REPRESENTATIONS ABOUT THE TEACHING OF PORTUGUESE LANGUAGE IN A RURAL SCHOOL

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▪ ABSTRACT: This research investigates discursive representations about the teaching of the Portuguese Language (PL), in a rural school in the Northern Region of Brazil. We take a transdisciplinary approach to Applied Linguistics and use theoretical assumptions of scientific education and discursive theories of language. Such assumptions inform the qualitative approach of the linguistic analysis carried out. The research data are constituted from a semi-structured interview, carried out before a pedagogical intervention within the scope of the research project **ConGraEduC** (CNPq 441194/2019-2). For this paper, we considered the answers presented by students from basic education to eight out of fifteen questions in a script. For the analysis of the answers, we considered the interweaving between the intra and interdiscourse, in order to investigate the memory evoked by the participants when enunciating about PL and, especially, about grammar. Results suggest that grammar is represented both by a silencing and by the discourse of normativity once students claim not to know it and conceive language as a mere set of rules.

▪ KEYWORDS: mother language; teacher education; discourse.

Introduction

The classroom is a space that reveals representations between different social actors, being students and teachers usually elevated to the role of protagonists. As subjects with specific enunciative positions, they produce discursivities that help to understand the relationship they establish with language in the teaching and learning processes. When enunciating, meanings of learning produced by the students' voices as students of Portuguese Language (PL) come into play, involving theoretical assumptions and

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strongly rooted methodologies. That is, when enunciating, people manifest positions taken in their discourse, revealing identificatory movements under construction and produced in the relationship with the other.

In line with Applied Linguistics (AL), it seems essential to continue to problematize the identity or status that PL teaching has been propagating in Brazilian schools, especially at a time marked by profound social transformations and new demands for the production of knowledge. With the articulation of theoretical and methodological devices of the Pecheudian Discourse Analysis (DA), the dialogue between different areas of knowledge provides a relevant reflection upon what is legitimized in / by the school as opposed to what is desired by most of the actors involved or interested in that institution (BRITO; GUILHERME, 2013).

In this paper, we identify discursive representations about the teaching of PL, in utterances produced by 7th grade students, enrolled in a rural school in Palmas, capital of the State of Tocantins. To this end, we highlight some representations about the teaching of grammar, which is configured as a school language practice about which teachers still express a lot of insecurity (REIS; SILVA; FREITAS, 2021; SILVEIRA; SILVA; REIS, 2019). We also point out some theoretical implications and problematize some implications for the teaching of mother tongue from the identified discourses, as characteristic of the investigative dynamics of research in AL (CAVALCANTI, 2004). We understand that the problematization of discursivities suggests ways to rethink teaching, considering approaches that take language as a social practice.

The analyzed utterances were generated from a semi-structured interview, used as an instrument for characterizing students before the pedagogical intervention planned in the ConGraEduC project, designed to develop students' awareness of the functioning of Brazilian Portuguese grammar.[1] Thus, one intends to inform the intervention by the pedagogical approach of scientific education and, furthermore, to familiarize students with research practices in their own mother tongue (SILVA, 2020).

For this, we mobilize some theoretical-analytical devices of DA, such as the notion of memory, inter and intradiscourse and the notion of discursive resonance (ORLANDI, 2007, 2020; PÊCHEUX, 1997; SERRANI, 1990, 1998, 2001). Parallel to this, AL concepts involving the teaching or study of grammar and literacies are considered in order to discuss the reading gestures arising from the established discursivities (BAGNO, 2000; KLEIMAN, 2013; SIGNORINI, 2004, 2006, 2007, 2012; SILVA, 2011). In this overlapping of areas, some grammatical categories of Systemic-Functional Linguistics (SFL) are used to assist in the examination of the linguistic materiality of the investigated statements (HALLIDAY; MATTHIESSEN, 2014; HODGE, 2017; THOMPSON, 2014). We also take advantage of some theoretical assumptions of SFL to problematize the pedagogical work with and about grammar (MARTIN; ROSE, 2012).

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[1] The ConGraEduC refers to the Project **Con**scientização **Gra**matical pela **Edu**cação **C**ientífica (Grammatical Awareness for Scientific Education Project), approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Federal University of Tocantins (UFT), based on the report 3.457.383. The project is developed in the research group Práticas de Linguagens (PLES) and coordinated by Prof. Dr. Wagner Rodrigues Silva (UFT/CNPq).

Regarding the organization of this paper, in addition to this introduction, final considerations and references, this text comprises four main sections. The first deals with some theoretical conceptions of DA, proposing a dialogue with the field of AL. The second part describes the conditions of production of the research and the procedures involved in the constitution of data. Finally, the third and fourth parts address the analysis of data and the effects of meanings mobilized in the utterances, relating them to some possibilities in the field of AL.

Discursive representations in the language-subject-grammar relationship

Assuming the relevance of the enunciative dimension of language, the school is understood as a space for circulation and stabilization of utterances, produced by human actors in their respective subject-positions. It is of interest to consider these utterances as they direct relevant processes of meaning to understand what is called school discourse.

In the conception of DA, the subject is constituted in / by language, which is responsible for the mediation between men and the natural and social reality that surrounds them (ORLANDI, 2020). That is why, when they enunciate, subjects reveal their affiliations and identification processes, making it possible to track what they say about themselves and the other with whom they interact. Working with this notion makes it possible to study the subjectivity of speakers in view of various objectives, depending on specific theoretical-methodological interests.

