

THE SPEECHES OF PUBLIC-SCHOOL ENGLISH TEACHERS ON THE OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS: ENUNCIATIVE DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF A (IN)TENSE DIALOGUE

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- **ABSTRACT:** This article presents a survey of the studies in the English Language teaching and learning field that addressed the issue of official documents in relation to the practice of the English teachers in public schools, bringing their speeches out. In order to analyze how the speeches of the official documents are being appropriated by English teachers, according to research in the field, this work is theoretically based on the perspective of the subject's social and discursive formation, which can be found in the Bakhtinian theory related to the appropriation of discourses. As the analysis of teachers' statements indicates, the documents do not have direct adherence to the concrete context of teaching practice, they are understood by teachers as alien to their reality and inefficient in the conjunction in which they work. The official speeches are taken by the teachers as an authoritative word, which refers to a high sphere, far from the sphere of familiar contact. As observed, the asymmetry between the speeches of official documents and the speeches of teachers related to their practice tends to continue due to the distance from the teachers and the instances of planning and organization of classes, the choice of material and personalized content for their students.
- **KEYWORDS:** official documents; english language teachers; enunciative discourse analysis.

Introduction

In this study, we assume that the subject is constituted in the social environment, with others, and through semiotic mediation, thus, we are based on the subject's social and discursive formation from the Bakhtinian perspective of discourse appropriation.

From the perspective of Bakhtin (1981, 1986a, 1986b, 1986c), the appropriation of others' discourses is a complex process, since the speeches are not neutral but full of intentions and accents, and the subject, in the discursive communication chain, tries to submit them at his own intention. Faraco (2009, p. 84, our translation) explains the constitution of the dialogical subject in the Bakhtinian conception: in the subject's

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perspective the linguistic reality is presented as “a world of social voices in multiple dialogical relations - relations of acceptance and refusal, of convergence and divergence, of harmony and conflicts, intersections and hybridizations”.¹ According to the author, immersed in the multiple relations and dimensions of socio-ideological interaction, the subject is constituted as concomitantly assimilates social voices and their dialogical interrelations (FARACO, 2009).

Therefore, we consider the subjects’ speech as an important source of investigation, as it brings with it marks of the historical, cultural, and social context where it was forged. In this sense, considering the field of teaching and learning foreign languages, we observe a wide variety of speeches to which English teachers respond, such as influences of methodological approaches and teaching practices present in their professional routine, textbooks, teaching resources, and official documents.

These speeches are presented through different conceptions of language that support teachers’ classroom practice (it could be the traditional language teaching approach, based on concept studies and lexical memorization, or it could be teaching with the text as the object of study) and ideological perspectives (hegemonic or counter-hegemonic speeches) that compose the set of speeches that participate in the constitution of the teacher. Once this subject is a Public-School teacher, he is surrounded by speeches that characterize foreign language teaching in that context, considered inappropriate for language learning. Cox and Assis-Peterson (2007, p. 11, our translation) summarize the discourse of inefficiency in teaching English that surrounds public schools: “In public schools, students do not have anything. Everything is missing. The scenario is a failure: a place of students who do not learn, of teachers who do not know the language they teach, of parents who are not concerned with the education of children, and methods that do not work”.²

In this discursive universe involving the practice of the English teacher in public schools, we are interested in observing how the speeches of the official documents are being appropriated by English teachers, according to the studies of the field. We focus on studies that address the São Paulo State Curriculum and the accompanying material (*Caderno do Aluno and Caderno do Professor*).³

¹ Original: “um mundo de vozes sociais em múltiplas relações dialógicas – relações de aceitação e recusa, de convergência e divergência, de harmonia e de conflitos, de interseções e hibridizações” (FARACO, 2009, p. 84).

² Original: “Na escola pública, os alunos não têm. Falta tudo. O cenário é de malogro: lugar de alunos que não aprendem, de professores que não sabem a língua que ensinam, de pais que não se preocupam com a educação dos filhos e de metodologias que não funcionam.” (COX; ASSIS-PETERSON, 2007, p. 11).

³ In 2008, São Paulo state launched the program: “São Paulo Faz Escola”, which included teaching materials for students and didactic and methodological guidelines for teachers, as well as documents defining the skills and competencies to be developed in each school grade in all curricular areas. As an additional clarification, with the homologation of the Common National Curriculum (*Base Nacional Comum Curricular – BNCC, BRAZIL, 2017*) it was made a (re) elaboration of the Curriculum. In the State of São Paulo, the elaboration of Currículo Paulista begins, approved in August 2019, when the preparation phase of new support materials for educators and students starts. More information is available at: http://www.escoladeformacao.sp.gov.br/portais/Portais/84/docs/pdf/curriculo_paulista_26_07_2019.pdf. Accessed in Feb. 2020.

This study, therefore, is a literature review and brings a survey of studies, developed between 2000 and 2018, in the field of English Language teaching and learning, which addressed the theme of official documents in relation to the practice of the English teachers in public schools, bringing their speeches out.

This article is organized in a way that the Bakhtinian theory bases our view on the teachers' speeches, which are approached considering the proposed objective, and based on Bakhtin's conception that every concrete utterance refers to an object already valued. "The word, directed toward its object, enters a dialogically agitated and tension-filled environment of alien words, value judgments and accents [...]" (BAKHTIN, 1981, p. 76). In this sense, the speeches of the teachers, and our own speech, on the speeches of the official documents for English Language teaching and learning, are part of a discursive construction, built at a given social and historical moment, about this particular object, therefore, it's part of the social dialogue (BAKHTIN, 1981).

Thus, this theoretical conception supports the entire construction of the text and it is a way of approaching the teachers' speeches brought by the studies. The article begins with concepts from Bakhtin's theoretical foundation, focusing on the speeches of English teachers. The articulation of the speeches presented and the theory is developed in the final remarks.

After the presentation of the theoretical contribution, we continue the text by building a broader panorama and discussing the studies that deal with official speeches regarding foreign languages, analyze documents and also contemplate what the teachers say about them. The official documents for foreign language teaching brought by these studies were those developed at the federal context, such as the National Curriculum Parameters of Elementary Education (*Parâmetros Curriculares Nacionais do Ensino Fundamental* – PCNs, BRAZIL, 1998) and the Curricular Guidelines for High School (*Orientações Curriculares para o Ensino Médio* - OCNEM, BRAZIL, 2006). Those studies, developed between 2000 and 2018, were found in Brazilian databases (such as: Scielo; *Portal de Periódicos da Capes*; *Banco de Dissertações e Teses da Capes*; *Biblioteca Digital Brasileira de Teses e Dissertações* - BDTD).

Subsequently, we analyzed the studies that thematized the São Paulo State Curriculum and brought the speeches of public-school teachers, so that we could understand how official speeches are appropriated by teachers. This survey included studies carried out between 2010 and 2018, searched in the same databases. The studies were selected for reading and those considered relevant integrated the present text. For the period that our study covered, we do not refer to the Common National Curriculum (*Base Nacional Comum Curricular* – BNCC, BRAZIL, 2017), approved by the National Education Council (*Conselho Nacional de Educação* - CNE), on December 22, 2017, that suggests replacement or adaptation of the official documents referred here.

Finally, we develop the final remarks, in the dialogue with the theoretical fundament of our analyses.

Focusing on the speech of English language teachers

From an enunciative perspective of language, based on studies by Bakhtin (1981, 1986a, 1986b, 1986c) and Volosinov (1973), consciousness is formed in the process of social interaction and “consciousness becomes consciousness only once it has been filled with ideological (semiotic) content, consequently, only in the process of social interaction” (VOLOSINOV, 1973, p. 11). In this conception, the subject is constituted by others, in a determined social, historical, and cultural context.

