

EVALUATION, IDENTITIES AND GENDER: ANALYSIS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE NARRATIVES IN AN INTERACTION AMONG WOMEN

Adriana Nogueira A. NÓBREGA *
Adriana Rodrigues de ABREU**

- **ABSTRACT:** This research investigates the relationship between the evaluative uses of language and the (re)constructions of gender identities from the analysis of oral narratives about domestic violence, suffered by women in their family contexts, reported in an academic interaction. Grounded in the area of Contemporary Applied Linguistics, the theoretical and methodological framework followed a critical stance and the research analyzes how participants structure, negotiate and (re)construct their identities along the narratives, observing how they cope with gender issues, ideologically imposed by society. Hence, to reach the above objectives, we propose an interface between the perspective of gender as a performative act, performed through the use of language, with the interactional approach of narrative and the social constructionist view of identities. The qualitative methodology oriented the analysis of the narrative practice, which was centered on the evaluative elements that constituted the narrative discourse. Results suggest that both gender and identities are products of local performances of sociohistorical individuals, situated in several discursive activities.
- **KEYWORDS:** oral narratives of personal experience; domestic violence; gender identities; evaluation.

Initial considerations

In this article, we analyze the relationships between the evaluative uses of language and the (re)constructions of gender identities, based on a critical theoretical-methodological framework focused on the interrelationship between gender, identities and evaluation in oral narratives of personal experiences. The research focuses in the field of Contemporary Applied Linguistics, an undisciplined and mixed field of investigation that seeks to create intelligibilities about the uses of language in specific

* Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro (PUC-Rio). Rio de Janeiro - RJ - Brazil. adriana.nnobrega@gmail.com. ORCID: 0000-0002-0194-0120.

** Rede Municipal do Rio de Janeiro. Secretaria Municipal de Educação. Rio de Janeiro - RJ - Brazil. adrianarodrigues@yahoo.com.br. ORCID: 0000-0003-2359-6372.

social contexts (MOITA LOPES, 2006; PENNYCOOK, 2006). Contemporary Applied Linguistics is moving towards an “epistemological project with implications for social life!” (MOITA LOPES, 2006, p. 91, our translation), being a continuously critical and self-reflexive field (PENNYCOOK, 2004, 2006) and concerned with issues related to sociocultural, political and historical life (MOITA LOPES, 2006).

Based on the principles of Contemporary Applied Linguistics, the theoretical conception adopted here follows a non-essentialist perspective of identities and argues that, instead of a given, ready and finished reality, identities emerge from, and are constructed in, particular sociocultural contexts and can only be understood as effects of body and language performances. We therefore start from a critical perspective of language (FAIRCLOUGH, 2003; PENNYCOOK, 2004), understanding discourse as a founding and constitutive part of social practice, a mode of action over the world and society (FAIRCLOUGH, 2003). To critically analyze discursive practice is to take into account “the premise that discourse is structured by domination; that each discourse is historically produced and interpreted, that is, it is situated in time and space; and that the structures of domination are legitimated by the ideologies of the groups that hold power²³.” (WODAK, 2004, p. 226, our translation).

Following these assumptions, we analyzed an interaction that occurred between women participants in a research group, linked to a university in Rio de Janeiro. Our focus is on the narration of stories of domestic violence suffered by the participants (whether physical, psychological, material, among others), especially in investigating the evaluative discursive elements that contribute to the (re)constructions of the gender identities of Carina⁴, the main narrator of one of the stories reported in the interaction⁵, when she tells of the physical aggression she suffered in her family environment.

In this sense, in order to study speech in the interaction of the group of women in question, we resort to the gender perspective as a performative act, performed through the use of language (BUTLER, 2003) and not as something with which one is born. In line with this view of gender as a performative discursive act, we base ourselves on the social approach of identities, understanding them as multiple, fluid and fragmented (MOITA LOPES, 2003; BUCHOLTZ, 1990; SAWIM, 1990), as well as collaboratively constructed in localized discursive practices, unique and specific to each social interaction.

¹ Original: “projeto epistemológico com implicações sobre a vida social” (MOITA LOPES, 2006, p. 91).

² Original: “as premissas de que o discurso é estruturado pela dominação; que cada discurso é historicamente produzido e interpretado, isto é, está situado no tempo e no espaço; e que as estruturas de dominação são legitimadas pelas ideologias dos grupos que detêm o poder” (WODAK, 2004, p. 226).

³ The translations presented in this article were done freely by the authors.

⁴ Fictitious name.

⁵ Due to limitations in the extension of this article, we restrict the analysis and interpretation of the data to only one of the narratives produced in the interaction between the participants. We believe, however, that this fact does not restrict access to the content of the other stories reported, which were very similar, regarding the (re)constructions of gender identities.

Inspired by theoretical and methodological social constructionist paradigms, and considering narratives as a *locus* for the reconstruction of personal experiences, we base ourselves on the interactional perspective (DE FINA, 2008; BASTOS, 2004; MOITA LOPES, 2001) for the analysis of the selected narrative, focusing on the interactional and interpersonal aspects that compose it. The discursive moments of evaluation direct our analytical gaze, since they are “the *raison d’être* of the narrative” (LABOV, 1972, p.366) and, in line with Linde (1997, p. 152), we consider as evaluation “any instantiation produced by the speaker that has social meaning or that indicates the value of a person, thing, event or relationship”, understanding the evaluation as a factor intrinsically related to the moral dimension of language.

We thus note the importance of evaluation for the construction of senses, considering it to be “one of the most basic and important functions of language and worth investigating in depth”, since “finding a text or even a sentence without any trace of evaluation is a very challenging task, if not impossible” (ALBA-JUEZ; THOMPSON, 2014, p. 5). Therefore, for the analysis of the evaluative discourse practice, we take the system of evaluation (MARTIN, 2001; MARTIN; WHITE, 2005), part of the social-semiotic approach of language proposed by Systemic-Functional Linguistics (HALLIDAY, 1994; MARTIN; ROSE, 2007), as a tool for the analysis of the evaluative discursive choices, especially those linked to the affective and moral dimensions of language.

