

AVALIAÇÃO, ATITUDES, CRENÇAS LINGUÍSTICAS E O ENSINO DE LÍNGUA PORTUGUESA: UMA REFLEXÃO A PARTIR DE TESTES COM PROFESSORES DE ENSINO MÉDIO¹

EVALUACIÓN, ACTITUDES, CREENCIAS LINGÜÍSTICAS Y ENSEÑANZA DE LENGUA PORTUGUESA: UNA REFLEXIÓN BASADA EN EXÁMENES CON PROFESORES DE LA SECUNDARIA

LINGUISTIC EVALUATION, ATTITUDES, BELIEFS AND PORTUGUESE TEACHING: A REFLECTION BASED ON TESTS WITH HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS

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RESUMO: A avaliação, as atitudes e crenças linguísticas suscitam a construção de julgamentos subjetivos do falante sobre sua própria língua e do seu interlocutor. Tais julgamentos podem influenciar o quadro de variação ou o curso de processos de mudança, estando, usualmente, ancorados na ideologia linguística de uma língua padrão. No ambiente escolar, destaca-se o professor como um dos agentes principais do que é transmitido e/ou reforçado no processo de ensino-aprendizagem. Por seu papel no processo de construção de crenças e atitudes, propusemos neste estudo investigar atitudes linguísticas de professores de duas escolas públicas de Monte Azul Paulista- SP, quanto ao fenômeno variável de concordância verbal, de modo a auxiliar na discussão sobre a valorização ou rejeição às variedades linguísticas em uso e sobre o ensino de língua portuguesa no Brasil. Este trabalho pautou-se na abordagem teórico-metodológica da Sociolinguística Variacionista (WEINREICH; LABOV; HERZOG, 2006; LABOV, 2008).

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Atitude linguística. Avaliação linguística. Concordância verbal. Teste de atitudes linguísticas. Teoria da variação e mudança linguística.

RESUMEN: *La evaluación, las actitudes y las creencias lingüísticas fomentan la construcción de juicios subjetivos del hablante sobre su propio idioma y el de su interlocutor. Tales juicios pueden influir en el marco de variación o en el curso de los procesos de cambio, y generalmente están anclados en la ideología lingüística de un*

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lenguaje estándar. En el entorno escolar, se destaca el profesor como uno de los principales agentes de lo que se transmite y/o se refuerza en el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje. Debido a su papel en el proceso de construcción de creencias y actitudes, este estudio objetiva investigar las actitudes lingüísticas de los profesores de dos escuelas públicas en la ciudad de Monte Azul Paulista-SP, con respecto al fenómeno variable de la concordancia verbal, para contribuir con la discusión sobre la valorización o el rechazo a las variedades lingüísticas en uso y sobre la enseñanza del portugués en Brasil. Este trabajo se fundamenta en el enfoque teórico-metodológico de la Sociolingüística Variacionista (WEINREICH; LABOV; HERZOG, 2006; LABOV, 2008).

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Actitud lingüística. Evaluación lingüística. Concordancia verbal. Test de actitudes lingüísticas. Teoría de la variación y cambio lingüístico.*

ABSTRACT: *Evaluation, attitudes and linguistic beliefs led to subjective judgments of the speaker about his own language and that of his interlocutor. Such judgments can influence linguistic variation or the course of linguistic change, and are usually anchored in the ideology of a standard language. In the school environment, the teacher stands out as one of the main agents of what is transmitted and/or reinforced in the teaching-learning process. Due to its role in the process of building beliefs and attitudes, we proposed in this study to investigate the linguistic attitudes of teachers from two public schools in Monte Azul Paulista-SP, regarding the variable phenomenon of verbal agreement. The main objective is to discuss about the valorization or rejection to the linguistic varieties in use and about the teaching of Portuguese in Brazil. This work was based on the theoretical and methodological approach of Variationist Sociolinguistics. (WEINREICH; LABOV; HERZOG, 2006; LABOV, 2008).*

KEYWORDS: *Linguistic attitude. Linguistic evaluation. Verbal agreement. Attitude measurement techniques. Theory of Language Variation and Change.*

Introduction

Evaluation is an issue that must necessarily be discussed in studies on linguistic variation and change, as it raises a process of constructing subjective judgments of the speaker in relation to his own language and that of his interlocutor, and because such judgments can influence the framework of variation or the course of change processes. These judgments are anchored in the linguistic ideology of a standard language, since speakers believe that “languages exist in standardized forms, and that type of belief affects how they think their own language and 'language' in general”⁴ (MILROY, 2011, p. 49).