Consciousness takes shape and being in the material of signs created by an organized group in the process of its social intercourse. The individual consciousness is nurtured on signs; it derives its growth from them; it reflects their logic and laws. The logic of consciousness is the logic of ideological communication, of the semiotic interaction of a social group. (VOLOSINOV, 1973, p. 13).

In the social environment, the subjects appropriate the words of others, with their expression and values, and these words are assimilated and re-elaborated, forming the subjects’ discursive universe. According to Bakhtin, we become aware of ourselves through others: “Everything that pertains to me enters my consciousness, beginning with my name, from the external world through the mouths of others [...] from them I receive words, forms, and tonalities for the formation of my initial idea of myself” (BAKHTIN, 1986c, p. 161).

In Bakhtin’s theoretical construct, the subject is completely social and also singular, once the appropriation of ideological signs is never mechanical, there is a living interaction between the subjects and the social voices that constitute them. Faraco (2009, p. 86-87, our translation) explains:

It can be said that for the Circle (Bakhtin’s), the subject is social from end to end (the origin and logic of consciousness are external to consciousness) and singular from end to end (how each consciousness responds to their objective conditions are always unique, because each one is a unique event of Being).⁴

In order to analyze the teachers’ speeches, we start from the understanding of the subject’s discursive formation process, as presented in the works of the authors discussed here. Thus, the discursive experience of each individual is built on the continuous interaction with the individual utterances of others, Bakhtin (1986a) characterizes this

⁴ Original: “*Pode-se dizer que para o Círculo (de Bakhtin), o sujeito é social de ponta a ponta (a origem do alimento e da lógica da consciência é externa à consciência) e singular de ponta a ponta (os modos como cada consciência responde às suas condições objetivas são sempre singulares, porque cada um é um evento único do Ser).*” (FARACO, 2009, p. 86-87).

process as the assimilation of the words of others, a process that implies a creative degree. The words of others “carry with them their own expression, their own evaluative tone, which we assimilate, rework, and re-accentuate” (BAKHTIN, 1986a, p. 89).

Words enter our speech in the form of concrete utterances, “If an individual word is pronounced with expressive intonation it is no longer a word, but a completed utterance expressed by one word” (BAKHTIN, 1986a, p. 85). When bringing up the concept of utterance, Bakhtin (1986a, p. 71) clarifies that this is the “real unit of speech communication”. The utterance has its full meaning within a given context, addresses someone, and raises an active-responsive position: one of agreement, divergence, sympathy, or rejection. For the author, “any concrete utterance is a link in the chain of speech communication of a particular sphere” (BAKHTIN, 1986a, p. 91), this means that each utterance refers to others, respond to other utterances belonging to a determined discursive sphere, which means that when taking a position, the subject does so in relation to other positions regarding an object.

Therefore, the speaker’s object of speech has already been spoken, discussed, refuted, explained, evaluated, that is, “various viewpoints, world views, and trends cross, converge, and diverge in it” (BAKHTIN, 1986b, p. 116). Because it is a link in the discursive communication chain, every utterance is linked to other utterances that preceded it, including the ones about the speaker’s object. Thus, we can conjecture that English teachers, when referring to the speeches of official documents that guide their practice, speak about an object already valued, respond to other utterances of the same discursive sphere.

The living utterance, having taken meaning and shape at a particular historical moment in a socially specific environment, cannot fail to brush up against thousands of living dialogic threads, woven by socio-ideological consciousness around the given object of an utterance, it cannot fail to become an active participant in social dialogue. (BAKHTIN, 1981, p. 76).

We consider it important to emphasize that, due to its internal dialogicity, every utterance about a certain object is built from interaction and the encounter with other speeches about it, but it is also oriented to the subsequent utterances. The speaker constructs his utterance considering its address, that is, to whom the utterance is addressed, and expects from the interlocutors (which can be a direct interlocutor of the dialogue or a not concrete one) a response. “From the very beginning, the speaker expects a response from them, an active responsive understanding. The entire utterance is constructed, as it were, in anticipation of encountering this response” (BAKHTIN, 1986b, p. 117). From the Bakhtinian perspective, the understanding of the discourse is always actively responsive, includes value judgment, and it is dialogical. The listener, when understanding the meaning of the speech, occupies his active-responsive position concerning it, disagrees or agrees with it, completes it, or prepares to use it.

In this theory, understanding implies an assessment, they are simultaneous and constitute an integral unity. The subject of understanding focuses on the object with a formed view of the world, a point of view, and positions that determine its evaluation, thus, the complete understanding of the utterance, is active and creative. This is the process of producing meanings. According to Bakhtin (1986b), the meaning always responds to something, because once the utterance is understood, in concrete contexts, we take a position about it, we elaborate meanings in response to the utterances that are not indifferent to us, we turn to them with our counter words.

Thus, we focus on the speeches of English teachers who work in public schools and are oriented by official documents that guide their practice, realizing that these speeches are enunciated in concrete situations, within a social horizon that refers to the ideological creation of a given social group and a given time, therefore, present themselves in a precise ideological context, and also vivid and dynamic (BAKHTIN, 1981). These subjects, living and acting in a certain historical and cultural context, are impacted by “models and inheritances which they are confronted with; the countless prescriptions and constraints related to educational policies, the organization of schools, careers, teaching programs, among others; the communities attended; the tasks that are presented” (CRUZ, 2013, p. 30, our translation), and they appropriate the speeches of the official documents, giving them meanings, in a (in)tense dialogue.

The speeches of the official documents

Reading the studies that addressed the speeches of official documents for foreign language teaching, analyzing the documents, and also contemplating the apprehension of these speeches by teachers, we find studies that appreciate the documents as desirable orientations for the teaching (AMO, 2008, for example) and also those that criticize the mismatch of the documents in comparison with the practice of teachers in basic education (as in ROCHA, 2017).

The official documents for foreign language teaching analyzed by the studies chosen for consideration were those developed in the Federal context to guide Elementary and High School teaching, such as the National Curriculum Parameters of Elementary Education (*Parâmetros Curriculares Nacionais do Ensino Fundamental* – PCNs, BRAZIL, 1998), the National Curriculum Parameters of High School (*Parâmetros Curriculares Nacionais do Ensino Médio* – PCNEM, BRAZIL, 2000), the National Curriculum Parameters of High School - complementary guidelines (*PCN + Ensino Médio: Orientações Educacionais Complementares aos Parâmetros Curriculares Nacionais* - PCN+, BRAZIL, 2002), and the Curricular Guidelines for High School (*Orientações Curriculares para o Ensino Médio* - OCNEM, BRAZIL, 2006).

These documents, despite the criticisms, discussions, and divergences they foster, supported basic education, and participated in the definition of policies for foreign language teaching and learning in Brazil until now. It is observed that regarding High

School, different documents were formulated in a short period, in an attempt to update the guidelines for foreign language teaching. Those documents were criticized, which led to the creation of the Curricular Guidelines for High School, as explained by Silva (2015, p. 10, our translation): “the overly theoretical language of the PCNEM and the prescriptive content of the PCN+ caused these documents to lose visibility over the years, thus generating the need for the elaboration of the Curricular Guidelines for High School”⁵.

Authors who dealt with the task of analyzing the documents point out some differences in the approaches and focus of foreign language teaching. Miranda (2005), when performing the articulated reading of the National Curriculum Parameters of Elementary Education and the National Curriculum Parameters of High School, observes that these documents follow the same theoretical approach, emphasizing the importance of significant foreign language teaching with a focus on communication, however, the documents present distinct proposals: while the first one focus on the development of reading skills, the second one focus on the development of the complete communicative competence in a foreign language. In the Curricular Guidelines for High School, we find guidance for the development of language skills as contextualized cultural practices and the introduction of theories about language and new technologies (literacies, multiple literacies, multimodality, hypertext) in language teaching. We understand that documents for foreign language teaching suffer varied influences from the social, historical, and cultural context where they were forged, thus, they bring ideological currents, approaches in language teaching and learning, and diverse conceptions of language, not always harmonious.