The qualitative and interpretative research paradigm (DENZIN; LINCOLN, 2006) guides our analytical path and we emphasize that, when investigating the (re) constructions of gender identities in oral narratives of personal experiences, this article aims to analyze how the participants of this study structure, negotiate and (re)construct their identities throughout the story told by Carina. With this, we believe it is possible to observe how the interlocutors deal with gender issues in a predominantly hegemonic and ideologically patriarchal society, which imposes certain ways of being aprioristically.

Gender, identities and evaluation in narratives

Gender studies have been undergoing modifications and reformulations in the Social Sciences and the Humanities. Initially, we can cite the contributions of anthropologist Margareth Mead (1979) who, in her work *Sex and temperament in three primitive societies*, first published in 1934, already sought to distance herself from biologizing and naturalistic views that approached the behavior of men and women as a direct consequence of their biological sex. Although she did not use the concept of gender, her idea was that there would be a natural or pre-discursive sex on one the one hand and a culturally constructed gender on the other. The understanding that gender would be the expression of the social, while sex of the order of the natural, came into question, since it is impossible to establish a pre-discursive sexed nature. We can say, then, that the definition of female and male sex does not exist as an absolute truth, but as a sociohistorically constructed concept.

Later studies, such as those by Michel Foucault (1977), indicate the importance of paying attention to the discursive order of the notion of sex, as well as to the fact that gender identity is constituted through our discursive performances⁶. Following this line, Judith Butler (2003) states that there are no sexual differences *per se*. However, the existence of a heteronormative matrix supposes coherence between sex and gender and, taking this into account, the performance of the male gender necessarily implies an association with the male sex, just as it does for the female sex. The author points out that “even if sexes seem to be non problematically binary in their morphology and constitution (...), there is no reason to suppose that genders should also remain in number two”⁷ (BUTLER, 2003, p. 24, our translation).

Butler (2003, 2008) also emphasizes that gender is produced in daily discursive practices, which manifest themselves in the performances of men and women, based on regulatory standards of what it is to be a man or a woman within a given society. Such a gender-building conception is linked to the language’s ability to accomplish things in the world. For the author (BUTLER, 2008), the possibility of gender-constituting language is based on a performative view of language. According to Cameron (2010, p. 131, our translation), “Butler says that ‘female’ and ‘male’ are not characteristics that we possess, but effects that we produce through the specific things we do”⁸. In this sense, the discursive acts are performative, for “the essence or identity that they intend to express are fabrications manufactured and sustained by bodily signs and other discursive means”⁹ (BUTLER, 2003, p. 194, our translation).

In this way, we can say that gender identities are not pre-formed, but are, on the contrary, and according to Pennycook (2004), performed in contextualized discursive practices. This vision of identities as a social act was already present in the studies of Bucholtz (1990), for whom identity is a discursive construction, a local production and not a static category. The author, aside from understanding identities as performative, also points out that women are active users of the language, not only being seen as victims, but as agents of reflection, even if oppression occurs *a priori*. As we will observe in the data of this study, the narrator places herself at many moments as an agent of reflection, even if she is surrounded by hegemonic patriarchal ideologies, by which women are oppressed (BEAUVOIR, 1967). With this, we understand that identities are often (re)constructed as a possible linguistic mechanism of self-protection.

⁶ We take Goffman’s concept of performance as a foundation, which is defined as “any activity of a given participant on any given occasion that serves to influence in some way any of the other participants” (GOFFMAN, [1959] 2014, p.23). Also, for Butler (1990), when discussing gender, we must think about both the performance and the performativity aspects. For the author, performance is related to our acting in a certain gender role, in the sense of public *display* and theatrical performance. Performativity, which is linked to the making of a certain gender, is a social construct, built by discursive interactions, performed in specific social contexts (BORGES, 2016).

⁷ Original: “*mesmo que sexos pareçam não problemáticamente binários em sua morfologia e constituição (...), não há razão para supor que gêneros também devam permanecer em número de dois*”. (BUTLER, 2003, p. 24).

⁸ Original: “*Butler afirma que ‘feminino’ e ‘masculino’ não são características que nós possuímos, mas efeitos que produzimos por meio das coisas específicas que fazemos*” (CAMERON, 2010, p. 131).

⁹ Original: “*a essência ou a identidade que pretendem expressar são fabricações manufaturadas e sustentadas por signos corpóreos e outros meios discursivos*” (BUTLER, 2003, p. 194).

In the same vein, Cameron (2001) states that we are built on what we speak and, in speaking, we use discourses that are present in an ideological discourse chain, available to speakers. Thus, our discourses can echo (repeat, reiterate) norms of heteronormativity, often impelling us to positions of subjects with whom we do not necessarily identify. We can say that they are ideological forces present in social discourses, in which discourse, especially hegemonic discourse, stands out to the detriment of other discursive positions belonging to groups that do not hold power.

The perspective of identity as a performative act, as a performance, leads us to its discursive nature (SAWIN, 1990; BUCHOLTZ; HALL, 2003, 2005), which makes us establish theoretical connections with social constructionist studies of identities. Understood as multiple, fluid, fragmented and contradictory (MOITA LOPES, 2002, 2003), identities have their origins in historical and social processes, and thus we can say that discursive practices, social world and identity constructions are amalgamated. Moita Lopes (2003) points out that identities are a construct of a social nature, not concerning the nature of the person and, as the author states, identities are constructed in discourse, being the individual a member of many discourses, which represent each of their identities. It is also possible to reinforce that identities have a close relationship of dependence with differences, since, according to Silva (2000 *apud* RESENDE; RAMALHO, 2006, p. 76, our translation), “the affirmation of identity is part of a chain of denials, of differences (...). Identity and difference are, then, mutually determined concepts¹⁰”.

