

Queer English Language Teaching in Brazil: A Critical Discourse Study

Márcio Evaristo Beltrão^{1,2*} Antonio Henrique Coutelo de Moraes^{1,2,3}

1. Postgraduate Program in Language Sciences, Catholic University of Pernambuco, 526 Príncipe Street, Recife 50050-900, Brazil

2. Postgraduate Program in Language Studies, Federal University of Mato Grosso, 2367 Fernando Correa da Costa Street, Cuiabá 78060-900, Brazil

3. Postgraduate Program in Education, Federal University of Rondonópolis, 5055 Estudantes Avenue, Rondonópolis 78736-900, Brazil

* E-mail of the corresponding author: marcioevaristobeltrao@gmail.com

Abstract

Although the school is one of the main environments in which LGBTQIA+phobia can be fought, the discussion on gender and sexuality issues in pedagogical scenarios is increasingly losing ground in Brazil, mainly due to the lack of educational policies on the subject in this country. In this perspective, our objective is to verify if and how Brazilian English language teachers carry out queer pedagogical practices in their classes. For that, we seek to base ourselves on Fairclough (2003), Louro (1997), Mazzaro (2021), Moita Lopes & Fabrício (2013), among others. The methodology, of an analytical nature, allowed the analysis of statements by three English teachers who work in different Brazilian contexts (Goiás, Mato Grosso and Pernambuco). Data were collected from the application of an online questionnaire and, as an analytical instrument, the Faircloughian Critical Discourse Analysis was used. The results indicate that the fear of discussing issues of gender and sexuality continues in the Brazilian school environment today. It is concluded that, with the weakening of democracy, there is also an outline of the weakening of all achievements, especially those of marginalized groups such as the LGBTQIA+ community.

Keywords: Critical discourse analysis, queer, English language, teaching,

DOI: 10.7176/RHSS/13-10-02

Publication date: May 31st 2023

1. Introduction

Brazil is one of the countries where more LGBTQIA+ people are murdered in the world. LGBTQIA+ is the acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transvestites and trans people, queer, intersex and asexual people. Initially, the most common term was GLS; however, with the growth of the movement against LGBTQIA+phobia and the encouragement of free sexual expression, the acronym was changed to GLBT and, later, to LGBT, with the letter L going to the beginning of the acronym to give visibility to lesbian women and the addition of the letter T to represent trans people and transvestites. From the end of the first decade of the 2000s, the “QIA+” was added to the acronym, seeking to represent the “questioned” or the “queer” (Gold 2018) and intersex and asexual people.

According to the Gay Group of Bahia (GGB), with data from 2021, there is one death every 29 hours. However, the real number must be even higher, since many cases are not officially registered. The school is one of the main environments in which LGBTQIA+phobia can be fought since it is a space of constant human and social formation. However, the discussion on gender and sexuality issues in pedagogical scenarios is increasingly losing ground, mainly due to the lack of educational policies on the subject.

With the objective of verifying if and how English Language teachers carry out queer pedagogical practices in their classes, this paper analyzes the statements of three English teachers who work in different Brazilian contexts (Goiás, Mato Grosso and Pernambuco). Data were collected from the application of an online questionnaire and, as an analytical tool, Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough 2003) will be used, through the category Interdiscursivity of the representational meaning of discourse. Thus, at first, brief comments will be made on queer theories and language teaching. Then, the methodology of the work will be presented, based on the explanation of concepts about Fairclough's CDA and the construction of the work corpus. In the next section, the data will be analyzed and, finally, brief considerations will be made about the study carried out.

This research was appreciated by the Ethics Committee of the Catholic University of Pernambuco (UNICAP/PE), with the title “Queer Teaching of Foreign Languages: a critical study of discourse”. The survey received a favorable opinion (CAAE 59756022.0.0000.5206) and all participants signed the Free and Informed Consent Form, authorizing the analysis and dissemination of statements issued in the applied questionnaires.

2. Queer theories and language teaching

The use of the term queer to refer to sexual communities that do not follow the heteronormative matrix on gender and sexuality has been a fact of the English language since the 18th century. However, as Mazzaro (2021)

points out, its reappropriation as an indicator of a political identity has been spread around the world from 1990 onwards. Used as an insult, the word queer means “veado” (fag), “bicha” (faggot), “boiola” (sissy) when translated into Portuguese in the Brazilian context. Nonetheless, the reappropriation and re-signification of the term queer gains a great reach in militancy groups and academics from two historical events: sixty HIV-positive activists founded a protest group calling themselves queer and a professor coined the expression Queer Theory for academic meetings on homosexuality at a recognized university in the United States (Mazzaro 2021).

For Tomaz Tadeu da Silva (2004 p. 107), queer epistemology is “perverse, subversive, impertinent, irreverent and profane”. Through it, it is possible to critically understand concepts related to the various ways of experiencing sexuality. In this regard, it is important to highlight that the relationship between sex, gender and sexuality has changed over the years. Until the mid-nineteenth century, it was believed in isoformism, that is, in the existence of only one sex, which unfolded into two genders (Santos 2016). Medicine established the existence of only one genital, varying in appearance: men had their sexual organs exposed and women had their genitals internally. In this way, the vagina was understood as an inverted penis, located inside the organism.