⁴ “as línguas existem em formas padronizadas, e esse tipo de crença afeta o modo como pensam sua própria língua e a ‘língua’ em geral”

The social conception of language standardization is reflected in the teaching of Portuguese Language in Brazilian schools and in the textbooks adopted by teachers: although they present linguistic variation as content, apparently the conception of language as a social practice is not underlying their approach⁵. The school, which could (should) be a space for reflection on language and for building respect for diversity, ends up being an environment conducive to the distortion of linguistic reality and the spread of linguistic prejudices, silencing external subjects to an idealized norm⁶, which is loaded with ideologies and power relations (PETERMANN; ALVES, 2018).

The study of linguistic assessments and attitudes is one of the tasks that Sociolinguistics proposes, being one of the founding questions of the Theory of Linguistic Variation and Change. Weinreich, Labov and Herzog (2006 [1968]) claim that unconscious assessments of speakers of a certain linguistic subsystem would determine the social meaning that would be attributed to the use of that variety. And, in this way, they would influence its possible expansion or disappearance.

Thus, the works that discuss the rejection of the school to the variety of the student are of paramount importance and should be developed from the perspective of language as a social practice. Understanding and analyzing the attitudes of teachers and students opens paths for the discussion of variation and change within the school universe, orienting towards a teaching that considers the student as a thinking and active individual and no longer one who "does not know Portuguese". A new pedagogy of mother tongue teaching is based on work that does not damage students' social values.

We argue that students need to be aware that the language varies over time and that all varieties, from the linguistic structural point of view, are perfect and equivalent to each other. The school cannot ignore sociolinguistic differences. They should be used for students to reflect on the variety they acquire at home and the cultivated varieties they

⁵ In their analysis of high school textbooks, Petermann and Alves (2018) concluded that the teaching approach of these books aims more at the "recognition and classification of" varieties "than at reflecting on the existence and persistence of linguistic phenomena" and they see linguistic variation as "distortions of an illusory pattern of language" (PETERMANN; ALVES, 2018, p. 19).

⁶ Faraco (2008) proposes a treatment for polysemy that involves the conception of a norm. *Educated/ common/standard norm* is the "variety that literates currently use in their most monitored speech and writing practices" (FARACO, 2008, p. 73), while the *standard-norm* is a "relatively abstract coding, a goal extracted from real use to serve as a reference, in societies marked by accentuated dialect, to political projects of linguistic standardization".

learn at school; so it will be possible to develop your communicative competence⁷ both in spoken and written form.

Based on these reflections and under the theoretical-methodological assumptions of Variationist Sociolinguistics (WEINREICH; LABOV; HERZOG, 2006 [1968]; LABOV, 2008 [1972]), the main objective of this work is to investigate the linguistic attitudes of High School Portuguese Language teachers of two public schools in Monte Azul Paulista - SP, in relation to the variable phenomenon of verbal agreement (VA) of the plural third person. To this end, we designed a test of linguistic attitudes⁸ which was applied to Portuguese language teachers, and the details of which will be exposed in the Methodological Procedures section.

The choice of VA is justified because it is an overestimated phenomenon. We have two variants - the absence of plural marking in verbs⁹ (*Os meninos fala*¹⁰) and the presence of plural marking in verbs (*Os meninos falam*¹¹) -, which means that plurality information is ensured in both cases. However, the non-realization of the morphological trait of number has a sociolinguistic value, and may correspond to a way of disqualifying the speaker of the language. About this, Scherre (2005) argues:

Those who fail to agree on numbers are usually called dumb, ignorant, because, it is said, “not knowing how to speak”. So, are we sometimes smart and sometimes stupid? Are we “variably” smart? I repeat: the variation of the number agreement in Brazilian Portuguese is certainly installed in the language spoken [...]. (SCHERRE, 2005, p. 20).¹²

Before presenting the test, proposal and analyzing its results, it is necessary to deepen the concepts of *linguistic assessment, belief and attitudes*.