Since we focus on the analysis of discursive gender identities in oral narratives of personal experiences, we have also adopted an interactional conception of narrative. In line with the social constructionist perspective of narrative (BASTOS, 2005, 2008; MOITA LOPES, 2001), we affirm the impossibility of investigating narrative discursive production outside its historical, social and cultural production contexts. Moita Lopes points out that investigating narrative practice enables us to analyse the (re)construction of identities, and highlights “the role that narratives play in the construction of social identities in narrative practices where people recount their social life and, in such discursive engagement, others are built and constructed¹¹” (MOITA LOPES, 2001, p. 63, our translation). Thus, narrative performance does not occur in a neutral field, free of values and beliefs, but in a different way, occurring in the midst of struggles which are discursive and ideological by nature (ABREU, 2018). The moment we narrate facts, there is a discursive investment in the production and maintenance of the identities of a collectivity, as we will observe in the analyses of this study. From this broader view, “narrative becomes seen as a social construction¹²” (BASTOS, 2004, p. 121, our translation) and, as Nóbrega and Magalhães (2012) suggest, it is from our narratives

¹⁰ Original: “a afirmação da identidade é parte de uma cadeia de negações, de diferenças (...). Identidade e diferença são, então, conceitos mutuamente determinados” (SILVA, 2000 *apud* RESENDE; RAMALHO, 2006, p. 76).

¹¹ Original: “o papel que as narrativas desempenham na construção de identidades sociais nas práticas narrativas onde as pessoas relatam a vida social e, em tal engajamento discursivo, se constroem e constroem os outros.” (MOITA LOPES, 2001, p. 63).

¹² Original: “a narrativa passa a ser vista como uma construção social” (BASTOS, 2004, p. 121).

that we say who we are, what we desire or believe, always reconstructing ourselves at each narrative account.

As we have seen, we consider the influence of social, cultural and inter-national factors in the structuring of narratives extremely relevant, which makes us understand it as “a basic form of organization of human experience, from which one can study social life in general (...), telling stories is [thus] a social practice, a historical and culturally situated activity¹³” (BASTOS, 2004, p. 119, our translation). Therefore, narratives are (co)constructed functionally through interactions, being seen as a situated practice, that is, they are constructed along social interaction (DE FINA; GEORGAKOPOULOU, 2008).

The idea of narrative as a performative *praxis* in which, interactively, the narrator and the audience (co)construct meanings and values (LINDE, 1997), brings us back to the question of evaluation in narratives. In their seminal studies, Labov and Waletzky (1967) and Labov (1972) propose that the function of evaluation¹⁴ in narratives is to inform about the dramatic and emotional charge of the reported event, as well as the participants in the narrative interaction, being, for the authors, “the *raison d’être* of the narrative” or, as Reissman (1993, p. 20) suggests, the “soul of the narrative”.

Seeking to bring a broader view of evaluative discourse practice, since this is one of the central points of our analyses, we align ourselves with Thompson and Hunston (2006), who propose the following functions for discourse evaluation:

(i) expressing the opinions of speakers and writers, providing an understanding of the value system of the speaker (or writer) and his/her community;

(ii) building and maintaining relationships between speaker and listener (or writer and reader) and

(iii) organizing the discourse (THOMPSON; HUNSTON, 2000). With such a proposal, we observe that there is a departure from an evaluation centered on the “I”, which is now conceived as an interactive resource, where the speaker (or writer) and listener (or reader) collaboratively build their attitudes towards the evaluated facts.

The studies of Thompson and Hunston (2000, 2006) are expanded by Alba-Juez and Thompson (2014), who bring the contextual elements, in a more preeminent way, to the center of their perspective on evaluation in discursive practices. Context becomes more central to the analysis of evaluative language and cultural and situational contexts are investigated in a dialectic relationship with evaluative discourse. Interactions are thus interpreted as macro and micro social elements, i.e. everything surrounding the speaker (or writer) and listener (or reader) in their use of language (ALBA-JUEZ; THOMPSON, 2014).

¹³ Original: “*uma forma de organização básica da experiência humana, a partir da qual se pode estudar a vida social em geral (...), contar histórias é [desse modo] uma prática social, uma atividade histórica e culturalmente situada*” (BASTOS, 2004, p. 119).

¹⁴ Labov and Waletzky (1967) and Labov (1972) suggest a basic structure of the narrative, which is composed of six elements: summary, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution and coda. For the present study, however, only the evaluation element will be investigated.

Our discussion on context is based on Michael Halliday's proposal, described in his functionalist approach to language as a social-semiotic element. For the author and his followers (EGGINS, 2004; MARTIN; ROSE, 2007; GOUVEIA, 2009, among others), language should always be analyzed in its use, while we carry out our daily activities. Based on this assumption, the author proposes that there are two types of contexts that should be investigated when analyzing specific discourses: the context of culture and the context of situation, the second being part of the first. The context of culture relates to the set of procedures that cultures institutionalize as a way of achieving their objectives, that is, it refers to rituals, forms of politeness, ways of interacting that create meanings in different cultures (EGGINS, 2004). Inserted in the context of culture, the context of situation, in turn, is the environment of the text (HALLIDAY; HASAN, 1989), the most immediate place where the text develops and which illustrates the nature of the action, its participants and the role that language is playing in a given interactive situation.

The contexts of situation and culture, therefore, permeate the entire linguistic system and, from the hallidayan perspective, are concretized in the semantic discursive, lexicographical and grapho-phonological strata (HALLIDAY; MATTHIESSEN, 2014). The importance of context and its realization in such strata is central to the analyses we bring in this article, since we develop them from a conception of evaluation as a contextual, interactive and discursive element. Thus, to observe the evaluations present in the narrative discourse of the participant Carina, we resort to the system of evaluation (MARTIN, 2001; MARTIN; WHITE, 2005), a component of systemic-functional theory.

The system of evaluation, as proposed by Martin and White (2005), deals with the language of evaluation and can be defined as a textual analysis perspective, situated in the field of evaluation of interpersonal activities, at the level of semantics of discourse. Such activities are dynamically established throughout the text, that is, meanings are created in the discourse during social interactions, according to contextual aspects specific to each interaction (MARTIN; ROSE, 2007; NÓBREGA, 2009; WHITE, 2021).