However, in the sense of some convergence, regarding the objectives for the foreign language teaching, there is guidance for an education that enables the student to act in the world discursively, given the various communicative situations of social life. The documents bring the prerogative of teaching beyond linguistic instrumentalization, which must be linked to practices that reinforce the emancipator character of that school subject.

Nevertheless, teaching beyond the structures and formal aspects of the language (such as grammatical topics), would imply a non-instrumental conception of the foreign language. The socio-interactional (in the National Curriculum Parameters) and discursive (in the Curricular Guidelines for High School) conceptions of language theoretically support the documents, however, according to the studies, they still do not predominate in teaching practice. In research that privileged the teaching of the English language in the context of High School, Lima (2012) sought to understand whether the teachers’ perspective is articulated with the document’s recommendations. The results of the study point to an apprehension of teaching English with objectives aimed specifically at instrumental usage and there was no “evidence that instrumental English

⁵ Original: “a linguagem demasiadamente teórica dos PCNEM e o teor prescritivo dos PCN+ Ensino Médio fizeram com que esses documentos perdessem visibilidade ao longo dos anos, gerando, assim, a necessidade da elaboração das Orientações Curriculares para o Ensino Médio.” (SILVA, 2015, p. 10).

is worked in alliance with the orientation for citizenship”⁶ (LIMA, 2012, p. 108, our translation). That research, like so many others (for example, ROCHA, 2006; SOUSA, 2006; PUCCI, 2017), points out that, for teachers, the relevance of English skills lies in the possibility of inserting students in the job market. Thus, the instrumental aspects overlap the social and cultural aspects for which the documents advocate, that is, the educational objectives brought by the documents, aiming at the integral education of the student as a citizen, are still not recognized by teachers as essential in the language teaching. The linguistic content presents to the teachers, in addition to being necessary and more important, as the content which is part of the routine of the teacher’s practice, as observed in Costa (2013), when the author investigated the discursive practices of English teachers in public schools and analyzed their beliefs and representations about continuing education. In this study, one teacher reports.⁷

Look, when I say that I am totally confident to teach, it is in the specific content, you know? So if you talk to me like that, teacher, I need you there to replace that class, the teacher is absent, you will have to teach Passive Voice, I just take a look at the content and I go to the classroom and I give the class. Now you need to be there to teach Indirect Speech, I just take a quick look and go to the classroom and teach it, I don’t prepare classes, people even talk to me, don’t you prepare classes? I don’t, I go to the room, pick up the material and go to the classroom.⁸ (COSTA, 2013, p. 126, our translation).

Studies that relate teachers’ speeches to the text of the National Curriculum Parameters (SOUSA, 2006; REIS *et al.*, 2008; SALDANHA, 2015) point to the reproduction of teaching focused on grammar in English language classes, even though the proposal of PCNs contemplated other language teaching aspects besides linguistics. It should be remembered, however, that even though the National Curriculum Parameters adopted an interactive language approach, they favored reading skills in foreign language teaching, claiming, in a prejudiced posture (PAIVA, 2003), that public-school students are less likely to speak the language, in addition to reiterating the school’s (and also the teachers’) problems in offering an education that includes all foreign language skills. This speech is appropriated and enunciated by the teachers. Saldanha (2015,

⁶ Original: “*indícios de que o inglês instrumental é trabalhado em aliança à orientação para a cidadania*” (LIMA, 2012, p. 108).

⁷ Teachers’ speeches are cited as they were transcribed in the original works, including words or passages in capital letters, italics, bold or underlined, and the use of quotation marks. Our interventions consist only of square brackets ([...]) indicating cut lines.

⁸ Original: “*Olha, quando eu falo que eu sou totalmente confiante para dar aula é no conteúdo específico, entendeu? Então se me falar assim, professora, está precisando de você ali para repor aquela aula ali, o professor faltou, você vai dar Voz Passiva, eu só dou uma olhadinha no conteúdo e vou para a sala e dou né. Agora está precisando ali para dar Discurso Indireto, eu só dou uma olhadinha rapidíssimo e vou para a sala e dou aula, eu não fico preparando aula, o pessoal até fala assim, você não prepara aula não? Eu não, eu vou para a sala, pego a matéria e vou embora.*” (COSTA, 2013, p. 126).

p. 15, our translation) observed in the speeches of the teachers participating in her study, a preference in teaching reading and writing, the subjects' responses "reveal the thought that it is more viable to work with instrumental English in public schools, due to several factors. It is exactly this discourse that is presented in the National Curriculum Parameters".⁹ In Sousa (2006, p. 35, our translation), we observed a justification for teaching with an emphasis on the writing skill that corroborates the National Curriculum Parameters approach, as reported by a teacher: "[...] there are few cases in which you notice that the student will take an oral exam. Usually, there are written tests, so my major concern is with the language ... it is with the text comprehension."¹⁰

Another aspect contemplated in the studies is the dissonant relationship between what is prescribed in official documents and the teaching practice. The studies list from the conditions of the English teachers' practice to their insufficient training among the factors that hinder the realization of the official documents' guidelines. Regarding the teachers' working conditions that are seen as obstacles to teaching practice according to what the documents postulate, there are a high number of students per class, excessive working hours, lack of teaching resources, in addition to the lack of time and opportunities for the discussions about the content of the documents, the salary issue and the devaluation of the foreign language in the curriculum (MIRANDA, 2005; MACAU, 2006; ARAGÃO, 2010). An elementary school English teacher, subject of Miranda's (2005, p. 71, our translation) research who worked for six years in public schools, with a weekly workload of 42 hours, illustrates some difficulties:

Unfortunately, a teacher who needs to have 42 classes a week to have a reasonable salary, is unable to do a job appropriate to reality with good planning of the classes. There is a lack of time to prepare activities compatible with the objectives. Teachers in this situation and concerned with their students' learning "do what they can", but they are aware that their role is flawed and incomplete. I know that, in fact, it is not the National Curriculum Parameters' fault, because through them, among other things, you can relate what you learn in school to real life. Perhaps working conditions still need to be rethought, which is not up to the National Curriculum Parameters (unfortunately).¹¹

⁹ Original: "revelam o pensamento de que é mais viável se trabalhar o inglês instrumental nas escolas públicas, por vários fatores. É exatamente esse o discurso que está presente nos PCN-LE" (SALDANHA, 2015, p. 15).

¹⁰ Original: "[...] são poucos os casos que você percebe que o aluno vai fazer uma prova oral. Geralmente as provas são escritas, então a minha maior preocupação é com a linguagem...é com a compreensão de texto". (SOUSA, 2006, p. 35)

¹¹ Original: "Infelizmente um professor que necessita ter 42 horas/aulas semanais para ter um salário razoável, não consegue fazer um trabalho adequado à realidade com um bom planejamento de suas aulas. Há falta de tempo para preparar as atividades compatíveis aos objetivos. Os professores nessa situação e preocupados com a aprendizagem dos seus alunos "faz o que pode", mas está consciente que seu papel está falho e incompleto. Sei que na verdade, a falha não está nos PCNs, pois por meio deles, entre outras coisas, pode-se relacionar o que se aprende na escola à vida real fora dela. Talvez as condições de trabalho ainda precisam ser repensadas, o que não compete aos PCNs (infelizmente)". (MIRANDA, 2005, p. 71).