From the studies of the theorist Michel Foucault ([1976] 1997, [1977] 1994), the social construction of sexuality and its emergence as an instance of the subject's truth began to be demonstrated in the academic field. In this wake, there was a power game between psychological knowledge, social knowledge and medical knowledge about the subject. Foucault ([1976] 1997) argues that sex was brought into discourse due to nineteenth-century bourgeois moralism. In this context, the establishment of a generalized sexualization process was centered mainly on children and on the responsibility of the family for the function of observing and carrying out the sexual control of its members (Duarte 2004).

From a political perspective, sexualities considered illegitimate were considered a confrontation with established powers. In this way, any form of sexual manifestation that escaped political interests should be repressed. This prohibitive behavior is addressed by Foucault ([1976] 1997) as a repressive hypothesis. However, at the same time that there was sexual repression, the instigation on the subject of sexuality was increasing. As Rodrigues (2016) points out, confessions took place in the church; in literature, sex is detailed, as in the works of the Marquis de Sade; in medicine, psychiatry studied perversions; and in rationality, the need to regulate sex through useful and public discourses and not through the rigor of prohibition was observed (Foucault [1976] 1997).

For Butler (2010), the notion of gender does not stem from sex, since the sex/gender distinction is arbitrary. The researcher indicates that sex is not natural, but, like gender, something discursive and cultural. In this way, accepting sex as something natural and gender as culturally constructed and determined data would also be accepting that gender would express an essence of the subject (Rodrigues 2016). Another important point discussed by Butler (2010) is that the body has nothing that can be considered natural, since it is constructed as the child is educated through social instruments of power that lead them to transform themselves into a man or woman. Thus, it is observed that “gender is a complexity whose totality is permanently deferred, never fully what it is at any given juncture in time.” (Butler 2010 p. 37).

With the theoretical apparatus of Connel (1995), Louro (1997) explains that, in the understanding of gender, social practice is directed to bodies. In this perspective, gender is the way in which sexual characteristics are understood, represented or inserted in social practice and is part of the historical process. For the author, genders are constructed through social relations, in which gender inequalities are also produced based on “social arrangements, history, conditions of access to society's resources and forms of representation” (Louro 1997 p. 22. Our translation.).

Understood as a contemporary phenomenon, Weeks (2002 p. 6) argues that sexuality “is the product of a host of autonomous and interacting traditions and social practices: religious, moral, economic, familial, medical, juridical”. In this sense, sexuality is as much related to words, images, ritual and desire as it is to the body (Weeks 1993). According to Louro (1997), people can exercise it in different ways, as sexual identities are constituted according to the way sexuality is experienced (with partners of the same sex, of different sex, of both sexes or without partners).

Santos (2016 p. 111) defines gender identity as the way a person feels and wants to be socially recognized. A person can identify as a man, as a woman, as both, as a transvestite, as a crossdresser or even partially identify in any of these categories. It is worth mentioning that, when we talk about identities, in addition to the political function (providing visibility and including self-identifications), such terms are used to facilitate understanding, as there is not always a consensus among the Brazilian LGBTQIA+ population on such concepts (Santos 2016). In turn, sexual orientation is how the attraction is intended. Heterosexual is someone who is attracted to people of a different gender, homosexual is attracted to people of the same gender, asexual is not attracted to either gender, and pansexual is someone whose attraction occurs regardless of gender.

Studies on gender and sexuality entered several areas of research, such as Applied Linguistics (hereinafter AL), which initially emerged as a discipline focused on teaching foreign languages. However, over the years, the rigid definition of the object of study of AL and the tasks of applied linguists have been altered. Carvalho (2010)

points out that, from the debates held at applied linguistics conferences, it is observed that practically all fields of human activity in which language plays a relevant role are of interest to AL, both in terms of theoretical aspects and the practical ones. Therefore, as it encompasses different areas, AL focuses on investigating language as a social practice.

For Maingueneau (1996), applied linguistics brings together concepts and methods chosen in various scientific and technical domains, such as psychology and sociology. Thus, the applied linguist has the role of being the mediator between practice and a diverse network of disciplinary sources. With regard to language teaching specifically, disciplines such as general education, political and historical studies, anthropology and psychology of learning are central to the process of solving learning problems (Smith 2000). In the last decades, due to the constant problematizations about the use of language in issues involving gender and sexuality, a specific area of applied linguistics began to gain prominence in universities, called by many scholars as queer linguistics.

It is worth mentioning that, as Borba (2015) points out, in Brazil, several scholars discuss issues of language, gender and sexual diversities without necessarily using the term “queer linguistics” to name the studies they carry out, however they have a clear influence coming from this area, such as Moita Lopes and Fabricio (2013), Borba (2015) and Rocha (2014). Initially, queer linguistics was defined as the study of language-in-use augmented with ideas from queer theory (Barrett 2002), in which the focus was on describing how LGBTQIA+ people used language in various social practices. With the expansion of studies in AL, queer linguistics has been re-signified and is currently configured as an area of investigation that studies the semantic-pragmatic space between dominant oppressive discourses (such as heteronormativity) and linguistic performance (Borba 2015).