Three subsystems, or domains, compose, in an interconnected way, the evaluation system: attitude, engagement and gradation, creating each one of them a region of meanings. For the analysis of the evaluative discourse, and according to each domain, we can suggest the following questions: what is the nature of the evaluation? (attitude); where does the evaluation come from and what voices are in it? (engagement); and, finally, how strong is the evaluation? (gradation) (NÓBREGA, 2009). For the observation of Carina's (re)constructions of gender identities, and for reasons of data cutting and selection, we will base our analyses on the domain of attitude and its components affection, judgment and appreciation, which, respectively, turn to the evaluative language of emotion, ethics and aesthetics (MARTIN; WHITE, 2005). The subsystems of affection, judgment and appreciation have particular characteristics and refer to different aspects. However, affection permeates the domains of judgment and gradation, interconnecting them, since these also have components of affection.

Martin and White (2005) propose the following categories for each evaluation area:

(i) in the scope of affection, they refer to the discursive manifestations of the emotions of (un)happiness, (dis)satisfaction and (un)safety, focusing on the evaluator, in an authorial or non- authorial manner;

(ii) in the scope of judgment, they relate to the instantiations of right vs. wrong behavior, whether of social esteem or of social sanction, and they return to the evaluated one and

(iii) in the scope of appreciation, they address the evaluations of people, objects or entities, being carried out by reaction, composition or social value¹⁵.

All three domains can be carried out in a positive or negative way, explicit (when the meaning of the words is directly constructed in the text) or implicit (when the evaluation is inferred from meanings created by the participation of listeners/readers, when interpreting what was said/written by the speaker/writer).

In order to analyze the evaluative discursive elements that contribute to the (re) constructions of Carina's gender identities, we are especially interested in the implicit evaluations, which are predominantly carried out in the semantic stratum¹⁶ of language and thus become strongly dependent on contextual factors. We follow the approach of evaluation as a semantic resource of discourse, which focuses on "meaning beyond the clause" (MARTIN; WHITE, 2005, p. 9). Corroborating this position, Macken-Horarik and Isaac (2014, p. 68) suggest that "in contrast to lexical concepts of evaluation, the scope of evaluation throughout the text allows analysts to track not only explicit expressions of attitude, but also the relationships they enter into with implicit forms of evaluation and their cumulative meaning".

Methodological paths and data contextualization

Developed according to the assumptions of Contemporary Applied Linguistics (MOITA LOPES, 2006; PENNYCOOK, 2006), this study aligns itself with qualitative research methodology (DENZIN; LINCOLN, 2006) for the analysis of the relationship between evaluation in narratives and (re)construction of gender identities, focusing on an interaction between members of a research group, linked to a graduate program in Language Studies located in Rio de Janeiro. The correlations that we propose here arose after listening to the data, which was generated spontaneously, since the initiative of recording the interaction came from the coordinator of the group, when she realized how rich the reports made during the meeting and their consequent contribution to the discussions held in the research group itself were. The recording of the interaction

¹⁵ The theoretical and analytical proposal of the evaluation system is quite broad and, due to space and scope in this article, we present only a brief introduction of its analytical categories. For further details, we suggest reading Martin and White (2005), White (2021) and Vian Jr (2010).

¹⁶ The evaluations materialize in the prosody of discourse and are carried out in all strata of language, namely: semantic, lexicographical and graphophonological (ALBA-JUEZ; THOMPSON, 2014; HALLIDAY, 1994; MARTIN; WHITE, 2005).

took place only after all the participants had granted permission for the audio recording and we emphasize that the present research is in accordance with Resolution No. 510, of April 7, 2016, being based “on respect for human dignity and protection given to participants in scientific research involving human beings”¹⁷.

The referred interaction took place in one of the bi-monthly meetings of the research group, when seven participants from the group and one guest professor were gathered in a university room. As in other meetings, the activities carried out at the time were focused on the discussion of theoretical texts, the report of research in progress and/or completed, among other activities related to the research conducted by the coordinating professor, her/his students or graduate alumni, or by eventual guests.

In total, eight women participated in the meeting, all of them involved in academic research. At the time of the recording, one participant was a student of the English Language *lato sensu* graduate course, three were pursuing a Master’s degree and two a Doctorate, while the other two were university professors at different institutions. The coordinator of the group was, at the time, the advisor to the Master’s, Doctorate and *lato sensu* graduate students. In order to preserve the identity of the participants, with the exception of the identification of the authors of this article, all names were replaced by fictitious ones: Aline (*lato sensu* graduate student); Heloá, Noemi e Carina (master students); Adriana A. and Monique (doctoral students); Adriana N. (university teacher and group coordinator) and Luana (invited university teacher). It is important to point out that the main narrator is Carina and that not all the participants speak in the fragments transcribed here.

As mentioned above, the meeting analyzed had the participation of the guest teacher Luana, a feminist activist, whose interest was centered on the discussions held by the group and its theoretical-analytical focus on Systemic-Functional Linguistics (HALLIDAY; MATTHIESSEN, 2014). For the date of the meeting in question, the coordinator Adriana N. suggested the reading of two texts written by the invited researcher, which deal with her studies on the Maria da Penha Law¹⁸. During the meeting, there was a certain “catharsis”, since many narratives with themes of violence against women emerged, focusing on the (re)construction of the participants’ gender identities. We believe, therefore, that the narratives we investigated are spontaneous and that the conversational topic was motivated by Luana’s texts and by the very context of life in which the participants were inserted.

For this article, we selected a fragment from a more extensive recording and chose the parts where issues of (re)constructing gender identities most emerge. In the data analysis, we bring four fragments that were representative for our interpretations. The total recording lasted 1 hour, 36 minutes and 42 seconds and, for the purposes of

¹⁷ Available at: <http://conselho.saude.gov.br/resolucoes/2016/Reso510.pdf>. Access on: 26 Oct. 2021.

¹⁸ The Maria da Penha Law (Law no. 11.340) “creates mechanisms to restrain and prevent domestic and family violence against women” (BRASIL, 2006). Sanctioned by President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, in August 7, 2006, the law was named after Maria da Penha, a women’s rights activist. Maria da Penha was left paraplegic after suffering many violent aggressions from her husband.

this discussion, 5 minutes and 3 seconds were transcribed. The data were transcribed according to the adapted conventions of Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974), with incorporation of Loder and Jung (2009)¹⁹.