Concerning teachers' training, the authors claim that it is one of the factors that can influence change or maintenance of paradigms in teaching (MENDONÇA, 2006), thus, the main parameters for teacher training should fall on the functions required of them in basic education, according to the documents that support it (COSTA, 2012). In this regard, Borba and Aragão (2012) reaffirm the importance of paying attention to the initial and continuing education of the English language teachers, so that they can act according to the demands of the documents. The Curricular Guidelines for High School, for example, builds a certain profile for the full performance of the foreign language teacher:

This profile involves acting in the context of new technologies, obtaining a different posture and curriculum, developing the critical and political sense appropriate to the knowledge generated by new ways of dealing with communication, with knowledge, as well as preparation to build pedagogical environments aimed at the development of citizenship through foreign languages teaching and learning.¹² (BORBA; ARAGÃO, 2012, p. 234, our translation).

The authors point out that there is a gap between the profile of the real classroom teacher and the profile of the teacher required by the official text, a fact recognized in the document itself that affirms the need for a change in teacher's training related to the use of new technologies. Teachers recognize the importance of new technologies in English language teaching, as presented in teacher Clara's testimony (COSTA, 2013, p. 70, our translation):

Teaching and learning in the current social and historical context require the use of new technologies, new techniques. The reason is the changes in the way in which young people relate to one another today, they have an enormous facility with these technologies. The teacher needs to be aware of these changes, so the classroom needs to adapt as well. The use of new technologies ends up reinforcing the social interaction between students and teachers.¹³

¹² Original: "*Esse perfil envolve atuar no contexto das novas tecnologias, obter postura e currículo diferenciado, desenvolvimento do senso crítico e político adequado ao conhecimento gerado por novas formas de lidar com a comunicação, com o conhecimento, bem como uma preparação para construir ambientes pedagógicos voltados para o desenvolvimento da cidadania a partir da educação pelas línguas estrangeiras.*" (BORBA; ARAGÃO, 2012, p. 234).

¹³ Original: "*O ensino e aprendizagem no contexto sócio-histórico atual requerem o uso de novas tecnologias, novas técnicas. A razão são as mudanças na forma em que os jovens se relacionam na atualidade, eles têm uma facilidade enorme com essas tecnologias. O professor precisa estar a par dessas mudanças, dessa forma a sala de aula precisa adequar-se também. O uso de novas tecnologias acaba reforçando a interação social entre os alunos e professores.*" (COSTA, 2013, p. 70).

The technological limitations of schools and the lack of preparation to deal with new technologies, in general, are also recognized by teachers. Borba and Aragão (2012, p. 238, our translation) conclude that it is not enough “sending texts with curricular guidelines to schools, but it is necessary to convey structured forms of mediation of them with teachers in service and initial training at universities”.¹⁴

The mediation referred to by the authors is of paramount importance for the understanding of the social function of foreign languages in public schools, for the teaching and learning process, and for the students’ education, as the restricted recognition of the importance of foreign language teaching, implies losses in the integral education aimed at students, that is, “an education that prepares the learners to work not only with the productive forces but above that, seeks for the appropriation of knowledge that includes social relations and social practice aspects in different areas of society”¹⁵ (MIRANDA, 2015, p. 18, our translation).

Thus, from our examination of the official documents and the teachers’ speeches, we recognize that the documents tend to place great weight on the performance of the teacher to comply with its requirements and, not occasionally, completely ignore the working conditions of the teachers, therefore, establishing “a policy of pretending”, as explained by Oliveira (2011, p. 84-85, our translation): “creating laws and regulations to govern the public system and not providing the means for the materialization of the law is a policy of pretending”.¹⁶

The analyzed studies pointed to:

1). the distance from the theoretical and chimerical discourse of the documents and the teaching practice, as explained by a teacher, who does not recognize the reality in the prescribed documents: “the National Curriculum Parameters proposals were elaborated by foreign authors, who do not have a reality like ours”¹⁷ (MIRANDA, 2005, p. 71, our translation);

2). insufficient training; and

3). the (bad) working conditions, as reported by another teacher: “I place more emphasis on writing. Due to lack of material and discipline (45 to 50 students per class); I teach oral skills a little”¹⁸ (SOUSA, 2006, p. 35, our translation). These recurrent conclusions in the research field are configured in circumstances that do not leave

¹⁴ Original: “o envio de textos com orientações curriculares para as escolas, mas se fazem necessárias formas estruturadas de mediação deles junto com os professores em serviço e em formação inicial nas universidades”. (BORBA; ARAGÃO, 2012, p. 238).

¹⁵ Original: “uma formação que prepara os sujeitos educandos para atuarem não apenas junto às forças produtivas, mas que acima disso, prima pela apropriação de um conhecimento que abrange as relações sociais e à prática social nos diversos âmbitos da sociedade”. (MIRANDA, 2015, p. 18).

¹⁶ Original: “criar leis e regulamentações para reger o sistema público e não prover os meios para que a lei se concretize é uma política do fingimento”. (OLIVEIRA, 2011, p. 84-85).

¹⁷ Original: “as propostas feitas pelos PCNs foram elaboradas por pensadores estrangeiros, os quais não possuem uma realidade igual a nossa”. (MIRANDA, 2005, p. 71).

¹⁸ Original: “dou mais ênfase à escrita. Por falta de material e de disciplina (45 a 50 alunos por classe); uso pouco a parte oral”. (SOUSA, 2006, p. 35).

much choice for English teachers, the utilitarian view of the language stands out in their practice, even if the teacher recognizes other needs for English language teaching.

It is implied that for the construction of another understanding of foreign language teaching, less utilitarian, debating the issue is also fundamental. As studies reveal (ZACCHI, 2003; SOUSA, 2006), the construction of critical thinking in language teaching is still barely visible in the speeches of the teachers, who conceive English learning as a natural need and seek to convince students of its importance arguing the ubiquity of English in students' daily lives and its relevance for entering the job market. A critical literacy approach for foreign language teaching permeates the documents and their appropriation by teachers would help them to rethink their classes and, through critical reflection, broaden the understanding of the ways of using writing and reading in the English language today (COSTA, 2012). However, for this teaching conception to materialize in schools, teachers must have studied, been informed, and reflected on it, which would require a joint investment by the State, schools, and teachers, "so that it can actually enable emancipatory education that does not dispense, but that is not restricted to preparing for entry into higher education or the world of work"¹⁹ (BEZERRA; JOVANOVIC, 2014, p. 131-132, our translation).

The speeches of São Paulo's official documents for English language teaching in the teachers' appropriation

According to the São Paulo State Department of Education, the São Paulo Faz Escola program aimed at unifying the school curriculum of state schools. Through the program, an official curriculum, São Paulo State Curriculum, was implemented "formatted in documents that constitute guidelines for the work of the teacher in the classroom and aims to guarantee a common base of knowledge and skills for all teachers and students".²⁰

In 2008, the new curricular proposal began to be implemented, with the distribution of material for teachers (*Cadernos do Professor*), organized bi-monthly, by school subjects and grades, which included general guidelines for the organization of classes, assessment, and catch-up for students. In 2009, materials for students (*Cadernos do Aluno*) were included in the pedagogical teaching material, and in 2010 the curriculum proposal became the Official Curriculum of the State of São Paulo.²¹

¹⁹ Original: "para que se possa possibilitar de fato uma formação emancipatória que não dispense, mas que não se restrinja à preparação para o ingresso no ensino superior nem tampouco ao mundo do trabalho". (BEZERRA; JOVANOVIC, 2014, p. 131-132).

²⁰ Original: "formatado em documentos que constituem orientações para o trabalho do professor em sala de aula e visa garantir uma base comum de conhecimento e competências para todos os professores e alunos". Available at: <http://www.educacao.sp.gov.br/sao-paulo-faz-escola>. Accessed in Aug. 2018.

²¹ A brief history of the implementation of the Curriculum was developed in the following works, among others: Bernardino (2010) e Catanzaro (2012).