In the realm of AL, in which this investigation is situated, we are interested in understanding the teaching-learning processes through discourse. From this dialogue of areas, as Serrani (1990, p. 41, bold in the original) already said in the early days of AL, "the object of study **crosses** the boundaries of the disciplines, which do not participate additively, as mere providers of subsidies, but whose fields are questioned at that intersection". By focusing here specifically on the discourse on the teaching of PL, the transdisciplinary perspective of LA is assumed; the intention is, therefore, to identify the discursive representations of students from the epistemological contributions of both DA and AL.[2]

A significant example in which the interface of these areas can contribute concerns the problematization of the discourses of exclusion marked by the valuation of the standard norm, which in its core, are crossed by political-ideological conceptions strongly historicized by the voices of the North (KLEIMAN, 2013; SIGNORINI, 2004, 2006). That is why the belief that people from socially peripheral groups do not know Portuguese is inscribed in the collective memory of parents, teachers and students. It is a discourse that is frequently reiterated by authorities, established authors, grammarians, print media, among others. This discursive representation corroborates the reduction of language learning to the domain of a standard variety (BAGNO, 2000, 2007; SIGNORINI, 2012).

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[2] All quotations from works written in Portuguese were translated from the original.

As postulated by DA, "the discursive subject works through the unconscious and through ideology" (ORLANDI, 2020, p. 18), producing meanings by taking a stance. These symbolic objects, said by someone, in other places and moments, constitute the memory of the subjects' utterances or the interdiscourse. This means that, when manifested through linguistic materiality (the intradiscourse), effects of meaning are produced between the interlocutors. This is what Pêcheux calls discourse (ORLANDI, 2007, 2020).

In the confrontation between intra and interdiscourse it is possible to outline discursive representations. "What works in the discursive processes is a series of imaginary formations that designate the place that A and B each attribute to themselves and to each other, the image that they make themselves of their own place and the place of the other" (PÊCHEUX, 1997, p. 82). For Pêcheux (1997), the subjects bring with them a set of representations, images created from the other and from themselves, based on the positions they occupy. This is the idea of representation for DA, a game of projections responsible for constituting different and varied identities, which may even affect the choices of the subject.

Investigating the representations built at school about language learning implies examining the complexity that governs the classroom, with a view to problematizing the logic of "clarifying the ignorant in matters of language", in a given school project (SIGNORINI, 2004). In addition, when invited to speak, students can share their experiences, the meanings of learning, making it possible to "regain authorship" (BOHN, 2013) by reflecting on the language, its purpose and its heterogeneity. This depends on the ability of every speaker to know how to operate with the language contextually.

The interest in the students' testimonies will allow us to investigate the effects of meaning arising from their utterances, analyzing the functioning of *discursive resonances*, which, in turn, are inscribed in the linguistic materiality. This notion is presented and developed by Serrani (1998, 2001) in research of the Discursive Resonance Analysis in Open Testimonies (AREDA, in Portuguese) project, which also articulates the transdisciplinary stance of AL with DA. In the words of the author:

> By discursive resonance, I mean the mutual semantic vibration, which tends to construct, in the intradiscourse, the reality of a meaning. Resonances can be around specific units, such as lexical items, or around ways of saying, that is, they refer to the effects of meanings produced by the repetition of syntactic-enunciative constructions. (SERRANI, 1998, p. 143).

It is worth mentioning that, in the context of the AREDA project, the resonances are analyzed in individual testimonies of bi/multilingual speakers (SERRANI, 1998). In this article, the resonances are analyzed between different utterances of the students, when they speak, through orality, about the teaching of PL as their mother tongue. As

the DA investigates the functioning of language in relation to history to think about the production of meaning, what Serrani (1998, 2001) proposes with this notion is a closer look at the linguistic base, since it is the place where discursive processes are materialized. In this sense, Hodge (2017) states that SFL, as a grammatical theory, based on a rich descriptive apparatus of language, can contribute to discourse analysis. For the author, "discourse analysis asks many questions about social functions and effects of language in action that SFL is well equipped to answer" (HODGDE, 2017, p. 523).

It is worth mentioning that the social functions mentioned by the author are linked to contexts, which include the places where one lives, the degrees of familiarity between people in situations of interaction, and cultures. All of this affects the linguistic choices made by the speakers, both in terms of the meanings to be expressed and of the lexical and grammatical elements that will carry them out (THOMPSON, 2014). This is the theoretical basis of SFL, whose precepts can enrich practices of language use, minimizing what Signorini (2004, p. 96) calls diglossic polarization: it is the "opposition between oral and written language as two poles that are excluded", establishing an inequality among speakers in access to the language.[3] Table 1 summarizes the language metafunctions proposed in the SFL, from which grammatical categories are made available for analysis of textual materiality.

Table 1 – Metafunctions of language

METAFUNCTIONS	PURPOSE	FEATURES
EXPERIENTIAL	Indicates human experiences of acting, describing, thinking, behaving, existing.	Organizes sentences into participants (nominal groups), processes (verbal groups) and circumstances (adverbial or prepositional groups).
INTERPERSONAL	Regulates interactions between speakers / writers and listeners / readers.	It considers social roles, identities, relationships, negotiations, ways of giving opinions among the interlocutors. Analyzes modalization and appraisal resources.
TEXTUAL	Regulates the organization of the textual structure, allowing the user of the language to formulate his sentences from the angle that is most convenient to him.	It analyzes the textuality resources related to the organization of information in the text and its thematic progression (theme and rheme).