Linguistic assessment, attitudes and beliefs

⁷ We understand that communicative competence includes “[...] not only the rules that govern the formation of sentences, but also the social and cultural norms that define the adequacy of speech” to different communication situations (BORTONI-RICARDO, 2004, p 73).

⁸ The linguistic attitudes test is adapted from Barbosa and Ghessi (2019), a research approved by the Ethics Committee (Protocol 2112) of the Federal University of Triângulo Mineiro (UFTM).

⁹ Since the rule being explained here does not apply in the English writing, for comprehension and translation purposes, the case will be exemplified using the past tense in the footnotes and keeping the original text in the corpus.

¹⁰ The boys was[∅] speaking

¹¹ The boys were speaking

¹² Quem deixa de fazer concordância de número é normalmente chamado de burro, ignorante, porque, afirma-se, “não saber falar”. Somos então às vezes inteligentes e às vezes burros? Somos “variavelmente” inteligentes? Repito: a variação da concordância de número no português brasileiro está seguramente instalada na língua falada [...]. (SCHERRE, 2005, p. 20).

The problem of linguistic attitudes and beliefs is part of one of the empirical problems proposed by the Theory of Variation and Linguistic Change (WEINREICH; LABOV; HERZOG, 2006 [1968]). - the problem of evaluating linguistic variables. According to Labov (2008 [1972]), “[not] all linguistic changes they receive explicit social evaluation or even recognition. Some seem to be well below the level of explicit social reactions”¹³ (p. 354). For the author (2008 [1972]), it is possible to classify the various elements involved in linguistic variation and change according to whether or not they are evaluated and, if so, according to the type of social evaluation they receive. It thus distinguishes three types of variables: *indicators*, *markers* and *stereotypes*.

Indicators are linguistic traits embedded in a social matrix, indicating differentiation between the speakers, but which do not have any pattern of stylistic alternation and do not have much evaluative strength. The *markers*, although they may be below the level of consciousness, produce regular reactions in tests of subjective reactions, having more evaluative strength than the indicators (LABOV, 2008 [1972], p. 360). Finally, *stereotypes* “are socially marked forms, emphatically labeled by society”¹⁴ (LABOV, 2008 [1972], p. 360).

Some forms may have a prestige that varies from group to group, being thus positive for some and negative for others. The linguistic variants that receive more evaluative strength become more easily identified, causing speakers to start monitoring their speech in order to not be evaluated. Linguistic assessment concerns the way in which a listener/speaker measures the values carried with him, associating these values with his own linguistic production and that of his interlocutors.

The relation between assessment and attitudes, therefore, arises, naturally, as the study of assessment seeks to understand the subjective correlates of the framework of variation and the ongoing linguistic changes. In the words of Lambert and Lambert (1972):

An attitude is an organized and coherent way of thinking, feeling and reacting in relation to people, groups, social issues or, more generally, to any event that has occurred in our surroundings. Its essential components are the thoughts and beliefs, the feelings (or emotions) and the tendencies to react (LAMBERT; LAMBERT, 1972, p. 77-78).¹⁵

¹³ “[n]em todas as mudanças linguísticas recebem avaliação social explícita ou sequer reconhecimento. Algumas parecem ficar muito abaixo do nível das reações sociais explícitas”

¹⁴ “são formas socialmente marcadas, rotuladas enfaticamente pela sociedade”

¹⁵ Uma atitude é uma maneira organizada e coerente de pensar, sentir e reagir em relação a pessoas, grupos, questões sociais ou, mais genericamente, a qualquer acontecimento ocorrido com nosso meio circundante.

Thus, it is claimed that three components are integrated in attitudes: cognitive, affective and behavioral¹⁶ (LAMBERT; LAMBERT, 1972; RODRIGUES, 1972; entre outros). That is, for an attitude to be constituted, these three interrelated components are necessary, so that “what you feel and the way you react to a social object are coherently associated with the way you think about it.”¹⁷ (BOTASSINI, 2015, p. 114).

The *cognitive component* is related to the beliefs that the speaker has in relation to a referred social object, because “One cannot have an attitude towards an object if there is no cognitive representation about it, that is, it is necessary to know it”¹⁸ (BOTASSINI, 2015, p. 115). In this way, prejudiced attitudes are the result of negative cognitions in relation to the group or variety being discriminated against (RODRIGUES, 1972, p. 398).