Regarding the foreign languages, there is a change from the communicative approach to the teaching perspective focused on multiple literacies. The foreign language teaching based on literacy proposes links between knowledge and practice, the linguistic system and writing, learning and reflection on learning, therefore, the Foreign Language Curriculum points out that “it is necessary that the text (oral or written), understood as a concrete discourse manifestation, occupies a central place in the pedagogical action and stops being used as material for mere translation or as a pretext for the study of grammar”²² (SÃO PAULO, 2011, p. 108, our translation).

Materials that accompany the Curriculum point out that the guidelines and proposals can be used as support material, to assist teachers in planning, organizing and conducting classes. However, studies indicate that the material is fundamentally prescriptive and aimed at organizing, substantiating, and directing the teacher’s work. The English Language Curriculum, for example, brings the Fundamentals for Foreign Language teaching, the organization of basic contents for Elementary School (Cycle II), and the organization of basic contents for High School, where it justifies and presents the chosen contents; it also brings the methodological principles that guide the development of the English content proposed for Elementary School II and High School:

In the development of the English content proposed for Elementary School II and High School, three methodological principles stand out. First, the emphasis is placed on understanding and interpreting meanings (from reading and written texts, participation in activities and problem-solving in a collaborative way, etc.) through, mainly, the expansion of interpretative schemes and the students’ lexical repertoire. [...] Secondly, the study of the characteristics and organization of different texts acquires relevance in the development of the content. [...] Finally, teaching and learning take place in a spiral: students have contact with the object of study (textual, lexical, or structural) several times, at different moments and in different contexts, to gradually expand and re-elaborate knowledge.²³ (SÃO PAULO, 2011, p. 111, our translation).

²² Original: “é necessário que o texto (oral ou escrito), entendido como manifestação concreta do discurso, ocupe lugar central na ação pedagógica e deixe de ser trabalhado como material para mera tradução ou como pretexto para o estudo da gramática”. (SÃO PAULO, 2011, p. 108).

²³ Original: “No desenvolvimento dos conteúdos de língua inglesa propostos para o Ensino Fundamental II e para o Ensino Médio, destacam-se três princípios metodológicos. Primeiramente, a ênfase é dada à compreensão e à interpretação de significados (dos textos lidos, dos textos escritos, da participação nas atividades e na resolução de problemas de modo colaborativo etc.) por meio, principalmente, da ampliação dos esquemas interpretativos e do repertório lexical dos alunos. [...] Em segundo lugar, o estudo das características e da organização de diversos textos adquire relevância no desenvolvimento dos conteúdos. [...] Por fim, o ensino e a aprendizagem ocorrem de forma espiralada: os alunos têm contato com o objeto de estudo (textual, lexical ou estrutural) diversas vezes, em momentos e contextos diferentes, de modo a gradualmente ampliar e reelaborar seu conhecimento”. (SÃO PAULO, 2011, p. 111).

In that sense, researchers reflect on the effects of the prescription on the autonomy of teaching work. Pinhel-Aguilera (2013) infers that the teacher's role can be reduced to technical, if the material is used as the only teaching resource, leading the teachers' decisions to the detriment of the student's real needs and interests. This situation would be brought about by the uniformity of the content and the approach proposed in the material, which reduces the initiative of teachers. Confuorto (2015), analyzing the speeches of official documents for foreign language teaching, affirms that the discourse of those documents produces an effect of homogenizing the teaching practice, an effect enhanced when there is a curriculum that prescribes the teachers' action and places them as communicators of content. The author asks:

The curricular policy implemented in São Paulo has a clear objective in standardization. An example is *Cadernos do Professor*, as part of the curricular proposal of São Paulo (2008). What are they if not a comeback, a return to instructional teaching, in which the teacher is just a knowledge donor and the student is a receiver?²⁴ (CONFUORTO, 2015, p. 53, our translation).

Studies also address the possibility of developing student's autonomy to build knowledge and encourage reflection. Kina (2014), in a study, focused on the treatment given by the curricular proposal to reading practices in English, observed that the suggested reading activities provided students with the roles of information recipients and speech reproducers of textbooks, not offering the space for their elaborations and understanding about the readings performed. Borges (2015), related to the proposal of readers training sought by the Curriculum, analyzes that although the document aims at the development of reading and writing skills in English, access to authentic practices, and awareness of the text production context, these aspects are not sufficiently addressed in the proposed activities.

Nevertheless, due to the (im)position of the Curriculum in the teacher's work routine, mainly through the material for teachers and students, the teaching practice starts to orbit its contents, taking the material as a reference (once its contents are asked on internal and external students' evaluations), establishing an (in)tense dialogue with them.

We can observe in the literature review that, in general, teachers see as positive the insertion of the Curriculum materials in the daily routine of classes (CONFUORTO, 2015; SANTOS, 2015; DIAS, 2012; LOPES, 2010). Borges (2015) helps us to understand this point of view, since most of the public-school teachers of São Paulo have a long workload, many students in the classrooms, problems with indiscipline and, in addition to working on the content of classes, they must participate in meetings (peer's

²⁴ Original: "*A política curricular implantada em São Paulo tem um claro objetivo na padronização. Um exemplo são os Cadernos do Professor, parte integrante da PCLEM- Inglês (2008). O que são eles senão uma volta, um retorno ao ensino instrucional, em que o professor é apenas um elemento transmissor e o aluno, receptor?*". (CONFUORTO, 2015, p. 53).

meetings, School Orientation meetings in the Teaching Boards, parent's meetings, etc.) and implement school projects. Thus, because of such varied demands, it is not difficult to understand that teachers, "even though the proposal and the materials were implemented without their consultation and preparation, that is, they were imposed by the Department of Education, they welcome the use of them"²⁵ (BORGES, 2015, p. 268, our translation).

The materials seem to cover relevant content for English teaching, according to the teachers. However, we observe that the contents of the English language structure, grammar, and vocabulary stand out in their speeches and, with significantly less recurrence there are references to ways of teaching the content, aiming at the construction of discursive competence based on the development of multiple literacies, as suggested by the Curriculum.

The Curriculum is WONDERFUL / it is VERY good / the curriculum proposal of the state of São Paulo / I think it is WONDERFUL / I look at it and see ... WOW / everything ... because it covers EVERYTHING [...] you look at this content here / you see it is good ... / of course ... there is no ... within the State classrooms we do not have other resources ... like laboratories that exist in private schools [...] I think it is a great material ... excellent / but that's what I said ... in reality, my students are very different [...] I can't do it, in the 8th grade teaching present perfect to a student who doesn't even know what a verb is ... right? / he can't recognize the verbs ... IMAGINE him decorating a column of three verbs ... there /²⁶ (CONFUORTO, 2015, p. 142, our translation).

I try to teach verb tenses, numerals, pronouns, adjectives, etc., which I understand to be the central aspects for comprehending the text.²⁷ (SOUZA, 2010, p. 73, our translation).

At school, we work on grammatical English. Unfortunately, it is a reality. All the texts that we work on ... in the booklet relate to grammatical questions. [...] It is understood that that text was, ... it was one that, that, ... the text was a pretext, to talk about grammar. Which is also valid,

²⁵ Original: "*por mais que a Proposta e os Cadernos tenham sido implementados sem sua consulta e preparação, isto é, foram impostos pela Secretaria da Educação, veem com bons olhos a utilização dos Cadernos*". (BORGES, 2015, p. 268).

²⁶ Original: "*O currículo é MARAVILHOSO / ele é MUITO bom / a proposta curricular do estado de São Paulo / eu acho ela MARAVILHOSA / eu olho ela e vejo...NOSSA / tudo...porque abrange TUDO [...] você vai olhar esse conteúdo aqui / você vê que é bom... / é claro...não tem...dentro do Estado a gente não tem outros recursos...como laboratórios que existem nas escolas particulares [...] eu acho que é um material ótimo...excelente / mas é aquilo que eu falei...na realidade dos meus alunos é muito diferente [...] eu não consigo em uma 8ª série dar um present perfect para um aluno que não sabe nem o que é um verbo direto...né? / ele não consegue reconhecer os verbos...IMAGINA ele decorar uma coluna de três verbos...lá!*" (CONFUORTO, 2015, p. 142).