In recent years, there has been a growing interest among Brazilian researchers in investigating how social practices legitimize and naturalize LGBTQIA+phobic discourses. Among them are Urzêda-Freitas (2018) and Beltrão (2020). This occurs because, in recent decades, several discourses on sexuality have emerged socially and have been transformed into objects of study in areas such as linguistics, psychology and anthropology. From the social changes that have occurred over the years, it is observed that the diversity of sexual and gender meanings and categories is unstable and multifaceted (Borba 2015). One factor that exemplifies this constant redefinition of concepts and understandings about queer studies is the acronym used to refer to people who do not follow the social conventions for gender and sexuality imposed by heteronormality. Initially called GLS (gays, lesbians and sympathizers), the various forms of social representation and experience of sexuality were presented discursively, changing the acronym to LGBTQIA+, among others socially used.

By analyzing how linguistic and semiotic mechanisms are used to maintain social relations of power and exclusion, this work uses the theoretical and methodological contribution of Critical Discourse Analysis (hereinafter CDA), by Norman Fairclough (2003). The main focus of Fairclough's CDA is social change based on discursive change, based on the idea that both are mutually implicated. Due to this, it proposes to discuss and problematize the aspects of the discourse considered opaque regarding social inequalities, which highlights its emancipatory character. Thus, the choice of CDA as an analytical tool and theoretical support for data analysis in this work is consistent with a queer perspective, since the LGBTQIA+ community is a social group that suffers from various forms of oppression through naturalized and legitimized excluding discourses.

3. Critical Discourse Analysis

Coined by Norman Fairclough in 1985 and consolidated in linguistic studies in the early 1990s, Critical Discourse Analysis is simultaneously considered a method, an approach, a theory and a methodology (Gouveia 2013). In CDA, language is understood as an irreducible part of social life, in which discourse is an inherent element of all social practices. In this way, Fairclough's theory seeks to understand the semioses in their various modalities, that is, the verbal and non-verbal linguistic manifestations. Therefore, the context plays a crucial role in its constitution, since social life is an interconnected network of various social practices and each one (such as religious rituals, medical care, activities in the classroom, family relationships, among others) is the result of the combination of specific social elements (power relations, historical contexts and social subjects involved in the practices).

In Fairclough's (2003) critical studies, the term discourse can be understood in two ways. As an abstract noun, discourse is an element of social practices, treated as ways of representing aspects of the world, such as the processes, relationships and structures of the material world, the mental world and the social world, relating it to all semiotic elements that integrate social life (Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999). In turn, in a more concrete perspective, treated as a countable noun and based on Foucauldian concepts, the term discourse is used to refer to different ways of meaning and structuring areas of knowledge and social practices from a particular perspective (Fairclough, 2003), such as the medical, feminist or sexist discourse, among others.

For Batista Junior, Sato & Melo (2018 p. 9), an analysis based on CDA does not focus only on the articulation between the words present in an utterance or on the choices of terms with an ideological semantic load used in discourses of oppression and domination. Supported by Fairclough (2013), the authors point out that

CDA proposes to explain social phenomena, revealing the way in which discourse, understood as language in use, participates in this oppressive construction of society, stabilizing and naturalizing social distortions.

When carrying out an analytical work based on Faircloughian studies, it is of paramount importance that the researcher pay attention to the meanings of the discourse present in the discursive instances selected for analysis, since, according to Fairclough (2003), it is through three meanings that discourse appears as part of the social practices that occur through the relationship between text and events. Named as identificational, actional and representational meanings, each one of them corresponds to a mode of interaction between discourse and social practice. The identificational meaning relates to the way of being, the actional to the way of acting and the representational to the way of representing.

The three proposed meanings of discourse are also related to elements of the orders of discourse, which are understood as a way in which varieties of discourses and different types of discourse are put together in the network of social practices. For Fairclough (2003), it is through them that instances of language use are carried out, in written or oral texts, based on three elements: styles, discourses and genres. From this perspective, the identificational meaning is related to styles, which are a type of language used by a particular group of people and related to their identity (Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999). In turn, the actional meaning is related to genres, which are a type of language operationalized in a particular social activity. Finally, the representational meaning is related to discourses, that is, to a type of language used to construct some aspect of reality from a particular perspective.

For each meaning, there are a number of analytical categories. Through them, it is possible to carry out a “comparison of data, obtained through speeches and symbols, with the theoretical assumptions of different conceptions of the world, of the individual and of society” (Franco 2007 p. 31. Our Translation.). In this work, the analysis of the statements will be based on the representational meaning of the discourse, through the analytical category Interdiscursivity. For Resende & Ramalho (2006), interdiscursivity is the heterogeneity of a text in terms of the articulation of different discourses. In this perspective, carrying out an interdiscursive analysis is to identify how the discourses are articulated, fulfilling two stages: the survey of the central themes represented (subjects) and the identification of the particular perspective through which they are represented (Resende & Ramalho 2006).