Narrative practices and gender identity performances

In view of the objectives we have indicated above, in this section we present the analysis of the data. At the beginning of the recording, narrator Carina makes a contextualization of her narrative, presenting characters, places, time and situation in which the reported event occurred: a physical fight between her and her brother. In our analysis, we will highlight the part where Carina reports the reaction of the participants involved (her grandmother, her mother, her brother and herself), as well as their position in the event she experienced. In this initial part, we find the central point of the narrative, the physical violence of her brother, which allows us to look at the (re)construction of the gender identities of both the participants in the research group who were present at the time of the report and the projected identities of the participants of the narrated event, as we see in excerpt 1 below.

Excerpt 1

- 01 Carina then I managed to open it and he went down to my grandmother's house
02 before me (...) [and when I arrived] there:: [at my grandmother's house]
03 Luana [°to gossip°]
04 Adriana N. [to gossip [hhh]
05 Luana [hhhh]=
06 Carina =NO and he went down to my grandmother's house as if nothing had
07 happened and I went down super nervous so my body was all:: shaking
08 when I arrived at my grandmother's house:: (.) my mother was there,
09 my grandmother and him (.) and it looked like this:: barrier as if:: (...)
10 like::: I was the villain of the story (...) the scene had been SET and I
11 arrived like this and I said like "mom you don't know what happened↑"
12 and she said "I already know what happened" and she spoke with a kind
of rough tone like this=
13 Adriana N. =as if it were your fault↑

In the fragment above, which represents a contextualization of the event, Carina recounts the moment when her brother, after the fight, goes to her grandmother's house to meet her mother (lines 01-02). Participants Luana and Adriana N. evaluate Carina's brother's posture through a negative judgment of social esteem, contributing to the evaluative construction of the narrative and, at the same time, to the projection of the

¹⁹ The transcription conventions can be found in the appendix.

brother's identity construction, seen by the participants as a gossip (lines 03 and 04). The use of "gossip" accentuates the negative content of the narrator's brother's behavior and Luana and Adriana N. understand his attitude as a possible gossip or intrigue. The fact that the teachers made such a statement with laughter leads us to a possible irony of the participants and to an increase in gradation in the evaluation of both, as a form of an implicit negative evaluation. It is worth remembering that the general theme of the meeting was related to situations of violence suffered by women, in a heteronormative society, with emphasis on favoring men's positions in social practices.

In addition, Carina makes an opposition between her posture ("I went down super nervous so my body was all: shaking", in line 07) and her brother's posture ("he went down to my grandmother's house as if nothing had happened", in line 06). In lines 06-07, therefore, we can already see how she constructs her identity in opposition to his, who acts as if nothing had happened. As said in a previous moment, the construction of identities is part of a chain of denials and differences (SILVA, 2000 *apud* RESENDE; RAMALHO, 2006). This is corroborated further in lines 09-12, when Carina mentions being considered the villain of the story, which we can infer to be said in opposition to the "hero" who would be her brother. In this evaluation of negative affection of dissatisfaction, the narrator still mentions the fact that "the scene is already set" (said out loud, denoting high gradation, in line 10), which points, once again, to an implicit evaluation, dependent on contextual factors, for her understanding. Having the scene set means there is badness, mess, confusion, which, once again, contextualizes and guides the participants of the narrative interaction on the dramatic burden of the narrative moment.

In line 13, Adriana N. aligns herself to Carina and evaluates the situation, hypothetically, as the narrator's fault. We can understand Adriana N.'s speech as a negative evaluation aimed at Carina's mother who, at that moment, apparently shows to be in favor of the master's brother - which can be expressed in the narrator's speech, by referring to the "kind of harsh tone" of her mother's voice (line 12). This alignment between Adriana N. and Carina is also expressed by the narrator's interruption of her shift in "like this" (line 12), when the teacher infers that her mother would blame her for the fight with her brother.

As the general theme of the narratives told in the interaction of the research group was about violence suffered by women, and having as background for discussion the texts about the Maria da Penha Law, it is possible to refer to this larger context of the meeting to understand Adriana N's speech. In this case, the coordinator builds an opposition to the hegemonic pattern deterministically attributed to women as the ones causing confusion and, to men, as the ones suffering consequences of the attitudes of these women. Thus, we note that gender identities are performed and projected along this first interactional micro context, when there is the collaborative construction of the evaluations of the narrated facts.

Carina is the main narrator, having control over most of the shifts, even keeping them discursively under her command, as we will observe later. However, we still

notice that, in a collaborative way, the participants speak simultaneously, by means of overlaps, especially in excerpt 2.

Excerpt 2

- 14 Carina yeah (.) and I said like “then tell me what happened, what you
15 heard:” (...)
- 16 Adriana N. °yeah°
- 17 Carina and then my mother [said like this] “ah (.) you need [to be CALMER]
18 because you’re [very much like this”]
- 19 Monique [ah::: sure:::]
- 20 Adriana N. [Impressive::]=
- 21 Monique and the [green] pants
- 22 Adriana N. [it’s the] lime green pants [you know]
- 23 Monique [yes:::] you created a mess::: you
24 are I don’t know what
- 25 Adriana N. yeah:: ex[act::ly
- 26 Carina “[you already] know your brother is like this:::”
- 27 Adriana N. You already know your brother is::=
- 28 Todas =((incomprehensible speech))
- 29 Adriana N. Your brother is sex::ist, he is agi::tated
- 30 Carina look what happened the following, this, this, this, >I told my whole
31 version of the story then he kept looking because my brother is so
32 extremely cynical< he has always been
- 33 Adriana N. Your brother†
- 34 Monique Hhhh
- 35 Carina Yeah::: since we were little
- 36 Aline °like this innocent face°=

In the second excerpt, there is the engaged and sympathetic construction of the conversation, because the lines are intersecting to form local meanings mutually understood by all. The shared and interactively constructed understanding evinces a discursive position of the participants, which emerges in opposition and in disagreement with the posture of a man who assaults, be it a woman.