Source: Author's elaboration based on Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) and Thompson (2014)

From a systemic-functional perspective for language teaching, in experiments carried out in Australian schools, as Martin and Rose (2012) reports, attention is drawn to the concern of researchers in respecting the contexts of culture in school literacy

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3   The notion presented by the author also includes parameters between formal and informal language, language and dialect, standard and non-standard languages. (SIGNORINI, 2006).

projects, whose audience was formed by a large number of black students. After addressing methodological issues explored from a Genre Writing Cycle, Martin and Rose (2012) exemplifies his application work based on reading a thematic text on the causes of the rebellion of the African peoples of the city of Sobantu, located in South Africa.[4]

The methodology used consisted, initially, in the preparation of reading a text, reading it aloud to the class; then, general meanings of this text are explored, through paraphrases or more contextual and simple formulations, at the student level, a resource called as annotation phase. Once these reading procedures are carried out and the text is understood, students are encouraged to use the language patterns of the genres through a replication of the text in the collective production scheme. It is up to the teacher, at this stage, through Joint Rewriting, to introduce students to the discursive and grammatical patterns of the genre in focus. The process can also count on an individual rewriting, aiming to intensify this activity even more, before the independent writing to be carried out by the apprentice himself (MARTIN; ROSE, 2012).

In this described process, the teacher acted in mediation, helping students to take ownership of the genre jointly. As a result, students were encouraged to interpret the text, unpacking the meanings of some metaphors and developing some grammatical sentences more clearly. In the phase of joint negotiation text, certain prejudiced words were replaced, such as the expression "black townships", which became, in the production of students, "South African townships"; the history of oppression of the African people was also retold, being narrated from the students' perspective.[5]

Such experience meant, in practice, a political approach to the work of grammar in and of the text, allowing students in a state of *aphasia*, in the term used by Signorini (2004, 2006), to consciously reflect on linguistic choices when portraying the history of their people.[6] From a systemic-functional perspective, Martin and Rose (2012, p. 271) states that "If genres are treated as patterns of meaning, then to make grammatical analysis relevant to genre we need to deploy a grammar that focuses on meaning".

Perini (2019) reinforces this conception by stating that the conscious knowledge of the structure and functioning of the language with a view to communication is an essential part for the scientific literacy of individuals, opposing, therefore, a prescriptive grammatical approach. For the linguist, grammar should be seen as "the study of certain facts in real life" (PERINI, 2019, p. 53), just as one studies animals, plants, chemical elements, knowledge that will compose students' cultural background. Here one can go even further, extending the work of grammatical awareness by *scientific education*. Through this approach, Silva (2020, p. 2294) claims that language learning should be capable of "providing the necessary autonomy for people to appropriate the knowledge, practices, skills, or competencies necessary for the exercise of citizenship".

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[4] An adapted version of this proposal for Brazilian schools is presented by Silva (2015).

[5] "These students consider themselves a 'New Generation' that need not accept the ethnic classifications of apartheid " (MARTIN; ROSE, 2012, p. 313).

[6] This term was borrowed from Signorini (2006) and refers to the state of invisibility and exclusion of speakers in contexts of use of the legitimate language.

With regard to the teaching of PL, unfortunately, the situation of many schools makes it impossible to work in these dimensions, be it with linguistic analysis, with reading, with writing or with orality. If we take as a basis the concept of school literacy discussed by Signorini (2006, 2007), the verbal actions with language that are developed in the school are challenged by human and non-human actors, among whom are not only the student and the teacher, but also didactic materials and resources, official documents, physical conditions of the school, among other actors of a human nature or not, using Latour's terms (2004). All of this in some way makes up a dynamic network in the classroom, which "redirects and transforms the course of their actions" (SIGNORINI, 2006, p. 185), affecting students' discourses and, consequently, the subject-language relationship.

Therefore, the dialogue proposed here between AL and DA privileges students, and intends to listen to them from their unique look at the classroom. When they take a stance, their identifications about the notion of language that constitutes them, their relationship with language and their expectations about the teaching-learning process come to the fore. In this way, it becomes possible to insert oneself in the educational context of that subject, and "work with reading/writing alternatives that do not reproduce the diglossic logic of rigid dichotomies", but, instead, give them "the chance to leave, even if precariously, from the state of aphasia in which they find themselves" (SIGNORINI, 2004, p. 98).

Methodological path: in search for the discourse object

As we explained in the introduction to this paper, the corpus of this investigation is constituted from a semi-structured interview, carried out before a pedagogical intervention within the scope of the **ConGraEduC** research project, which intends to promote the productive study of grammar in basic education through the perspective of science education. Theoretical-methodological developments in the applied field may contribute to the transformation of teaching practice informed by a prescriptive and excessively metalinguistic grammatical approach.

The testimonies were recorded with nine students, from a total of 25 students from a 7th grade class at a full-time rural school. The sequence of interviewed students occurred according to the availability of the participants, during school activities. The interview sequence was interrupted the week before the school closed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This institution, which is located in the countryside, 70 km from the capital of Tocantins, serves students from two stages of elementary school. Most participating students are an average of 12 years old and have been attending school since their early school years. Once the interview was recorded in audio and video and transcribed, we tried to detect discursivities related to the teaching of PL, with a view to delineating grammar representations of the learners and participants of the research. We applied the rules of transcription shared by Preti (1999).

It is also worth mentioning the conditions of production of the utterances that make up the corpus. The first author of this article, a researcher at the field school, was responsible for the production of student testimonies, in a private room. For this, a questionnaire with 15 questions was used to allow the participants to enunciate about PL teaching, in order to cover issues related to grammar, reading and writing. In Chart 1, we list only the questions selected according to the investigative framework presented in this paper. The questions were used as a script, therefore, some paraphrases were used in the dialogue with the students in order to facilitate the understanding of the participants.

Chart 1 – Interview questions: investigative focus

1. What do you like most about the Portuguese language class?
2. What do you like least about Portuguese language classes?
3. What would you suggest to contribute to the Portuguese language classes?
4. What is grammar for you?
5. What would be the role or function of grammar in your education?
6. What are the spaces or time for reading activities in your Portuguese language classes?
7. What are the spaces or time for writing activities in your Portuguese language classes?