²⁷ Original: "*Procuo ensinar tempos verbais, numerais, pronomes, adjetivos, etc., que percebo serem os aspectos centrais para compreensão do texto trabalhado*." (SOUZA, 2010, p. 73).

isn't it? Because if it is ... if it is contextualized, it is much easier for you to work. But ... I return to that first question: how to teach English, such a vast text, with so many different words, if they don't know, for example, conjunctions, if they don't know nouns?²⁸ (CARVALHO, 2016, p. 108, our translation).

The speeches of teachers who value the teaching of English grammar are explained for different reasons. We conjecture that, although the Curriculum values teaching in a discursive perspective, not all the proposed activities are guided by this approach, remaining activities that do not privilege reflection and the construction of knowledge about the uses of the language in context by the student (KINA, 2014 and BORGES, 2015, for example) and, still, there are training issues that go through the difficulties presented by students and teachers, as we will see forward.

We found in the studies that the Curriculum also raises suspicion among some teachers.

[...] At the end of the booklet, the only thing I use is that part that makes a comparison between Portuguese and English. In the first grade of High School it talks about dictionaries, in the second, the booklet talks about films, the question of translation, about polysemy, that sort of thing. Then, the parts of *Vocabulary Log*, *Can-do-chart*, I never taught that in my life, and they say *why are we going to do that?* That doesn't make sense. I've already used film from those suggestions because it's related to the content. Film and, once in a while, music [...].²⁹ (SANTOS, 2015, p. 84, our translation).

The material [...] does not match the reality of the public-school student. Not ours. The one I work for, in particular. A very peripheral school.³⁰ (CARVALHO, 2016, p.119, our translation).

One of the explanations for such distance between the teacher and the Curriculum content as it is organized may be in the distance between this professional and the

²⁸ Original: "*A escola trabalha o inglês gramatical. Infelizmente é uma realidade. Todos os textos que a gente trabalha, na, ...na apostila se voltam pra questão gramatical. [...] Entende-se que aquele texto foi, ...foi um que, que, ...o texto foi um pretexto, pra se falar da gramática. O que é válido também, né. Porque se tá, ...se tá contextualizado, é muito mais fácil você trabalhar. Mas, ...eu volto aquela primeira questão: como trabalhar o inglês, um texto tão vasto, com tantas palavras diferentes, se eles não conhecem por exemplo, as conjunções, se eles não conhecem substantivo? "* (CARVALHO, 2016, p. 108).

²⁹ Original: "*(...) do final da apostila a única coisa que eu uso é aquela parte que faz uma comparação entre português e inglês. No primeiro colegial fala sobre dicionários, na apostila do segundo fala sobre filmes, a questão de tradução, fala sobre polissemia, isso aí. Depois, as partes de Vocabulary Log, Can-do-chart, eu nunca na minha vida dei aquilo, e eles falam assim pra que que a gente vai fazer isso? Não tem sentido aquilo. Eu já usei filme daquelas sugestões porque é relacionado mesmo à matéria. Filme e, uma vez ou outra, música (...)*". (SANTOS, 2015, p. 84).

³⁰ Original: "*O material didático [...] não condiz com a realidade do aluno da escola pública. Não da nossa. Da que eu trabalho, em particular. Uma escola bem periférica.*" (CARVALHO, 2016, p.119).

process of elaboration and implementation of the materials, the isolation of this process fosters a tendency of resistance to the adoption of the Curriculum by some teachers (CATANZARO, 2012).

We understand, from the speeches brought by the studies, that working with the Curriculum is challenging for the teacher who welcomed the material imposed for latent reasons (pressure of school management, National evaluation and, still, the lack of other materials available for English teaching), however, they have difficulties using the materials in their classes. English teachers, who are subjects of the study by Pinhel-Aguilera (2013), claim to have difficulties, and report some of them, faced in developing the material guidelines for learning activities:

Yes, a little, because everything new causes a strange feeling, the question of interpreting a text without translating it was one example.

[...]

Yes, I think the new curriculum should be gradual, as there is a lot of difficulty for teachers and students to leave the traditional.

[...]

Yes, I had difficulty with some proposals for written production. Some proposals are complex and sometimes, even if simple, certain proposals are difficult to implement within the classroom, due to indiscipline, lack of dictionaries, among other things.³¹ (PINHEL-AGUILERA, 2013, p. 195-196, our translation).

Adaptation is repeatedly used as a strategy for teachers, who started to use the material in their classes: adaptations of the content, of the strategies to present it to the students, and of the manners of developing the activities. The justifications of the teachers for the necessary adaptations to the development of the material guidelines come from difficulties that are supported by a tripod: the perception of the students' lack of knowledge and, therefore, the students' difficulty in learning the language, the classroom dynamics, and the lack of knowledge of teachers themselves.

Many of the adaptations in the material guidelines are based on the teachers' perception that students do not understand or are not able to carry out the activities as proposed.

³¹ Original: "*Sim, um pouco, pois tudo o que é novo causa um estranhamento, a questão de interpretar um texto sem traduzi-lo foi uma. [...] Sim, penso que o Novo Currículo deveria ser gradual, pois há muita dificuldade entre professores e alunos de deixar o tradicional. [...] Sim, senti dificuldade em algumas propostas de produção escrita. Algumas propostas são complexas e, algumas vezes, mesmo que simples, certas propostas são difíceis de implementar dentro da sala de aula, devido à indisciplina, falta de dicionários, entre outras coisas.*" (PINHEL-AGUILERA, 2013, p. 195-196).

[...] The material / I don't ... no ... I don't use it a lot / I don't think its didactics is good / I don't think ... it's even interesting in the initial grades / but as this year I have high school grades / uh ... it ... I think because the level is a little high / the students can't keep up [...].³² (CONFUORTO, 2015, p. 154, our translation).

[...] they are not able to do it, only if it is something from the textbook that we are working on at that exact moment, something grammatical, that I know, look, the exercise is the same, so you can finish at home. Other than that, research is very rare [...]. They can't handle it, I even tried it, I said, try to do it. They search the internet for the answer and copy it.³³ (SANTOS, 2015, p. 77-78, our translation).

A teacher, subject of Andrade's study (2012, p. 60, our translation), was asked if she followed the order of the steps established for a reading activity, which indicated as the first step "before reading"³⁴ activity, with previous questions about the text to be read. The teacher justifies:

I always work on the text before because I think if I ask the question before, they won't understand. Because it's asked: "Where can you find these texts?" So, he has to see the text. Take a look. I find it even strange that they put the question before the text.³⁵

The classroom dynamics also create barriers to working with the material. In the classroom dynamics are concentrated some of the problems of public education: crowded rooms, undisciplined students, tired teachers, lack of resources, in addition to the historically marginal positioning of English in the school curriculum. These aspects, among others, influence the application of the Curriculum and are not saved by it, as its creators would like. The contradiction is expressed by a teacher (CONFUORTO, 2015,

³² Original: "[...] *O caderno do professor / eu não...não...não costume usar muito / eu não acho a didática dele boa / eu não acho...êh até interessante nas séries iniciais / mas como eu nesse ano estou com o ensino médio / êh... ele ...eu acho porque o nível está um pouco alto / os alunos não conseguem acompanhar[...]*". (CONFUORTO, 2015, p. 154).

