) “Hoje é amplamente reconhecido que a tarefa de adquirir uma língua é também a de adquirir seu sistema gramatical, porém com controles explícitos, como: a) ministrar as estruturas mais simples antes das mais complexas; b) dar o regular antes do irregular”.

21) “A característica mais comum é a presença esporádica de algum personagem brasileiro, sem que os conteúdos sejam apresentados a partir do ponto de vista específico de um brasileiro. Se isso fosse feito, o livro didático talvez auxiliasse o aprendiz brasileiro a desenvolver uma perspectiva específica para a sua reflexão sobre a aprendizagem da língua estrangeira”.

22) “Não se apresentam as perspectivas diferenciadas (de brasileiros e de estrangeiros, por exemplo) na abordagem dos temas das unidades e dos textos dos livros, nem mesmo é freqüente, conforme assinalado acima, a construção de um lugar próprio para o brasileiro”.

23) “A língua inglesa é representada predominantemente como objeto neutro de comunicação e transmissão de informações. [...] a perspectiva da neutralidade da língua também contribui para a construção da unidade, pois, ao ser representada como objeto homogêneo, uno e uniforme, ela se torna um bem acessível a todos em igual medida e possibilita a comunicação perfeita”.

24) “No discurso colonial, a negação das diferenças faz parte da retórica do colonizador, pois cria um efeito de diminuição da distância entre colonizador e colonizado e uma pretensa aproximação”.

25) “[...] até porque a gente vai fazer isso toda aula. Alguns textos serão mais longos e outros mais curtos”.

26) “Bem, agora vamos fazer um exercício pra relaxar, ok?!”.

27) “Pra fazer uma coisa diferente, vamos fazer uma segunda questão com frases interrogativas e negativas pra, então, vocês formularem frases no futuro e perguntarem um pro outro”.

28) “Usamos quando algo está dentro de outra coisa”.

29) “Usamos quando algo está sobre outra coisa”.

ATTACHMENTS