Source: **C**on**G**ra**E**du**C**

To avoid unwanted exposure or constraints, we chose to identify students only by the first two initials of the name; the interviewer will be appointed as a Research Professor (RP). It is also worth noting that the answers were organized in discursive sequences (DS) that point out enunciative regularities (ER).

For the examination of the answers, we started from a qualitative approach guided by the linguistic analysis informed by Pecheudian discursive theories (ORLANDI, 2007, 2020; PÊCHEUX, 1997) and systemic-functional linguistics (HALLIDAY; MATTHIESSEN, 2014; THOMPSON, 2014). Thus, we consider the interweaving between intra and interdiscourse, in order to glimpse the memory mobilized by the participants when enunciating about the teaching of PL and, in particular, of grammar. From the notion of discursive resonance, we analyzed the textual and lexical marks signaled in the utterances, based on SFL categories.

We then organized the answers of the participants by their ER, which were systematized in tables based on the predominant discourse in the DS. In the analysis, we highlight some linguistic marks in the words with the use of italics. We emphasize that the discourses intertwine in the enunciative process and were separated here for didactic reasons, in order to allow the focus on more prevalent effects of meaning.

Discursive representations about grammar

When analyzing the testimonies, we noticed that learners build a representation of a language marked by the *discourse of normativity*. In these utterances, students are inscribed in the belief of inequality between speakers, mobilizing an utterance that refers to the following discourse: "it is not certain uses that he/she [the speaker] makes of the language, or certain forms that he/she uses, that legitimize him/her as a 'competent' speaker of that language" (SIGNORINI, 2006, p. 171). In other words, there is always a need to dominate a so-called standard form by the teacher's continuous intervention. Let us observe the ER in the words of these students when asked about what grammar was and its function.

ER 1 – Discourse of normativity	
DS1	**RP**: have you ever heard of the word grammar? **RL:** Yes **RP**: yes... and what do you mean by the word grammar? **RL**: it is something that someone *says wrong*, we *have to* correct it.
DS2	**RP**: ((laughs)) Very well - next question ML is ... for you what is grammar? **ML**: it is the way of *speaking correctly writing* words and *formulating sentences correctly.* **RP:** and what would be the role of grammar in our :: in your education? - what do you think grammar would help in your education? **ML**: because we would *speak correctly write correctl*y and it would make sense to everything we said to write or is...
DS3	**RP**: Very well - What do you understand by grammar? **LS**: Grammar? I researched about it ... you *write* a word within another word. I think that's how the teacher explained - Then you *write* a word within another word, then it means grammar. **RP**: What do you think would be the function of grammar in your learning here as a student - What do you think would be the contribution the benefit to that :: that ... do you think it would help? - It's your opinion – What do you think that studying grammar would help you with? **LS:** Helping to know what grammar is ... helping to *write* words in grammar. That's about it (I don't know much about it)

Source: ConGraEduC.

The images about learning grammar are reinforced at school by written and spoken practices that are supported by material actions, such as "writing", and verbal processes such as "speaking", "formulating". This learning conveys the representation of the legitimacy of linguistic uses which, despite being repeatedly reproduced at school, is a political-ideological discourse based on the "liberal republican principle, inherited from the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, of making equivalent legitimate language and language common to all citizens" (SIGNORINI, 2006, p. 171).

As it is possible to perceive in the utterances, on the one hand there is an appreciation for the hegemonic pattern, marked by the use of the adverb "correctly" (DS2) and, on the other hand, there is a negative reaction to the variant used by the student himself, considered as "wrong" (DS1). Through these discursive resonances between utterances, the system of mood that regulates interactivity, in the SFL, allows us to glimpse the presence of a discourse strongly favorable to the learning of normative grammar. In this case, there is a space of tension involved in the process of language acquisition, in which students must, necessarily (*have to* - DS1), strive for hegemonic speech and writing.

This is one of the beliefs internalized by many parents and teachers (including native speakers), who insist on the myth that grammar is "a kind of invisible mystical source from which the 'beautiful', 'correct' and 'pure' language emanates" (BAGNO, 2007, p. 57). It is these imaginary representations that constitute the subjects' discursive formations, leading them to study grammar through the *discourse of normativity*, which relates language learning to the learning of prescriptive grammar and this, in turn, is seen as a condition for speaking and writing correctly. That is why, when asked about text production classes, students' concern for "right" writing is evident, as one will see in DS15.

When putting on stage utterances that point to a historicity of language conditioned to the norm, students refer to preconstructed elements that are part of the social memory of a group. Many studies have already pointed to the emphasis on teaching grammar in decontextualized way within the scope of the basic school and its respective consequences on students' education (BAGNO, 2000; FRANCHI, 2006; POSSENTI, 1996; SILVA, 2011), however, there is still a great incidence of this approach in the classroom, corroborating its representation by the learners.

It should also be noted that, linked to the discourse of normativity, contradictorily, there are those who enunciate about grammar through the *discourse of ignorance*, showing themselves to be completely alien to the subject. In the context of the interviews, the highlighted discursive resonances occur from propositions of the order of polarity, marked by the "choice between positive and negative" (HALLIDAY; MATTHIESSEN, 2014, p. 173). ER2 illustrates students' statements.[7]

ER2 – Discourse of ignorance of grammar	
DS4	**RP:** What do you understand by grammar? **VG**: I don't *understand* anything, teacher ((laughs))
DS5	**RP:** Have you ever heard of the word grammar? **GR:** *No* **RP:** So ... you don't know what grammar is? **GR:** No!