³³ Original: "[...] *eles não dão conta de fazer; só se é alguma coisa da apostila que a gente tá trabalhando no exato momento, alguma coisa gramatical, que eu sei, ôh, o exercício é o mesmo, então termina em casa. Fora isso, fazer pesquisa é muito raro [...]. Eles não dão conta, eu já até tentei, falei tenta fazer. Eles procuram na internet a resposta e copiam.*" (SANTOS, 2015, p. 77-78).

³⁴ Before-reading or pre-reading activities are tasks worked on before reading a text, in which strategies, such as questions, can be used to predict and anticipate the content to be read. "Through this strategy, previous knowledge is mobilized [...] enabling the study of graphic marks of the text, the analysis of related texts and the comparison with marks in texts written in the mother tongue" (DONNINI; PLATERO; WEIGEL, 2011, p. 62). Original: "*Por meio dessa estratégia, conhecimentos prévios são mobilizados [...] possibilitando o estudo de marcas gráficas do texto, a análise de textos correlatos e a comparação entre as marcas em textos escritos em língua materna*". (DONNINI; PLATERO; WEIGEL, 2011, p. 62).

³⁵ Original: "*Eu sempre trabalho antes o texto, porque eu acho que se eu lançar a pergunta antes, eles não vão entender. Porque aí já pergunta: 'Onde você pode encontrar esses textos?' Então ele tem que ver o texto. Dá uma olhada. Eu acho até estranho eles colocarem a pergunta antes do texto*". (ANDRADE, 2012, p. 60).

p. 138, our translation) “[...] the curriculum proposal is good, but there is difficulty in applying it (the curriculum / content) in schools as oriented by the curriculum itself”³⁶.

English language teachers list the number of problems they face:

Currently, teaching English is very difficult because the subject is considered irrelevant to the government and students. When students think English is important and necessary, they look for a language school to learn. Students are undisciplined, not committed, interested or willing, and conscious of the need and importance of English for the future.³⁷ (SANTOS, 2015, p. 72, our translation).

The material provided by the State, for example, I follow and complement with the book that was provided too, which I think is really cool. And they fill in the book itself because there is a gap for them to complete. There’s a CD. I don’t use the CD, because there are classrooms that we can’t, there’s no way, and there are... The thing is it’s a great difficulty, sometimes, in the school itself, because they don’t borrow the CD player, and we have to bring it from home.³⁸ (PUCCI, 2017, p. 124, our translation).

[...] it is ... whoever is ... accumulating position ... it is difficult to do a good job all day long / some people can do a good job all day long / some people can’t / I am one of them / and unfortunately my English classes are in the afternoon ... so what I ... I wear out in the morning and in the afternoon I’m already exhausted, right? / and there is this issue / there is the crowded classroom issue [...].³⁹ (CONFUORTO, 2015, p. 133, our translation).

Teachers’ difficulties also involve linguistic and training issues, such as the lack of content to teach students and unfamiliarity with the teaching approaches presented in the material.

³⁶ Original: “[...] a proposta curricular é boa, mas existe uma dificuldade em se aplicar (o currículo/ o conteúdo) nas escolas da maneira prevista pelo próprio currículo”. (CONFUORTO, 2015, p. 138).

³⁷ Original: “Atualmente o ensino de inglês está muito difícil porque a matéria é considerada irrelevante para o governo e para os alunos. Quando os alunos acham que inglês é importante e necessário, eles procuram uma escola de idiomas para aprender. Os alunos estão indisciplinados, falta comprometimento, interesse, vontade, consciência da necessidade e importância do inglês para o futuro.” (SANTOS, 2015, p. 72).

³⁸ Original: “O caderninho que veio do Estado, por exemplo, eu sigo e complemento com o livro que veio também, que eu acho muito legal. E eles completam no próprio livro, porque vem um espaço para eles completarem. Tem um CD. O CD eu não uso, porque tem salas que não dá, não tem jeito, e tem... E, assim, é uma grande dificuldade, às vezes, da própria escola, porque eles não emprestam o rádio, e a gente tem que trazer de casa.” (PUCCI, 2017, p. 124).

³⁹ Original: “[...] é... quem está... acumula cargo... dificilmente consegue fazer um bom trabalho o dia inteiro / tem gente que consegue fazer um bom trabalho o dia inteiro / tem gente que não / eu sou um dos que não / e infelizmente o meu cargo de inglês é à tarde... então o que eu me ...me desgasto de manhã chega à tarde eu já estou acabado, né? / e tem essa questão / tem a questão da sala ser cheia [...]”. (CONFUORTO, 2015, p. 133).

I felt [difficulty] because the words were, even for them, I said they were difficult. So, I had to study hard, prepare myself, teach them vocabulary because we had no support, neither from the [Teaching] Board nor from the [Education] State Department.⁴⁰ (SANTOS, 2015, p. 124, our translation).

Some grammar exercises, such as those that address the present perfect, in the 3rd. grade, are difficult. If it is difficult for me, imagine for the students.⁴¹ (SOUZA, 2010, p. 83, our translation).

Violante (2011), in a study carried out with English teachers on the Curriculum and its materials, observed that the insertion of the material represented a significant change in the daily lives of teachers and, consequently, of students, even so, all teachers reported having difficulties to work with it. In this regard, the author reflects that the difficulty may not refer exclusively to the level of English required by the material, but also to the contemplated teaching approach, different from that used by teachers, in general. A striking indication of this assertion can be seen in the speeches of teachers who still favor teaching English through grammar and translation.

We understand that the way teachers narrate their teaching is based on the concept of teaching and language that they bring, therefore, the use of translation and grammatical structures reflect a structuralist concept of language, which refers to the way the teacher learned the language in dissonance with the perspective of multiple literacies, recommended in the Curriculum for foreign language teaching. Even when they reflect on the curriculum proposal for English teaching and embrace the new teaching approach, they recognize the limitations in the classroom:

Yeah, I think it's because I'm so addicted to translating, right? Then I don't let them think too, they try, right?⁴² (ANDRADE, 2012, p. 74, our translation).

[...] And ... today, the thing is I give a lot of translation too. I think it shouldn't be that way, the student has to learn more through English, but we usually give translation because of the difficulties they have with words.⁴³ (SANTOS, 2015, p. 120, our translation).

⁴⁰ Original: "*Senti [dificuldade] porque as palavras, eram, até pra eles, eu falava que era difícil. Então eu tive que estudar bastante, me preparar, passar vocabulário pra eles, porque nós não tivemos apoio nenhum, nem da Diretoria [de Ensino], nem da Secretaria [de Ensino]*". (SANTOS, 2015, p. 124).

⁴¹ Original: "*Alguns exercícios de gramática, como os que abordam o present perfect, no 3º ano, são difíceis. Se para mim é difícil imagina para os alunos.*" (SOUZA, 2010, p. 83).

⁴² Original: "É. Acho que é porque eu *to* tão viciada assim em já ir traduzindo né, aí não deixo também eles pensando, tá tentando, né?" (ANDRADE, 2012, p. 74).

⁴³ Original: "[...] *E... hoje, assim, eu dou muita tradução também. Acho que não deve dar, o aluno tem que aprender mais no inglês, mas a gente costuma dar tradução pelas dificuldades que eles têm com as palavras*" (SANTOS, 2015, p. 120).

Well, I think the orthographical part is missing, right? The grammar too, and as I said, you know, I think they (materials) focus a lot on text, on the student working with comprehension and I think the grammar is missing. Do you know what I mean?⁴⁴ (LUÍZ, 2015, p. 83, our translation).

Thus, we point out that teachers make their adaptations, as they are still adapting to the Curriculum, since we do not observe substantial changes in the routine of classes related to the concept of English teaching, which remains focused on the study of language structures, such as several studies evidence (VIOLANTE, 2011; SOUZA, 2015; PUCCI, 2017, among others).