We observe that Carina opens the second fragment making use of reported speech²⁰, that is, she brings to her account speeches that were produced by her and her mother

²⁰ Reported speech, often used in the data of this study, is here understood as “a narrative resource (...) used to highlight important aspects of the world of stories” (DE FINA, 2003, p. 93). De Fina considers reported speech as having a strategic function, being an active process of transformation of the other’s speech. This exchange can be configured either directly (when the discourse is reported in the form of a dialogue) or indirectly (when the reported discourse is paraphrased).

in the world of the story: “then tell me what happened what you heard:” (lines 14 and 15) and “ah (.) you need [to be CALMER] because you are [very much like this]”, lines 17 and 18. The intersection of the world of the story with the world of narration gives a high dramatic charge to the narrative and is seen, in this research, as an implicit evaluation that reproduces masculine hegemony and projects in Carina an identity of a nervous woman who needs to calm down in front of a man.

The narrator opens the passage by telling her apparent search for her mother’s alignment (lines 14 and 15), trying to find out what she heard from her brother, in order, possibly, to give her own view of the violence that has occurred. However, her mother responds with a negative evaluation of her behavior, using a negative judgment of social esteem, highlighting the non-normality of her daughter’s behavior (lines 17 and 18). On the contrary, Carina’s mother seems to normalize her son’s behaviour when, in line 26, she has her speech once again reported by the narrator “you already know your brother is like this”. The reported speech is repeated almost entirely by Adriana N. on the next shift and who, on line 29, completes what would be “being like this”: “sexist and agitated”.

The mother’s speech, reported in the interaction (lines 17 and 18), causes strangeness and resistance from the other participants, who do not agree with her positioning, as seen on line 20, when Adriana N. understands the fact as “impressive”, and on Monique’s shift, on lines 23 and 24, when she says “[yes:::] you created a mess::: you are I don’t know what”. The statements of both interlocutors are negative evaluative instances of social esteem judgment, which we can suggest turn to the capacity of a woman, Carina’s mother, to act in this way. There is, in Adriana N. and Monique’s speeches, indignation about the reproduction of gender ideologies, conveyed by a woman, whose speech is loaded with principles and values determined, indistinctly, the other woman in a patriarchal society.

This indignation is reinforced again with the return of the theme of another story (lines 21 and 22), narrated at the beginning of the meeting by Adriana N. In her story, the research group coordinator recounts a situation experienced with her older brother in her youth when he refused to take her to a party because she was wearing lemon-green pants, not approved by the boy. At the time, like Carina’s mother, Adriana N.’s mother aligned herself with her son and told her daughter to stop making a case and change clothes if she really wanted to go to the party. The event generated great resistance from the young woman at the time, who refused to follow her mother’s instructions, and her story was marked by the participants of the research group as a moral abuse suffered by a man.

We can say that the behaviour of Carina’s brother, as well as the behaviour of Adriana N.’s brother, represent ideological discourses of power, in which the man is seen as the one who can deliberately act in relation to women, because they must follow his guidelines. However, we notice in the two fragments analyzed so far, as in Bucholtz (1990), that women are active users of the language and agents of reflection, even if oppression occurs *a priori*.

What we observe in the interaction analyzed is that such reflection is done in a joint way, from the engagement of the interlocutors to build a negative identity of Carina's brother as "sexist" and "agitated" ("her brother is se::xist, is agi::tated", line 29). At the same time, indirectly, we can infer that Adriana N.'s brother can also be considered sexist and agitated, since the story about the use of lime green pants is brought in analogy to the situation lived by Carina. In this sense, "lemon-green pants" becomes an explicit and evoked negative evaluation, highly dependent on the interactional context, and shared by the members of the meeting. This statement becomes even more evident when we note that the evaluation was initially made by Monique, who appropriated the previous story to judge the behaviour of Carina's brother and mother. We are thus faced with the strength of the evaluation for the construction of meanings, which, in this analysis, relate to the (re)constructions of Carina's gender identities and those of the participants in the situation investigated.

As we commented earlier, we propose that there was a kind of "catharsis" with the experiences brought to the meeting, and this happened in a collaborative way in the (co) narration of the facts, illustrating that the reported events (and their participants) are constructed in the turn of the interaction, between the students and the teachers. This is made clear by the presence of glued shifts (represented in the transcription by =) and simultaneous talks (represented by []). According to Cameron (2010), glued speech is often taken as a marker of cooperation since, in order to carry it out accurately, it is essential that the speaker be very attentive to the contribution of other social actors. Thus, Carina does not act alone in the construction of her story, nor does she do it when evaluating the events that have occurred, since she counts on the collaborative participation of the other participants in the group - even though she governs most of the shifts, as we will see in excerpt 3, below.

Excerpt 3

- 37 Carina =Yeah:: Since we were little he threw a tantrum so that he
38 could get out of some place:: and my mother stopped because he made a
39 SCENE::, CRYING:: that the world was ending:: and I thought that my
40 mother always gave in so as not to be ashamed (...)) and:: then I said
41 what happened was this this and this (.) I said it in detail (.) but I said
42 “worse than what happened was his reaction because he did it I don’t
43 know what hit me, something else, else, else, else” (.)) then my mother
44 said it like that, then she looked at his face and said “you hit her↑” then
45 he said it like “but SHE hit me too::” but then I said “you started it first”
46 and then my mother started “ok” then I said “ok↑ I don’t want you to
47 take a stand now that you’re the mother (.) what are you gonna do↑”
48 and my mom was like that and: then my brother somehow started trying::
49 (.) change a little what I had said and so on and then I started another
50 argument with him there in front of my mother and my grandmother and
51 my poor grandmother hhh my grandmother wanting to hhhh put cold
52 water on ALL my grandmother “Stop it for god’s sake, stop it, stop it for
53 god’s sake” looking at one looking at another because my grandmother
54 is not like that, she is not like that, yeah: and that’s VERY:: far from all
55 my grandmother’s speeches (.) also because she doesn’t have (.) any
56 experience that might give her the:: understanding of what many people
57 might be going through right↑ because she doesn’t have experience to
understand maybe she can’t even have an idea of the gravity of things
because she didn’t go through things like that (.) right↑
- 58 Adriana N. right=