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[7] From the point of view of interpersonal metafunction, when two or more interlocutors are in face-to-face interaction, as is the case with utterances presented here, answers can be represented by yes and no sentences or by declarative propositions (HALLIDAY; MATTHIESSEN, 2014; THOMPSON, 2014).

DS6	**LR:** ((shaking the head and smiling)) Hum hum *I don't know*
DS7	**MI:** Grammar - I *think* - that in my head it is something that we ((pause)) that we study you know *something*.
DS8	**JV:** in my opinion I *think* that grammar is interpreting *something* ((whispering)) I'm not sure teacher

Source: ConGraEduC.

VG and GR have a negative opinion through a modal polarity adjunct (*no* DS5), unaccompanied by activity and without many modalization marks, being, therefore, direct.[8] In the utterances of LR, in turn, understanding the contextual factors involved in the communicative situation established, the speech is modalized through interjection ("*hum, hum*"), through gestures (head movements, smiles) and also through the negative sentence *I don't know* (DS6). The effect of meaning of this proposition can refer to a certain discomfort of the student in the face of his own *discourse of lack*, which he tries to soften when he uses hedging language.

There is also an attempt to enunciate on the part of the students, reinforced by mental processes (*I understand; I think; I know*). It is an effort by the learners to return to pre-existing meanings summoned by the formulation. Anyway, the utterances suggest that grammar is represented by a lack of knowledge, since the research participants are positioned sometimes categorically, claiming to be unaware of the questioned term, sometimes in a generic way, marking the lack of definition through the pronoun "*something*".

It is pertinent to remember that, even though they claim not to know grammar, students are able to express themselves through speech, using competently specific linguistic marks such as those previously mentioned. This is because

> […] to know a speech means to know a language. Knowing a language means knowing grammar [...] Knowing grammar does not mean knowing some rules learned at school by heart, or knowing how to perform morphological and syntactic analyzes. Deeper than this knowledge is the knowledge (intuitive and unconscious) necessary to effectively speak the language (POSSENTI, 1996, p. 30).

Other utterances help to signal the way in which these discursive representations become historicized for the students. When asked about what reading and writing classes were like, we observed, in the linguistic materiality, the predominance of grammar teaching. Let us look at ER3:

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[8] In the words of Halliday and Matthiessen (2014, p. 144), "this is the choice between positive and negative. In order for something to be arguable, it has to be specified by for polarity".

ER3 – Discourse of metalanguage	
DS9	**RP**: No, no problem! Yeah ... Now let's go to another more general question. It's a private thing of yours-- Yeah ... do you like Portuguese language classes? **GR:** I like it! **RP**: What do you like most about the Portuguese language classes? You can speak louder **GR** Umm... *about verbs, commas* ... and stuff
DS10	**RP**: VG what do you like most about the Portuguese language class? **VG**: learn ... how is it? ((looking for the answer)) ... learn language **RP**: what do you mean by language? **VG**: ((smiling)) Huh teacher **RP:** it is your opinion... **VG**: I understand that we have to learn *how to write the word ... comma these things* (whispering and smiling) this is what I know

Source: ConGraEduC.

What can be glimpsed in DS9 is that the terms "about verbs comma", "how you write the word ... comma" act as *phenomena* of grammatical constructions responsible for the explanation of mental representations.[9] The affect and perception of the participants, ways of evaluating a particular object, relate the Portuguese class to grammar content. They are almost unable to name, choosing to generalize what they study from the use of the nominal expression "these things". This in turn creates a contradiction, crossed by the absence and presence with respect to the representation of normative grammar. If, on the one hand, there are discursivities that point to its functioning in the subjects' discursive memory, on the other, there are previous testimonies that point to the absence of this knowledge.

The analyzed discourses reveal heterogeneity of voices in the school space, by which the subjects put themselves in a state of linguistic inequality. The form of enunciation about grammar learning is based on the imaginary of the ideal speaker, who, through the domain of the norm, is able to speak and write correctly.

Discursive representations about the PL class

We now discuss discursive representations about the PL class as a whole, based on the testimonies of the learning subjects about reading and writing production classes: did they happen? How did they happen? How often?

From what is possible to deduce from the discursivities in the linguistic materiality, the subjects signify PL classes from representations based on the schooling process. For purposes of textual organization, one decided to list the utterances and their respective

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[9]   In the transitivity system of SFL, the *phenomenon*, together with the *sensor* and the *process*, are categories of *mental clauses* (experiences that occur in the internal world). The *phenomenon* can refer to people, concrete objects or abstractions.

discursive sequences separately. ER4 shows the teaching and learning of reading as a mere school exercise.

ER4: Discourse of schooling	
DS11	**RP:** Hmm::: For example .. What are the spaces or time of reading activities in Portuguese language classes? How are the reading classes in the Portuguese language? Do they happen? How do they happen? You can even quote from last year **MI:** It happens. When the student is :: the teacher *is reading* and the student is not *paying attention*, the teacher *puts* the student to read
DS12	**RP:** Hmm:: another question. You know that we have reading activities, right, in the classroom, especially in Portuguese language classes, right? Do you think you have a lot of reading classes in the classroom? How much more or less do you think you have reading class in the classroom? It may be from previous years, now, how long? Do you have more reading classes? **LS:** How long do we have more reading classes? It's in Portuguese! We read, Hmm... we read about books, about tasks. You will do the task, then you will *have to read that task*. That's all!
DS13	**RP:** The other question. What are the spaces or time for reading activities in class? For example, what are reading classes like, at school? How is it, how is reading classes at school? How, what did you learn in these reading classes? Speak louder **DR:** Learning to read. Hmm:: ((thoughtful)) **RP:** But ... and what were the reading activities like? But what were they like ... what were they like? What did you do in reading classes? **DR:** We *read* a chapter about the book, and when we didn't *know* the word, the teacher would go there and *tell* us what the word meant.
DS14	**RP:** For example, what are the spaces or times in reading activities in Portuguese language classes? Which are how many times is there a reading class and it doesn't have to be exactly to refer only to this year since last year what are - what reading activity did you use to do what is it like in the reading class was there a reading class what were these classes like how many times a week I wanted you to explain this to us **J.V:** Yes, it was little reading but we read Hmm::: for example last year we read many... one class .. two classes out there... it was the maximum too, right? Then we would read ... *read* in the front, *explain* the other students what we were reading that text and it was also ... ((thinking with his hand on his chin))

Source: **C**on**G**ra**E**du**C**.