In the next section, the context in which the data were collected and the participants involved in the research will be presented.

4. The construction of the corpus

The historical cut of this research is 2022, which was the last year of government of the President of the Republic of Brazil, Jair Messias Bolsonaro. Bolsonaro's mandate was marked by major historical-social ruptures due to the growth and legitimation of conservative movements, in discourses combating gender and sexuality policies. In 2019, a decree of the Presidency of the Republic (no. 9,759 of April 11, 2019) determined the extinction of a series of public policy councils linked to various areas in the federal government, among which the CNCD/LGBT. In turn, at the end of 2021, decree no. 10,883 (December 6, 2021) ended the existence of a body exclusively dedicated to policies for LGBTQIA+ in the federal government.

In the midst of this scenario of setbacks, language teaching with a queer perspective has become fragile. In a conjunctural analysis, it is observed that the political movement to withdraw the discussion about gender and sexuality from educational public policies drastically reduced the support that teachers had to carry out pedagogical practices based on respect for gender and sexual diversities in the classroom. From the moment that states and prefectures sanctioned education plans without mentioning the term “gender” and “sexual orientation” (including the National Curricular Common Base, henceforth BNCC), a dismantling of public policies for LGBTQIA+ began to materialize in the Brazilian education networks.

In order to understand how English teachers are resisting this historic moment of setbacks in Brazilian education, three teachers who work in public schools in the country were interviewed. With the aim of observing how English language teaching based on gender and sexuality issues is being developed in different contexts in Brazil, each participant invited to the research is from a different Brazilian region. For ethical reasons, their names will be preserved, being cited throughout the work by the following pseudonyms: Glória, Aretuza and Pablllo. These pseudonyms were chosen as a way to honor three Brazilian drag queens: Glória Groove, Aretuza Lovi and Pablllo Vittar. Through intense resistance work, they are conquering space in the Brazilian music scene and, due to them, drag queen singers are having their songs performed on national radio stations, which denotes a historic movement in the country, especially when considering the conservative government that the country has.

The three teachers participating in the research are graduates in Portuguese Language and English Language, as follows: Glória teaches in Cuiabá, Mato Grosso; Aretuza in Recife, Pernambuco; and Pablllo in Santa Fé de Goiás, Goiás.

Regarding the data collection methodology, online questionnaires were applied to the three participants of

this research. Marconi and Lakatos (1999 p. 100) reiterate that, when applying a questionnaire, it is necessary to explain to the interviewee “the nature of the research, its importance and the need for answers, trying to awaken the interest of the recipient in filling out and returning the questionnaire within a reasonable period of time”.

Considering these guidelines, in this work, a previous contact with the participants was maintained through e-mail. At the time, the objective of the research was explained and a consent form was shared. Regarding the time for the answer, the questionnaire was sent to the professors on April 20, 2022, and a period of three months was agreed for its return. All teachers sent the completed questionnaire within the established deadline.

5. Data analysis

For Louro (2004 p. 98), the “representations of male and female teachers say something about these subjects, outline their ways and traits, define their contours, characterize their practices”. In this perspective, as a way of understanding how the pedagogical practices on gender and sexuality of each participant are carried out, this section will analyze the representations materialized in the statements of each one. It is important to emphasize that the focus of the analysis will be based on the linguistic materiality of the representational meaning of the speech (Fairclough 2003).

In the questionnaire, teachers were asked about their position in relation to work in the classroom on topics involving gender and sexuality issues. Participants provided the following answers:

Glória: It is essential to consider the subjectivity and historicity of students and teachers from the periphery because they have a lot to say (...). In addition to allowing access to a better world, the prestige represented by knowledge of a foreign language and the desire to discover new professional horizons, fluency in the English language is the order of the day.

Aretuza: Gender and sexuality issues permeate every aspect of my life and, consequently, the classes I teach. I say this very calmly because, despite my will, such issues are already found in the classroom, in the school as a whole and in society in general. I believe that the differential is my intention to constantly problematize these themes, from the most common situations, which would easily go unnoticed, to the complex situations that involve violence and discrimination (...).

Pablo: The curriculum is always very well-tailored, not to mention limited, and this tends to make the options for topics and content scarce. However, the subject teacher is a creative being by nature and gift, and always thinks about bringing to the surface themes as necessary as these in the classroom context. Gender and sexuality are themes that, more than ever, are intertwined in our society as a whole, and I, as a teacher, opinion maker and with the duty to train thinking and active citizens, always try to evoke the discussion of these issues, relating them to my teaching practice and the experience of my students.

In an interdiscursive analysis, the presence of different discourses dialoguing in the participants' utterances is perceived. In her response, Glória argued about how learning the English language can enable students to access a better reality of life (“better world”), making a generalization in her speech, that is, not specifically mentioning LGBTQTIA+ students. However, it is noticed that the teacher suggested that this community be respected in the school environment based on the discourse of valuing subjectivities, in which it is necessary to take into account in school planning the different social profiles existing in the classroom and even the teacher's own subjectivity.