Carina continues to build her identity in opposition to the behavior of her brother who always “threw a tantrum so that he could get out of some place::” (lines 37 and 38). In this case, she positions herself as different from the boy, configuring a feeling of not belonging to the group of those who cry to achieve something (lines 37-39). We observe, in this way, that the narrator does not seem to open her narrative speech to negotiate her understanding of the situation that has occurred, since she creates blunt interpretations about the behavior of her brother and her own mother, in a long and uninterrupted shift. This aspect denotes the approval of the rest of the group, which adopts a more collaborative posture before interaction, leaving room for Carina to (re) construct her experience without being interrupted. We observe that Carina builds herself discursively as a person who has a firm attitude, is strong and courageous, performing these identities discursively for herself throughout the interaction. Mainly, and of our greatest interest, she builds her gender identities, which also in this third excerpt is illustrated by the choice of the narrator when she demands, on lines 45-47, an action of the mother, who must not passively accept her son’s authority speech, since he acted brutally. Such an attitude illustrates how we are surrounded by male ideologies of power, which in most cases are not questioned. The mother accepts her son’s behavior, but is soon questioned by her daughter, who builds her identity as a linguistic mechanism of self-protection (BUCHOLTZ, 1990).

Despite maintaining a challenging posture, we observe that Carina also presents a discourse that erases the patriarchal ideologies that have always existed in society, not considering the possibility that women have always had a submissive role and, consequently, have always been oppressed by sexist discourses. This becomes evident when she states that her grandmother is not aligned with current discourses (lines 55-57), in which we can affirm that female oppression has always existed and is constituted as a tool for the establishment of power to the dominant class (even if not consciously elaborated or perceived).

Finally, we point out that, in this third excerpt, the (re)construction of the narrator's gender identities is marked by her evaluations of the facts, with strong dependence on contextual elements from the world of narration (the meeting of the research group) and the world of the story (the account of the aggression suffered). In order to understand her (re)constructions of gender identities, it is necessary that we take the sociohistorical and situated context of Carina and her family, as well as the environment of the research group meeting.

Excerpt 4

94	Monique	[you're telling this
95		story Carina] and I [am remembering=]
96	Carina	[=no it's not let me just] finish (.) so (.) then my mother got into
97		that situation and started crying and so on and I said it like that and so
98		she went "but what am I going to do↑" so I said "if you don't take a
99		stand I will involve the whole:: family in this matter (.) I will talk to my
100		uncles, I will talk to my aunts I will talk to everybody I will involve the
101		whole family in this matter and I will expose to EVERYBODY what
102		happened here at home" (...) then my mother was like "my god" and
103		then my brother "this is OUR problem that has to be resolved HERE
104		so why would you gossip you'll take it to the whole:: family" then I go
105		like - "not because this could be happening here, it could be happening at
106		my aunt's house too and it could be I don't know what" and then finally
107		I just know that my mother saw herself like this - and then I threw a lot
108		of things in her face so I said "I don't understand:: you (.) I don't even
109		recognize:: you because you have a speech to ME about what's out there
110		I with those I relate with you don't have to accept, you don't" I never
111	Adriana N.	[hurrum]
112	Carina	with whom I relate:: (.) "but like this you don't have with others but how
113		you're acting with my bro-ther I don't understand why it's yours son↑" you know (.)
114	Adriana N.	Right

In this last fragment, we notice that Carina does not give up her shift to Monique, who tries to start, on lines 94 and 95, a narrative ("[you're telling this story Carina] and I [am remembering=]"), but is soon interrupted by her colleague ("[=no it's not

let me just] finish”, line 96). We realize, with this, that Carina, involved with her own story, won't let her speak. Such attitudes of the participant have a correlation with the construction of her identity performance. She (re)constructs her identity in the discursive dynamics, which is in coherence with the propositional content she presents and, consequently, in dialogue with the identities she establishes.

As in the previous excerpt, Carina does not make room for the negotiation of senses and narrates her experience in an unmodified way, with a high degree of gradation in the reported facts, giving a strong (mainly negative) dramatic charge to the narrative. This is what happens between lines 99 and 102, when she threatens to tell about the aggression to all her family, making use of the attribute “whole” with vowel stretching, which illustrates an evaluation. Telling his uncles, his aunts and “everyone” becomes a negative evaluation based on the dissatisfaction and unhappiness of the narrator. To expose the fact to all her family is an evaluation with high negative gradation of the attitude of her brother and mother. This fact also becomes clear with Carina's mother's response when she says “my god” (line 102), alluding to the gravity of her daughter's threat, and also, in lines 102 and 103, when her brother, in a loud voice, says “this is our problem” and that must be solved “here”.

The student makes use of a reported speech, bringing her own speech to the narrated event, which suggests to us how she maintains the identity of an evaluator, of someone who charges for justice and who questions the very identity of a mother who raised a daughter so as not to be submissive to men (lines 107-109 and 112-113): “I do not understand:: you (...).) I really don't even recognize:: you because you have a speech to ME about what's out there I with those I relate with you don't have to accept, you don't”. (...) “but like this you don't have with others but how you're acting with my bro-ther I don't understand why it's yours son↑” you know (...)”. By contesting the mother's posture, Carina shows that she does not accept that a mother should always protect her child, since if she has committed an improper act, she should pay for her action. This posture once again suggests that although there is aprioristic oppression, women are active users of language (BUCHOLTZ, 1990) and, in the same way, active producers of “generated behavior (...) embedded in specific ways of speaking and acting in order to produce a range of effects²¹” (CAMERON, 2010, p. 133, our translation).