The first representation observed here can be synthesized from the utterance "The teacher puts the student to read" (DS11), which equates reading exercise with a punitive practice due to the student's lack of attention during the teacher's reading. The *material process* 'put', marked by its local variant for informal use, denotes a sense of obligation, reinforcing the discourse of *punitive reading*. Still in this representation, students build the image of reading as an intermediate process, always involving an activity, such as "doing a task" ("you will have to read that task" - DS12), deciphering the "meaning of that word" (DS13) or explaining "[to] the other students what we were reading" (DS14).

The processes highlighted above refer to the *material* ("are reading"; "put"), to the *verbal* ("spoke"; "explained"), and occur from the perspective of a third person, the teacher, reinforcing this schooled and passive characteristic of reading in the classroom. The final years of elementary school should continue to promote pleasant reading, the one that promotes discovery, consolidating the awareness of learners with regard to the functioning of Portuguese writing, among other semiosis responsible for interaction.[10]

Reading is an active interaction, which presupposes teacher and students reading texts of different genres and with varied ends, capable of "'imitating' as closely as possible the linguistic activities of life" (POSSENTI, 1996, p.48). However, in the collective imaginary of students, reflected in the utterances, reading is almost always evoked by the *discourse of schooling*, the effect of which is passivity; in other words, reading is not enunciated as a practice driven by curiosity, the search for knowledge, involving research, debate, and staging.

About written production, it is aligned to the focus of spelling and copying. What seems to escape the subject-learners, through these answers, is not far from the representation of work with reading. They are also purely schooled activities that have taken the place of written production practices; mechanical exercises that serve as a pretext for training word writing.

	ER5 – Discourses of copy and care with the spelling of the language
DS15	**RP**: And what about writing activities, writing production, what were the text production classes like in Portuguese classes? **DR**: We learned to write *right*, when we *write a wrong word*, the teacher goes there and corrects it, telling *us to write right*
DS16	**RP**: What is the text production class like? **VG:** ((the interviewer brings the cell phone close to the interviewee's mouth)) we *write from the board from the book* also then when we write an essay text *we make mistakes* then *when we make mistakes we have to write everything again to sHmmarize*
DS17	**RP**: Great ... and :: the text production activities ... What were they like? **ML:** we ... the teacher said that she wanted for us to be able to produce if it was a text Hmm: ((hand in the head)) be a dialogue about these things and we did it and afterwards *she corrected and that was all.*

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[10] About the reading practice, it is postulated in the National Common Curricular Base (BNCC in Portuguese) that "the **Reading Axis** comprises the language practices that result from the active interaction of the reader/ listener/ viewer with the written, oral and multisemiotic texts and their interpretation, examples being the readings for: aesthetic enjoyment of texts and literary works; research and support for school and academic work, carrying out procedures; knowledge, discussion and debate on relevant social issues; sustain the demand for something in the context of public life; having more knowledge that allows the development of personal projects, among other possibilities" (BRASIL, 2017, p. 71, author's emphasis).

ML: ((the interviewer brings the cell phone close to the interviewee's mouth)) Ah a lot of difference because in the past we *copied texts and from the book* doing *a lot of activity from the book* and this year no we're... Hmm::: *learning with explanations works and activities outside the context of the board* so it is ::: I think it has changed a lot because of that.[11]

This representation of *writing with a focus on spelling and copying* operates discursively through *material processes* ("write" – DS16; "copied" – DS17), tied to *circumstances* ("from the board from the book" – DS16; "from the book" – DS7). From this grammatical combination, it appears that most of the activities occur without transformation or creativity, except for the words of ML, which point to a change resulting from the execution of the written production classes ("with explanations, works and activities outside the context of the board" – DS) from one academic year to the next.

Based on the utterances of DR and VG, it is possible to perceive the recurrent reference to error ("when we make mistakes" – DS16) and to the way writing should be ("right" – DS15). The effects of meaning of these resonances reinforce the imagery of school writing, inscribing the practice of writing to the *discourse of the care with the spelling of the language*. It is worth mentioning that the school's concern with the "error" is valid, insofar as the focus of correction converges to a rewriting not only of the form, such as spelling and grammatical mistakes, but also of the content, taking as reference interactive and effective situations, therefore allowing students to make textual adjustments according to the genre taken as a reference.

As for the utterances of VG and ML, the representation of the writing activities of these collaborators is affected by the *discourse of copy*, so that the circumstances used in the testimonies do not relate writing to contextualized and subjective activities. The impression is that, in positioning themselves, the participants seem to claim textual production activities linked to some functionality, liable to circulate in contexts established from the pedagogical planning carried out by the teacher ("afterwards she corrected and that was all" – DS).