The *affective component* refers to emotions and feelings for or against a social object, being more related to the subject's valuation, characteristic of social attitudes. Finally, we have the *behavioral or conative component*, understood as a reaction or conduct towards a social object.

Beliefs and linguistic assessments are therefore a fundamental part of the attitude and relate to what individuals believe, think, feel about something. An essential aspect of the nature of beliefs (and evaluations), highlighted by Barcelos and Abrahão (2006, p. 19), is the fact that “they are born in the context of interaction and in the relation with social groups, incorporating social perspectives”¹⁹. In this way, they are “[e]merging, socially constructed and contextually situated”²⁰ (BARCELOS; ABRAHÃO, 2006, p. 19; our highlights). This aspect is fundamental, because it presents us with a reality that changes and that can be changed, which opens space for a reflection on the role of the school in this process.

Bearing in mind the close relation between beliefs and attitudes, in this work we assume that linguistic attitudes include an activity, a reaction and/or externalization of what is thought, of what was evaluated while thinking. We also understand that beliefs about language are built through experiences in the social context and over the years of

Seus componentes essenciais são os pensamentos e as crenças, os sentimentos (ou emoções) e as tendências para reagir. (LAMBERT; LAMBERT, 1972, p. 77-78).

¹⁶ Critérios dos defensores de uma interpretação mentalista da atitude.

¹⁷ “aquilo que se sente e a maneira como se reage diante de um objeto social estejam coerentemente associados ao modo como se pensa a respeito dele.”

¹⁸ “Não se pode ter uma atitude em relação a um objeto se não houver alguma representação cognitiva a seu respeito, ou seja, é preciso conhecê-lo”

¹⁹ “nascem no contexto da interação e na relação com os grupos sociais, incorporando as perspectivas sociais”

²⁰ “[e]mergentes, socialmente construídas e situadas contextualmente”

learning in the school context. In the school environment, the teacher stands out as one of the main agents of what is transmitted and/or reinforced in the school. Due to its fundamental role in the process of building beliefs and attitudes, we proposed to develop and apply tests of linguistic attitudes to teachers from two public High Schools.

One of the great challenges of this kind of work in the school context is the reconstruction of the imaginary about language; it seeks to access what goes on in the minds of teachers. The tests are proposed as an instrument to get closer to this imaginary, in order to observe what set of ideas circulates in the students' formation scenario. Knowing is necessary to change.

Methodological procedures

As already mentioned, the objective of this work is to observe the attitudes of teachers from two public schools with regard to institutionalized conventions and standards, in order to assist us in discussing the appreciation and rejection of the varieties of the language in use²¹. The variable phenomenon of third person plural verbal agreement was placed in the evaluative dimension, since it is from this that we verify, in this work, in the tests of linguistic attitudes, the positive and negative reactions of the teachers. We emphasize, therefore, that in this research we understand linguistic attitudes as a valuing disposition of speakers about linguistic phenomena, in our case, about verbal agreement.

The linguistic attitudes test was applied to four Portuguese language teachers from two public schools in Monte Azul Paulista - SP. This analysis is part of a broader study that included investigating the linguistic attitudes of students from the same school (GHESSI, 2020). The teachers who participated in the research are the Portuguese teachers of the participating students and the responses of both groups were correlated in the study of which this is an excerpt. If we take into account only the universe of teachers involved, it would be more appropriate to consider that we have here a pilot study on their attitudes.

In the construction of the test, we selected samples from different narrative passages, which represent writings with different degrees of monitoring in relation to the educated norm: a fragment closer to the educated norm and another more distant, with

²¹ The broader study that this is an excerpt also includes the investigation of linguistic attitudes of students from the same schools.

characteristics of what is considered outside the educated norm (with absence of verbal agreement, few mechanisms of cohesion, etc.). Such fragments were taken from the essays of public school students in the city of Uberaba-MG, collected in the research of Scientific Initiation financed by FAPEMIG/BIC, entitled “Variable patterns of verbal third person plural agreement in school essays of the 3rd year of the High School in the city of Uberaba”²². Below we see the fragments²³:

*(I) Eles permaneceram lá por 45 dias e passaram por muitos lugares, muitas cidades e conheceram um pouco da cultura de cada um. É claro que eles perceberam que muitas coisas são diferentes dos costumes que temos aqui no Brasil, mas, mesmo assim ficaram encantados com tudo o que puderam presenciar naqueles lugares.*²⁴ [Borrowed from scientific initiation research sponsored by FAPEMIG]