In the excerpts analyzed so far, we have seen that Carina takes the floor for most of the interaction, hardly giving up her shift and trying to keep it under her control for almost thirteen minutes, among other women who also seem eager to tell their stories. During all this time, we can notice a multiplicity of identities being constructed and projected to the other of the narrated event. There is a narrative performance of gender and Carina builds herself as a hero, presenting us with her identity as a warrior, courageous, fair and independent. She puts herself in the position of an evaluator and judge of others, evaluating each behavior and saying what is right or wrong, in place

²¹ Original: “comportamentos generificados (...) embutidos em modos específicos de falar e de agir a fim de produzir uma gama de efeitos” (CAMERON, 2010, p. 133).

of the one who can promulgate a sentence: “if you don’t take a stand I will involve the whole:: family in this matter (.) I will talk to my uncles, I will talk to my aunts I will talk to everybody I will involve the whole family in this matter and I will expose to EVERYBODY what happened here at home” (lines 99-102).

We can say, like Butler (2003), that we have a multiplicity of identities being collaboratively reconstructed and projected, that is, on the one hand we are many things, while at the same time in each discursive event we perform a range of identities. There is a discursive and multiple construction of identities, which are in play at the moment we interact with each other, as we can see in the data of this study.

Final considerations

In this study, we analyzed the construction of gender identities in narratives of personal experiences, observing the interaction between seven participants of the same research group and a guest teacher from another higher education institution. In order to investigate how participants structure, negotiate, and (re)construct identities throughout the stories told, we found the use of overlaps to maintain narrative engagement and the conversational topic, as in many cases participants aligned themselves when illustrating a refusal to the patriarchal norms that govern the social system. Although the participant Carina controlled most of the shifts, we believe that the use of overlaps demonstrates the collaborative and engaged way of the conversation, as well as contributing to the sequential organization of the interaction.

The importance of evaluation for the collaborative (re)construction of gender identities that were performed in the investigated interaction becomes clear. It was possible to notice that when evaluating (explicitly, but mainly implicitly) the events narrated by Carina, identities were constructed in opposition to the aggression suffered by the narrator, be it in relation to the behavior of her brother or that of her mother and grandmother. The observation of the evaluative elements, especially those in high gradation, suggests Carina’s dissatisfaction and unhappiness. Both the affection and the (negative) social esteem of the participants regarding the behavior of the narrator’s brother are constitutive factors in the formation of Carina’s identities, of her family members and of the participants in the group.

We also notice how the work of narration involves broader sociocultural aspects, while being guided by individual variations of each participant. The main narrator, as said before, (re)builds her identity as a warrior, courageous, just, judge and independent, always in opposition to the other. Her brother, for example, is built discursively as weak, sexist, crying, gossiping and nervous. It is important to point out that the meanings constructed in the events that are assembled in this narrative result from an interactional situation carried out in the here and now, the narrative being co-produced by interlocutors situated sociohistorically. In addition, the analyses illustrate that the direct reported speech was frequently used to establish involvement in the narration, since it is seen

as an evaluative resource that provides greater involvement among the members of the research group. The act of evaluating in narratives is therefore a significant resource for increasing the dramatic burden of reported history.

This research, then, based on the critical approach proposed by Contemporary Applied Linguistics, sought to look at the evaluation in the interactional dynamics of narration, with a view to observe how participants deal with gender issues present in a patriarchal and heteronormative society. Through principles and sociocultural and interactional norms that govern discursive constructions, we were able to observe how, many times, we are influenced by patterns that we reinforce by larger ideological forces. Even so, we noticed that there was a challenge from the main narrator, who proved to be an active user of the language and an agent of reflection.

After concluding our analyses and discussions, we believe that the performative perspective of gender adopted here has illustrated how it is possible to point out some of the mechanisms by which the patriarchal structure is installed and consolidated, controlling and determining the social system. We realize that there is gender violence, still driven by a patriarchal ideology where women are inferior to men and must always be submissive to them. Finally, we reiterate, in alignment with the theoretical reference used here, that both genders and identities are products of local performances of individuals sociohistorically situated in diverse discursive activities.

NÓBREGA, A.; ABREU, A. Avaliação, identidades e gênero: análise de narrativas de violência doméstica em uma interação entre mulheres. *Alfa*, São Paulo, v.65, 2021.

- *RESUMO: Esta pesquisa investiga as relações entre os usos avaliativos da linguagem e as (re)construções de identidades de gênero, a partir da análise de narrativas orais de experiências pessoais sobre violências domésticas, sofridas por mulheres em seus ambientes familiares, relatadas em uma interação acadêmica. Inserida na área da Linguística Aplicada Contemporânea, e com base em um arcabouço teórico-metodológico crítico, o estudo analisa como as participantes estruturam, negociam e (re)constróem identidades ao longo das narrativas, observando, sobretudo, como lidam com questões de gênero ideologicamente impostas pela sociedade. Para alcançar os objetivos propostos, a visão de gênero como ato performativo, desempenhado por meio do uso da linguagem, foi alinhada à abordagem interacional de narrativa e à concepção socioconstrucionista de identidades. A metodologia de pesquisa qualitativa orientou a análise da prática narrativa, centrada nos elementos avaliativos que constituem o discurso. Os resultados sugerem que tanto o gênero como as identidades são produtos das performances locais de indivíduos sócio-historicamente situados em atividades discursivas diversas.*
- *PALAVRAS-CHAVE: narrativas orais de experiências pessoais; violência doméstica; identidades de gênero; avaliação.*

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APPENDIX

Transcription conventions²²

Aspects of speech production			
.	Descending intonation	↑	Sound higher pitch than the surrounding
?	Ascending intonation	↓	Sound lower pitch than the surrounding
,	Intermediate intonation, continuity	Hh	Sigh or laughter
-	Sudden stop	.hh	Inaudible sigh
<u>Underline</u>	Emphasis on sound	°palavra°	Speak in a low voice
ALL CAPS	Speak out loud or a lot of emphasis	>palavra<	Faster speech
: or ::	Stretching	<palavra>	Slower speech
[]	Overlapping speech	Formatting, comments, questions	
Time		=	Contiguous elocutions, listed without pause between them
...	Pause not measured	()	Speech not understood
(2.3)	Measured pause	(word)	Dubious speech
(.)	Pause of less than 2 tenths of a second	(())	Analyst comment, non-vocal activity description
Others			
“word”		Related speech	

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²² Adapted conventions from Conversation Analysis studies (SACKS; SCHEGLOFF; JEFFERSON, 1974), with incorporation of Loder and Jung (2009).