In this same testimony, one still refers to probable review activities, apparently only because there was what is called an *error* and not a project to say ("we make mistakes then when we make mistakes we have to write everything again to summarize" – DS16). The students also evoke in their answers a probable pedagogical work with genres and typological sequences ("be a dialogue these things" – DS17), just as they are encouraged by official documents and specialized literatures of language studies (BRASIL, 2017; SILVA, 2011, 2015). However, as students' productions do not circulate, like real texts,

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[11] This statement, despite being an answer to the question about the practice of reading, was included here in the topic of writing because it is quite spontaneous and for reinforcing the discursiveness of the copy, something that is recurrent in other statements of this student.

students corroborate the representation that producing a text is equivalent to making a copy. In this perspective, Possenti (1996, p. 49) suggests:

> In order to have an idea of what it would mean to write as work, or significantly, or how to actually write "in life", it is enough that we check how those who write write: writers and journalists: they do not write essays. They do research, go to the street, listen to others, read files, read other books. Only then do they write, and read and reread, and then rewrite, and show it to colleagues or bosses, listen to their opinions, and then rewrite again. The school may well act that way [...]

It is worth mentioning that these discourses about reading and writing echo in other testimonies, such as, for example, when learners enunciate suggestions for PL classes. The identified representations that are based on the linguistic materiality are not exactly the ones that students wanted for PL classes.

ER6 – Discourse of interactive and innovative activities

DS18	**RP:** If you could suggest to ((teacher's name)) who is a Portuguese teacher and to me that I am also working now to improve Portuguese classes, what would you tell us to do to improve .. What activity do you think would be better for us to do? **VG**: Hmm::: ((throat clearing)) *to do* .. REsearch these things we really need to learn because we never did these things, right? *Research ... work ...* in group these things
DS19	**RP**: Got it ... Hmm::: if you could suggest to ((teacher's name)) that is yours [**ML**: [Wow ((hand in mouth and smiling)) **RP**: [Portuguese teacher and to me that am now also in the subject... What would you suggest to IMprove it? What activity do you think would work for the class - that you know the class - that would work for all of them to be interested in learning Portuguese? **ML**: ((brings the phone closer to the interviewee's mouth)) for sure ... *video classes*? **RP**: video classes? **ML**: [yeah **RP**: [how would that be? **ML**: [not to *copy* ... or how you do it ... the way you do it they like it because you *don't copy very much* you explain the content that you are passing this - then they stay - they pay – he/she focus on the stuff because... Hmm... you're not writing ((laughs)) **RP:** But what activities do you think could improve the most? **ML:** I don't know ((shaking his head)) **RP:** But since you would like to have it then? **ML:** ((puts his hand to his mouth thinks and then puts his hand to his chin)) *tours* **RP:** Activities with tours? **ML:** Aham

DS20	**RP:** ((cell phone recorder close to the mouth)) Another question-- For example ... If you could suggest to ((name of the class teacher)) or to me that I am also working on the Portuguese language subject what would you tell us to do to improve for the class?
	GR: ((cell phone recorder close to the mouth)) Hmm ::: for us to study well, the tasks, you *pass the project* to us, *research on the coronavirus*! That's it![12]
DS21	**RP:** Okay! And :: if you could suggest any activity for me or for ((name of the class teacher)) - any activity for us to improve the Portuguese language - what activity would you suggest? What kind of activity do you think we could have in class to be more cool?
	MI: ((thinking, looking around)
	RP: You can talk freely, we are here as impartial.
	MI: I think we Hmm :: *doing more tasks while playing* with us, that we learn, even more, because we spend all the time, just writing, just sitting.
	RP: Is it tiring?
	MI: It tires a lot. ((Confirms RP's response))
	RP: Aham ... Hey guys, I thought she was very honest. Very good! It has to be that way, frank, true, doesn'it! Excellent!! So you were going to suggest this to us. *Activities in which you play more*. Great!

Source: **C**on**G**ra**E**du**C.**

In these testimonies, sayings surface that make the idea of future projection resonate in LP classes, something that is never achieved, whose meaning points to a lack. The actions are mostly *material* and operate discursively expressing a concrete event ("doing research, doing group work" – DS18; "tours" – DS19; "passing the project" – DS20; "doing more tasks while playing" – DS21). What can be glimpsed is an inversion in the representation of the PL classes suggested by the participants: instead of repetitive activities and with a certain passivity ("not to copy" – DS19; "to be all the time just writing, just sitting" – DS20), classes with greater interaction.

The identification of these discourses is in the order of becoming, that is, it beckons students' wishes that the class could be different from what normally happens, resulting in learning for them. Methodologies ("group activities" – DS18), tours (DS19), projects (DS20) and resources ("video classes" – DS19), internet research (DS20), which point to a world outside the school are mentioned, activities that, in their vision, would help improve the teaching of PL, that is, systems of objects that affect the "dynamics of the classroom and the verbal actions of teachers and students" (SIGNORINI, 2006, p. 185).[13] In addition, most of these collaborators mentioned research work as a suggestion, something that may be linked to the routine that the PL teacher, a doctoral student and

[12] It is possible that the student is basing himself on a class taught in the classroom on this theme, whose methodology made use of *internet research via smartphone*.

[13] Object systems refer to non-human actors, in the conception of Latour's network (2004), whose impacts fall directly or indirectly on the classroom. Among these actors most cited in the utterances, the textbook and the whiteboard are the most used by teachers.

a member of the research project focused on in this paper, has been developing in the classroom, with prominence recognized in some scientific events in other states.[14] These statements may also reveal some expectations regarding the pedagogical intervention informed by the scientific education approach.

By subscribing to this *discourse of interactive and innovative activities*, we suggest that the interweaving between linguistic awareness and scientific education, a broader, more meaningful school literacy, is one of the possible directions for the development of culturally relevant and critical social practices (FREIRE, 2019). This approach that is intended to be implemented in the rural school challenges the student; it takes him/her to work on uses of the language, to raise hypotheses about those uses, to do rigorous research, to finally present the results to colleagues and the community. The treatment of language in these conditions can make the study of language more and more dynamic, promoting essential skills and abilities to a post-modern and heterogeneous subject (SILVA, 2020).