In 1997, Louro already warned about the need for teachers to understand how the process of “manufacturing” subjects occurs and how the school needs to be cautious in this regard, aiming not to strengthen prejudices through the inferiorization of identities and behaviors considered divergent of heteronormative logic. This critical look at oppressive discourses in the school environment directly affects the process of constructing the subjectivity and historicity of those involved in this context, since, as Menezes (2016) points out, subjectivity is manufactured and modeled in the social register, acting in a context in which language and culture assign meaning to our individual experiences. In other words, despite involving both conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions (Guattari 2000), subjectivity is developed from the social. Thus, as mentioned by Glória in her statement, the subjectivity of students and teachers cannot be ignored in the teaching process.

Regarding Aretuza's utterance, a discourse of queer positioning is perceived as a habitual social practice, and not just one-off, that is, the teacher addresses issues of gender and sexuality both in her school routine (“from the most common situations, which would easily go unnoticed”) and in other social contexts of their experience (“sexuality issues permeate every aspect of my life”). In view of the above, it is crucial to highlight a point addressed by Aretuza: the queer teaching work in the daily classroom. Louro (2008) points out that, influenced by multiculturalist teaching programs, many teachers restrict their work on diversities only to commemorative dates, such as International Women's Day.

For Silva (1999), for the curriculum to be democratic and respectful, it is necessary that the problems of diversity be discussed throughout the school course. From her statement, it is observed that Aretuza performs

this practice through an engaged posture. This position of the teacher is of paramount importance since, before trying to understand how the laws and the solemn speeches of the authorities reinforce discrimination, it is necessary that the teacher's gaze returns especially to the daily practices in which all subjects are involved, distrusting what is considered “natural”.

In turn, the participant Pablo begins his statement by approaching the discourse of the curriculum as a limitation of teaching work from a critical perspective. As mentioned before, the removal of terms related to gender and sexuality issues in the main document guiding teaching in Brazil contributed to many teachers feeling restrained from discussing topics related to the LGBTQIA+ community in the classroom (Beltrão 2019). However, Pablo resists this social pressure and highlights that creativity on the part of the teacher can enable queer teaching to be carried out. It can be seen, then, that Pablo has the profile of a critical-reflective teacher, who is in the conduction of his pedagogical work linked to the reflective thinking capacity of human beings as creative in their practical choices. In the Brazilian context, this profile occurs through the perception of social and political problems — such as LGBTQIA+phobia — influencing the construction of school content planning (Alarcão 2008).

The next question in the questionnaire was about what the main difficulties encountered by teachers were in teaching queer foreign languages. They provided the following answers:

Glória: I think that one of the biggest difficulties is that we live in a sexist, misogynistic, homophobic and transphobic country, hence the urgency of thinking about public policies that offer opportunities to those who have always been on the sidelines, not legitimized in their ways of life.

Aretuza: I believe that the greatest difficulty is the fear of being misunderstood when carrying out school tasks and functions. So far, I have not experienced any type of conflict, but sometimes I find myself hesitating in choosing and producing didactic-pedagogical material. At other times, certainly, I would be bolder! I try not to expose myself too much to the coordination, especially in written records such as tests, simulations, and printed activities. I fear that the records may be taken to other contexts and, erroneously, be understood as some kind of “indoctrination”.

Pablo: I realize that the biggest difficulty is the prejudice that has become embedded in society. In my view, we have already advanced a lot in this fight, however, reality is still unfair. The greatest social pathology is the heteronormativity that excludes, makes invisible, marginalizes, and ignores queer subjects through supposed “gender ideology”. It is no different in the school context, which is an extension of our extracurricular life. In schools, there are still some obstacles, such as homophobia and intolerance.

It is observed that the three professors address discourses related to heteronormativity, which, through a constant process of suppression of sexualities considered deviant, naturalizes heterosexuality and cisgenderism as the only legitimate forms of human expression (Welzer-Lang 2001). In her response, Glória highlights the existing social situation in Brazil, in which gender and sexual discrimination prevails, in addition to the absence of public policies aimed at promoting respect and the rights of groups considered socially marginalized.

In turn, Aretuza argues about the caution she has when working on gender and sexuality issues, seeking not to expose herself to the management of the school where she teaches. It is noticed that the teacher adopts this posture for fear of suffering some form of retaliation due to the current situation, since, in her statement, she highlights that she adopted a change of position over the years (“At other times, certainly, I would be bolder”). For Aretuza, this fear is necessary so that her pedagogical practice is not understood as a form of “indoctrination”. When using this term, the presence of the discourse of “gender ideology” is observed in the teacher's response, which, for Junqueira (2018), is a neological syntagm, a rhetorical and persuasive artifact with the aim of triggering new strategies of political mobilization and intervention in the public arena.

In common sense, “gender ideology” is seen by conservative groups in society as a form of indoctrination carried out by the LGBTQIA+ community, which encourages the school to go against family values, which are guided by religious issues. Another fear of these groups is that the gender ideology induces children to be homosexual or transsexual, since, for them, the biological sex defines both the gender and the sexuality of the person, heterosexuality being understood as “natural”. This erroneous conception of gender and sexuality makes many teachers feel intimidated to hold discussions on this subject in the classroom, as is the case of Aretuza.