In this sense, we encounter obstacles already known in teaching practice, one regarding teacher's training and another related to structural and social issues. The first concerns the teacher's continuing education that should contemplate not only the exhibition or the transposition of the contents of the material into the classes, but also a reflection on language teaching approaches, as claimed by Pinhel-Aguilera (2013, p. 58, our translation):

It is necessary to promote reflection on the conceptions of language and learning that underlie their practice, in order to contrast them with the conceptions of the official document so that the teacher can understand that the materials are not a method, but guidelines that can assist him in the classroom decision making.⁴⁵

As for the structural and social obstacle, we turn to the teachers' working conditions, which, if not taken as a basic requirement for educational practice by governments, as causally related to the quality of education offered to students, they will not be saved by the Curriculum, by the training processes, or even by the committed work of the teachers.

Final remarks

In this paper, we aimed to analyze how the speeches of the official documents are being appropriated by English teachers, according to research in the field. In order to do so, we brought the teachers' speeches regarding the documents that guide their teaching practice, the prescriptive documents with homogenizing intentions, such as the

⁴⁴ Original: "*Óh eu acho que falta a parte ortográfica né, a gramática também, e como eu falei já né assim, eu acho que eles (os cadernos) focam muito em texto, a pessoa trabalhar com a interpretação e eu acho que fica muito em falta a gramática. Entendeu?*" (LUÍZ, 2015, p. 83).

⁴⁵ Original: "*É preciso promover a reflexão sobre as concepções de linguagem e de aprendizagem que fundamentam sua prática, de modo a contrastá-las com as concepções do documento oficial, a fim de que o professor possa entender que os cadernos, de fato, não são um método, mas diretrizes que podem auxiliá-lo em suas tomadas de decisão em sala de aula*". (PINHEL-AGUILERA, 2013, p. 58)

National Curriculum Parameters of Elementary Education, the Curricular Guidelines for High School, and the São Paulo State Curriculum.

We infer that teachers recognize that these documents bring contributions to teaching practice, however, they express how much this official discourse is alien to the reality of their practice and, in this sense, it is not a parameter for classroom activities, especially the discourse of the Federal documents. From our point of view, this discourse remains distant, like the authoritative word, defined by Bakhtin, which “is given (it sounds) in lofty spheres, not those of familiar contact” (BAKHTIN, 1981, p. 78). As we have seen, the discussion of teaching in a critical or discursive perspective, as the documents proclaim, does not enter the teachers’ classes.

We recognize that all the other’s discourse, the authoritative⁴⁶ and the internally persuasive words (BAKHTIN, 1981), as part of the discursive field in which teachers participate, act in the constitution of their ideological formation. The internally persuasive word, however, is inserted in a tense relationship with our inner words, intertwining with them and leading to ideological transformation, a process in which the speeches of the official documents do not seem to participate.

Even when we look at the speeches of teachers who teach under the guidance of the São Paulo Curriculum, which is more present in the classroom due to the materials that accompany it, we observe that teaching in a discursive perspective, contemplating multiple literacies, does not emerge from their speeches, the activities are adapted and focused on linguistic aspects. This fact is already justified in the studies by factors that imply poor training and the teachers’ working conditions.

We conjecture that the appropriation/interpretation of the guiding discourse of official documents by teachers occurs in contrast to their practice, which does not bring the ideal conditions or ideal students that appear in the speeches of official documents. Teachers argue with these discourses and respond to them with their counter words, based on their theoretical and experiential repertoire. According to Volosinov (1973, p. 69), “any act of understanding is a response, i.e., it translates what is being understood into a new context from which a response can be made”. Understanding any utterance means taking positions, “understanding is to utterance as one line of a dialogue is to the next. Understanding strives to match the speaker’s word with a counter word” (VOLOSINOV, 1973, p. 102). From our perspective, we understand that meanings are produced in the encounter of a concrete utterance with the subjects’ counter words, within certain concrete conditions of discursive communication.

Thus, the imposed official curricula, which have no adherence to the concrete context of teaching practice, are understood by teachers as distant, alien to their reality, inefficient within the context in which they work, these are the responses that prescriptive discourses raise. In this sense, the asymmetry between the speeches of official documents

⁴⁶ The authoritative word, in the process of assimilating the words of others, is fully accepted by the subject who recognizes it united to authority, to a hierarchy. The authoritative word enters our verbal conscience in its entirety, we reject it or accept it entirely, they are immune to the limits of contexts or style variations, they definitively incorporate themselves into authority - political power, institution, personality (BAKHTIN, 1981).

and the speeches of teachers related to their practice tends to continue, due to the distance from the teachers and the instances of planning and organization of classes, the choice of material and personalized content for their students. We emphasize, once again, that there are several factors so that teachers' speeches do not match those of official documents when they relate to their practice. Although sometimes, they do not disagree with the proposed by official documents about the content, purpose, or approach of teaching English, they do not find conditions, whether structural, professional, or educational, to follow the guidelines.

The recent Common National Curriculum follows this direction, perpetuating a model that violates the autonomy of the teacher. Its normative character is shown in the document as it “defines the organic and progressive set of essential learning that all students must develop throughout the stages and modalities of Basic Education”⁴⁷ (BRASIL, 2017, p. 7, our translation). Thus, the document delegates to public and private schools the task of building curricula, based on the established content, to put the document effectively into action in schools.

Regarding the role of the curriculum (prepared by the municipalities, schools, and teachers), attributed as complementary to the document, the Common National Curriculum appropriates the concept of curriculum in action, one that is designed to cover aspects that the formal curriculum does not reach, as it does not cover all the possibilities of what happens in schools (MACEDO, 2018). In this sense, we have the prescribed curriculum and the curriculum in action, which guides the application, a model that is highly criticized, since it excludes the formulation of the curriculum implementation instance.

We infer that if teachers are not the protagonists in the discussion about what and how to teach their subjects with the proposals brought by official documents, these speeches will remain alien to their reality, as the meanings are produced and re-elaborated in the dialogue with other speeches. We also reiterate that if the concrete working conditions of teachers are not in line with the improvements aimed at public education, it will not be saved by the directions of the prescriptive documents.

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⁴⁷ Original: “*define o conjunto orgânico e progressivo de aprendizagens essenciais que todos os alunos devem desenvolver ao longo das etapas e modalidades da Educação Básica*”. (BRASIL, 2017, p. 7).

PUCCI, R. Os discursos dos professores de língua inglesa da escola pública sobre os discursos dos documentos oficiais: análise enunciativo-discursiva de um (in)tenso diálogo. *Alfa*, São Paulo, v.65, 2021

- *RESUMO: O presente estudo apresenta um levantamento de pesquisas na área de ensino e aprendizagem de língua inglesa que abordaram a temática dos documentos oficiais na relação com a prática do professor de inglês da escola pública, trazendo à tona os discursos desse sujeito. Com o objetivo de analisar como os discursos dos documentos oficiais vêm sendo apropriados pelos professores de inglês da rede pública, segundo as pesquisas da área, este trabalho fundamenta-se teoricamente na perspectiva da formação discursiva e social do sujeito, a partir da teoria bakhtiniana de apropriação dos discursos. As análises dos enunciados dos professores indiciam que os direcionamentos dos documentos não apresentam aderência ao contexto concreto da prática docente, são compreendidos pelos professores como estranhos à sua realidade e ineficientes na conjuntura em que atuam. Os discursos oficiais apresentam-se para os professores como a palavra autoritária, que remete a uma alta esfera, distante da esfera do contato familiar. Como observado, a dissintonia entre os discursos dos documentos oficiais e os discursos dos professores relativos à sua prática tende a continuar devido ao distanciamento dos docentes das instâncias de planejamento e organização das aulas, da escolha do material e do conteúdo adequado para seus alunos.*
- *PALAVRAS-CHAVE: discurso dos documentos oficiais; professores de língua inglesa; análise enunciativo-discursiva.*

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