It is interesting to note that, based on most of the analyzed testimonies, there is the construction of a tense-conflicting discursivity in the relationship of students with the study of language and which is represented by two images. The first, constantly experienced by the participants, is centered on normativity, error, copying and even ignorance. The second is the one that the learners would like to have at school, marked by more interactive and innovative activities. This is what can be seen in the utterances of ER7, stated from the following question: "Why were you interested in participating in the project?".

	RE7 – Ludic discourse
DS22	**VG**: because it is very good ... *we learn more* because in a future time *when I go to college* I *may need* this research and it is very good.
DS23	**ML**: because it's *something different*, something we don't see every day, right? because it's Always the board :: ((shaking the head)) (...) we copy and make things in the book *a more dynamic class that is more fun* ... so I think it is :: a lot *cooler* **RP:** [more more ((interrupting and asking the student to continue the answer)) **ML**: [more is :: *fun* right? and then it makes everyone interested in attending classes and paying more attention to the content.

Source: ConGraEduC.

The answers have implications for the representation of hope towards the school and the teaching of PL. The utility discourse can be seen in DS22, when the participant,

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[14] Among the works developed by Prof. Rosielson Soares de Sousa, we quote "Leitura e interpretação de pictogramas em bulas/rótulos de agrotóxicos" ["Reading and interpretation of pictograms on package of drug leaflets/ pesticide labels"]. The work was awarded scholarships for Junior Scientific Initiation (ICJ / CNPq) by the Brazilian Science and Engineering Fair (FEBRACE), in 2020. Another project coordinated by the aforementioned professor is "Quando a linguagem científica e o conhecimento prático se encontram no 'Texto de Campanha sanitária': um diálogo (im) possível para o homem do campo" ["When scientific language and practical knowledge meet in the 'Health Campaign Text': a (im)possible dialogue for rural people"], 2nd place at the Brazilian Scientific Initiation Fair (FEBIC), in 2019.

happily, evokes the belief in a school that can be connected with real-world practices, which allow him to reach "college", arouse interest ("everyone is interested in attending classes"). However, they claim for themselves, and rightly so, through the *ludic discourse*, "a more dynamic class that is more fun" (DS23), which can mean, classes inserted in functional practices, such as those in which most children are inserted outside the school, whose learning takes place by playing, observing, testing, experiencing, inquiring.

Final considerations

Considering the theoretical principles enunciated throughout this paper, we perceive heterogeneity of voices that reinforces the desire to acquire the prestigious standards of the language through the schooling/universalization of this knowledge. Thus, the images constructed in the discourses of these students are permeated by a memory of normativity, so that most of the subjects cannot get rid of the idea of grammar linked to speaking correctly. There are also utterances that call for a differentiated innovation or pedagogical practice in PL classes.

In the testimonies, repetitive and even mistaken pedagogical practices are described from a theoretical-methodological point of view, especially those related to the axes of reading and writing. Finally, there are those who, when enunciating, register a notorious lack of knowledge in the utterances about grammar and, consequently, its contributions to language teaching. Many are oblivious to their role as students, not positioning themselves for the exercise of learning language consciously.

Thinking about these relationships, special attention was paid to the students' discursive resonances in relation to their positioning towards the teaching of the mother tongue. Thus, when verifying in what ways these learners mark, in the linguistic materiality, the yearning for a language teaching that takes into account their personal and collective singularities, we also hope to have illustrated a contextualized model of analysis of transcribed speeches.

The ConGraEduC's task of familiarizing students with practices characteristic of scientific education seems, at first, challenging, due to the discursive meshes in which the subjects are enrolled; however, on the other hand, as applied linguists, this makes it possible to attempt to (re)signify these discourses, promoting a confrontation based on scientifically coherent theoretical-methodological bases. In this process, what is expected is a breakdown in the network of meanings, both for the teacher and the student, with a view to building new possibilities for teaching and learning the language.

In practice, this means listening to the learner, taking into account his/her plurality and difference, and starting from a close language, make him/her himself/herself investigate the typical phenomena of language as a way of developing awareness of his/her own cognitive capacity, in order to potentiate his/her communicative skills and competences.

Thanks

ANTONELLA, K.; SILVA, W.; BRITO, C. Representações sobre o ensino de língua portuguesa numa escola rural. **Alfa**, São Paulo, v.66, 2022.

- *RESUMO: Esta pesquisa investiga representações discursivas sobre o ensino de Língua Portuguesa (LP), em uma escola rural na Região Norte do Brasil. Assumimos uma abordagem transdisciplinar da Linguística Aplicada e utilizamos pressupostos teóricos da educação científica e de teorias discursivas da linguagem. Tais pressupostos informam a abordagem qualitativa da análise linguística realizada. Os dados da investigação são constituídos a partir de uma entrevista semiestruturada, realizada antes de uma intervenção pedagógica no âmbito do projeto de pesquisa **ConGraEduC** (CNPq 441194/2019-2). Para este artigo científico, foram consideradas as respostas apresentadas por estudantes da educação básica a oito perguntas de um roteiro com quinze questionamentos. Nas análises das respostas, consideramos o imbricamento entre o intra e o interdiscurso, de forma a entrever a memória mobilizada pelos participantes ao enunciarem sobre o ensino da LP e, em especial, da gramática. Os resultados sugerem que a gramática é representada tanto por um silenciamento quanto pelo discurso da normatividade, pois os alunos afirmam desconhecê-la e concebem a língua como um mero conjunto de regras.*

- *PALAVRAS-CHAVE: língua materna; formação de professores; discurso.*

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