Participant Pablo also brought in his statement the discourse of “gender ideology”, arguing that, through him, heteronormativity “excludes, makes invisible, marginalizes and ignores queer subjects”. By bringing these terms, the teacher highlights the historical process of marginalization of LGBTQIA+ people, who are considered abject subjects, that is, they are recognized as an intolerable, highly disgusting, and threatening element for having an identity recognizable as impure (Kristeva 1980). As a way of legitimizing this social exclusion, as mentioned by Pablo, “gender ideology” works as a social mechanism that regulates social discourses of oppression of queer people, based on a marked and incisive presence of religious activism, which envisions a reactionary, fundamentalist, Catholic-based offensive that unfolds on transnational bases (Garbagnoli 2014).

It is important to emphasize that, according to Junqueira (2018 p. 451. Our translation.), “gender ideology” engages “sectors and groups interested in promoting a morally regressive political agenda, especially (but not only) oriented to contain or nullify advances and transformations” in relation to issues of gender, sex, and sexuality. By carrying out this annulment, an unjust society is maintained, as mentioned by Aretuza in his statement. In Brazil, this movement gained emphasis mainly in the presidential elections in Brazil in 2018, in which the discourse “gender ideology” was the main focus of discussion of the political scenario that the country was experiencing. Miskolci (2022) historically contextualizes this discourse, emphasizing that, due to the recognition of same-sex unions by the Federal Supreme Court, an extreme right-wing deputy attracted media attention by denouncing anti-discrimination material in schools, dubbing it as “gay kit”. The factoid was triggered between 2014 and 2016, preventing the adoption of a gender perspective in the National Education Plan and its state and municipal counterparts, spreading fear across Brazil in relation to a supposed “gender ideology”.

In the questionnaire, the research participants also responded about how they observe the position of the students towards the LGBTQIA+ community. The following responses were granted:

Glória: The practices of the students are usually welcoming, as they already suffer a lot of prejudice on a daily basis.

Aretuza: I can say that, in my context, the vast majority of students are very receptive and respectful. It may be that my posture can intimidate situations of prejudice, as I have never witnessed any. However, I have witnessed several situations involving my peers. I've heard, for example, that “gays go to hell”, that “homosexuality is a fad”, that effeminate students are “the heartbreak of the family”.

Pablo: I have been in education for seven years and, being a queer teacher, I have lived many stories in this context (...). In my experience, I realize that we have evolved and that students are increasingly willing to learn about what belongs to the LGBTQIA+ community and the difficulties that this community constantly faces in the social context. On the other hand, the teachers, despite not being disrespectful, are a little more resistant, perhaps insecure, to deal with this subject. This can be explained by the reverberation of a limited, restrictive, exclusive, prejudiced, and heteronormative teaching of a few years ago.

In their statements, the three professors highlighted the receptiveness of most students towards people who do not follow the heteronormative logic of gender and sexuality. Terms such as “welcoming” (Pablo), “respectful” (Aretuza) and “willing” (Pablo) were used by them to reinforce this posture in their answers. However, Aretuza emphasizes an important point: such a posture can occur because she works on these subjects in her classes, which can inhibit students from showing some form of prejudice. To carry out this reflection, she brings oppressive speeches that her fellow teachers have produced, such as “gays go to hell” and “homosexuality is a fad” and that effeminate students are “the heartbreak of the family”, which depart from common sense and are socially legitimized as a way of oppressing LGBTQIA+ people.

These discourses are made up of ideologies that constitute the subjects and, sometimes, this ideological nature becomes opaque, naturalized and automated (Fairclough, 2001), which even makes it difficult to recognize the existence of an ideology underlying human decision-making rationality. In this way, when experiencing experiences based on the understanding that homosexuals are condemned and abject beings, social subjects build prejudiced identities, not allowing themselves to reflect on whether their posture is discriminatory, since this ideology was constructed from a series of discursive events. However, it is important to highlight that, according to Fairclough (2001), ideology is not a property of structure or events, but of ideological formations, which can be deconstructed through a constant process of self-emancipation.

When emphasizing that students have welcoming practices in the school environment, it is observed that, socially, this discriminatory ideological formation is not unanimity and that practices of respect for diversity are beginning to be strengthened in the school environment. However, participant Pablo pointed out that teachers still resist dealing with gender and sexuality issues in the school environment, which can result, according to the teacher, in teaching that is “limited, restrictive, exclusive, prejudiced and heteronormative”. Several factors can contribute to this position, however, in view of the other statements analyzed in this work, it is clear that the current social situation is one of the main causes for this form of educational practice to continue to remain, since the teacher may suffer from being coerced for promoting the allegedly “gender ideology”.

6. Conclusion

From the statements analyzed in this work, it is observed that the fear of discussing issues of gender and sexuality continues in the school environment nowadays. Strengthened by discourses such as “gender ideology”, conservative social groups carry out an inspection of what is worked on in schools as a way of inhibiting teachers from carrying out a queer teaching practice. However, despite these ideological investments, the professors interviewed continue to have a critical eye on such issues and are empathetic with regard to diversities.

The three participants reported the importance of teaching not silencing and repressing identities present not only in the school context, but in other social environments.

The positioning of the participants denotes that they have the “immortality of hope” conceptualized by Bauman (2016). The author argues that, through it, it is possible to reaffirm a posture of resistance to the pressures, norms and oppressions that demand social obedience in the current context of dark times, in which obscurity characterizes the contemporary social world. This scenario provides a growing sense of frustration in relation to the democratic system and promises, in which social subjects believe less and less in the capacity and willingness of political institutions to listen and to meet our demands (Urzêda-Freitas 2018 p. 24). This disbelief directly affects the social construction of the feeling of equity.

In this somber conjuncture, the future becomes even more uncertain and obscure, because, as highlighted by Urzêda-Freitas (2018), with the possibility of weakening democracy, there is also an outline of the weakening of all its achievements, especially those of marginalized groups such as the LGBTQIA+ community. However, despite this insecurity, hope continues in the experience of social subjects, such as the participants of this work. Socially, this hope can be understood as something utopian. However, Celani (1988 p. 173) responds to this possible question: if utopia means a “critical historical commitment, which at the same time sees hope as essential for the true dialogue that leads to transformation”, then it is necessary to have a utopian vision [...], of possibilities not yet realized”.

References

- Alarcão, I. (2008), “Professores reflexivos em uma escola reflexiva”, São Paulo, Cortez Editora.
- Barret, R. (2002), “Is queer theory important for sociolinguistic theory?”, In K. Campbellkibler et al. (eds.), “Language and Sexuality: Contesting meaning in theory and practice”, Stanford, CSLI Press, pp. 25-43.
- Batista J.R., J. R. L., Sato, D. T. B. & Melo, I. F. (2018), “Análise de discurso crítica para linguistas e não linguistas”, São Paulo, Editora Parábola.
- Bauman, Z. (2016), “Babel: entre a incerteza e a esperança”, Rio de Janeiro, Editora Zahar, 2016.
- Beltrão, M. (2020), “Políticas Educacionais para gênero e sexualidade em Mato Grosso: um estudo baseado na análise crítica do discurso”, *PhD Thesis*, Language Institute, UFMT.
- Berutti, E. B. (2010), “Travestis: Retratos do Brasil”, In H. Costa et al. (org.), “Retratos do Brasil homossexual: fronteiras, subjetividades e desejos”, São Paulo, Editora da Universidade de São Paulo, pp. 293-302.
- Borba, R. (2015), “How an individual becomes a subject: discourse, interaction and subjectification at a Brazilian gender identity clinic”, *Working Papers in Urban Language and Literacies* (163).
- Butler, J. (1990), “Gender Trouble. Feminism and the subversion of identity”, New York, Routledge.
- Butler, J. (1997), “Excitable Speech. A Politics of the Performatives”, New York, Routledge.
- Butler, J. (2001), “Corpos que pesam: sobre os limites discursivos do “sexo””, In G. Louro, (org.), “O corpo educado: pedagogias da sexualidade”, Belo Horizonte, Autentica.
- Butler, J. (2006), “Défaire le Genre”, Paris, Éditions Amsterdam.
- Butler, J. (2010), “Problemas de gênero. Feminismo e subversão de identidade”, Rio de Janeiro, Civilização Brasileira.
- Carvalho, J. (2010), “Linguística Aplicada ao ensino de Língua Portuguesa: a oralidade em sala de aula”, *Revista Educação Pública*.
- Celani, M. A. A. (1988), “Ensino de línguas estrangeiras: ocupação ou profissão?”, In V. J. Leffa (org.), “O professor de línguas estrangeiras: construindo a profissão”, Pelotas, Educat.
- Chouliaraki, L. & Fairclough, N. (1999), “Discourse in late modernity: rethinking Critical Discourse Analysis”, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University.
- Connell, R. (1995), “Políticas da masculinidade”, *Educação e Realidade* 20(2).
- Duarte, L. F. D. (2004), “A sexualidade nas Ciências Sociais: leitura crítica das convenções”, In A. Piscitelli, M. F. Gregori & S. Carrara, (org.), “Sexualidades e saberes: convenções e fronteiras”, Rio de Janeiro, Garamond.
- Fairclough, N. (2001), “Discurso e mudança social”, Brasília, Universidade de Brasília.
- Fairclough, N. (2003), “Analysing Discourse”, London and New York, Routledge.
- Franco, M. L. P. B. (2007), “Análise de Conteúdo”, Brasília, Líber Livro Editora.
- Foucault, M. ([1976] 1997), “História da sexualidade I: a vontade de saber”, Rio de Janeiro, Graal.
- Foucault, M. ([1977] 1994), “Le Jeu de Michel Foucault”, In “Ditsetécrits: 1954-1988”, Paris, Gallimard.
- Garbagnoli, S. (2014), “L'ideologia del genere: l'irresistibile ascesa di un'invenzione retorica vaticana contro la denaturalizzazione dell'ordine sessuale”, *AG About Gender* 3(6), Genova.
- Gold, M. (2018), “Sigla LGBTQ+ cresce para ecoar amplidão do espectro de gênero e sexo”, In Folha de São Paulo. Available on: <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br>, access on May 05, 2019.
- Gouveia, C. A. M. (2013), “Análise Crítica do Discurso: dimensões teóricas e metodológicas”, In “Estudos de homenagem a Arnaldo do Espírito Santo”, Lisboa, Centro de Estudos Clássicos.

- Guattari, F. & Rolnik, S. (2000), “Micropolítica: Cartografias do desejo”, Petrópolis, Vozes.
- Kristeva, J. (1980), “Pouvoirs de l’horreur. Approche de l’abjection”, Paris, Editions du Seuil.
- Junqueira, R. D. (2018), “A invenção da “ideologia de gênero”: a emergência de um cenário políticodiscursivo e a elaboração de uma retórica reacionária antigênero”, *Psicologia Política* **18**(43), 449-502.
- Louro, G. L. (1997), “Gênero, sexualidade e educação: uma perspectiva pósestruturalista”, Petrópolis, Vozes.
- Louro, G. L. (2004), “Conhecer, pesquisar escrever”, *Proceedings of 5th ANPED SUL*.
- Louro, G. L. (2008), “Um corpo estranho: ensaios sobre a sexualidade e teoria queer”, Belo Horizonte, Autêntica.
- Maingueneau, D. (1996), “Aborder la linguistique”, Paris, Seuil.
- Marconi, M. A. & Lakatos, E. M. (1999), “Técnicas de pesquisa”, São Paulo, Atlas.
- Mazzaro, D. (2021), “Por uma educação linguística queer: estranhando conceitos e práticas”, *Gragoatá* **26**(56), 1052-1084.
- Menezes, P. (2022), “Ideologia de gênero: o que é qual a polêmica por trás dela”. Available on <https://www.politize.com.br/ideologia-de-genero-questao-de-genero>, access on November 28, 2022.
- Menezes, T. D. (2016), “Identidade e subjetividade: uma reflexão sobre o que é ser mulher”, *Revista Letra Capital* **1**(1), 70-91.
- Miskolci, R. (2022), “Repensando os discursos sobre ideologia de gênero”, *Le Monde Diplomatique*. Available on <https://diplomatique.org.br/repensando-os-estudos-sobre-ideologia-de-genero>, access on December 08, 2022.
- Moita Lopes, L.P. & Fabrício, B. (2013), “Desestabilizações queer na sala de aula: táticas de guerrilha e a compreensão da natureza discursiva dos gêneros e sexualidades”, In B. Fabrício & J. Pinto, (orgs.), “Exclusão social e microresistências: a centralidade das práticas discursivo-identitárias”, Goiânia, Cânone Editorial, pp. 281-299.
- Pedra, C. B. (2016), “O que é travestilidade?”, In M. M. Ramos, P. R. G. Brener & P. A. G. Nicoli, (org.), “Gênero, sexualidade e direito: uma introdução”, Belo Horizonte, Initia Via.
- Resende, V. & Ramalho, V. (2006), “Análise de Discurso Crítica”, São Paulo, Contexto.
- Rocha, L. (2014), “Queer literacies in the Brazilian Public school: performing action research”, In E. Lewis, R. Borba, B. Fabrício & D. Pinto, (eds.), “Queering paradigms: SouthNorth dialogs on queer epistemologies, embodiments and activisms”, Berlin, Peter Lang, pp. 95-115.
- Rodrigues, A. P. K., (2016), “Gênero e sexualidade a partir de Foucault: o longo processo histórico de normalização e normatização dos corpos e das condutas”, *Undergraduate Monograph*, Departamento de Ciências Jurídicas e Sociais, UNIJUÍ.
- Santos, L. M. T. (2016), “O que é transexualidade?”, In M. M. Ramos, P. R. G. Brener & P. A. G. Nicoli, (org.), “Gênero, Sexualidade e Direito: uma introdução”, Belo Horizonte, Initia Via.
- Silva, T. T. (2004), “Documentos de identidade: uma introdução às teorias do currículo”, Belo Horizonte, Autêntica.
- Smith, Richard, (2000), “Developing the History of Applied Linguistics: Introductory Remarks”. Available on warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/al/research/collect/elt_archive/presentations/developing_history_of_applied_linguistics, access on November 28, 2022.
- Urzêda-Freitas, M. T. (2018), “Letramentos queer na formação de professorxs de línguas: complicando e subvertendo identidades no fazer docente”, *PhD Thesis*, Faculdade de Letras, UFG.
- Weeks, J. (1993), “El malestar de la sexualidad. Significados, mitos y sexualidades modernas”, Madrid, Talasa.
- Welzer-Lang, D. (2001), “A construção do masculino: dominação das mulheres e homophobia”, *Revista Estudos Feministas* **9**(2).