*(II) Chegando em seu destino, desceram e prosseguiu até a casa da amiga. Chegando lá todos sentou e conversou, até que a mãe de sua amiga lhe ofereceram para eles almoçar. Todos almoçou, lavou às louças, então decidiram ir todos para a casa.*²⁵ [Borrowed from scientific initiation research sponsored by FAPEMIG]

The choice of these fragments is justified by the set of their linguistic characteristics and the fact that they have already been used successfully in another research²⁶, which demonstrated its suitability for the proposed objectives. The fact that we use written fragments is also justified because there are few works on linguistic attitudes that use stimuli from materials of this modality, despite the mastery of writing being one of the central objectives of Portuguese language teaching. This is, therefore, an innovative feature of this research. We show here, as well as Barbosa and Cuba (2015), Barbosa and Ghessi (2019), that it is possible to infer positive and negative reactions in tests of linguistic attitudes that use written texts.

Of the two different approaches that make up attitude tests - the direct approach and the semantic differential technique (OSGOOD; SUCI; TANNENBAUM, 1957), we

²² Approved by the Ethics Committee (Protocol 2112) of the Federal University of Triângulo Mineiro (UFTM).

²³ The fragments are showing the same verbal agreement rule as before, a rule that cannot be properly replicated in English, since the plurals are not formed in the same way in Portuguese as it is in English. The original fragments were kept in the text, with a translation (that do not show the plural mistakes) in the footnotes.

²⁴ (I) They stayed there for 45 days and went through many places, many cities and got to know a little about each other's culture. Of course, they realized that many things are different from the customs we have here in Brazil, but even so, they were delighted with everything they could witness in those places.

²⁵ (II) Arriving at their destination, they went down and proceeded to the friend's house. Once there, everyone sat and talked, until their friend's mother offered them to have lunch. Everyone had lunch, washed the dishes, then they all decided to go home.

²⁶ Barbosa and Ghessi (2019).

restrict ourselves in this work to presenting the first approach. In it, we used a questionnaire inviting teachers to give open and written answers about the selected object for the evaluation.

The purpose of the questions is to be able to observe whether teachers cite verbal agreement as being the phenomenon that differentiates one fragment from the other and, thus, to be able to deduce evaluations on the use of agreement in the two possible forms. In addition, we also seek to understand the opinion of the Portuguese language teacher, who participated in the research, about linguistic variation, analyzing his assessment of the “deviations” present in one of the fragments and their possible actions (or practices) in the classroom in these deviations.

The method of data collection for the constitution of the *corpus* involves contact between the researcher and individuals/communities, thus, this work was submitted to the Research Ethics Committee (CEP), subordinated to CONEP (Ministry of Health) - CEP Opinion 2,750,849.

Data analysis

Based on their analysis of the two distinct fragments, one with the presence of a VA and the other with an absence, teachers were asked to answer the following questions: (i) “Is it possible to identify whether the passages are written by different people? Justify”; (ii) “Is it possible to see differences between the two sections? Point out some.”; (iii) “Is one text / fragment better than the other? Justify”; (iv) “If produced by your students, what assessment would they receive? Explain”.

The answers given led us to verify two main beliefs of the teachers: (a) the belief that there are speakers with a unique style (LABOV, 2008 [1972]); and (b) the belief in linguistic error. Regarding the first belief, the teachers characterized the fragments by the dichotomy *formality* vs. *informality*, without conceiving the discursive game of social relations involved in the communicative event, as we can see in these excerpts from their responses:

(01) *The same person would not use records so different from each other.* [PROF_A_01F].²⁷

²⁷ (01) *A mesma pessoa não se utilizaria de registros tão distintos um do outro.* [PROF_A_01F].

(02) *The two make use of very different records regarding the formality/informality of the texts.* [PROF_A_02F].²⁸

(03) *Text II has frequent concordance errors, which suggests a colloquial language, different from that presented in text I.* [PROF_B_02M].²⁹

In the excerpt (01), we see that, for the teacher, the same person would not use records so different from one another, disregarding, in this way, the heterogeneity of the linguistic system. Labov (2008 [1972]) notes that there are no single-style speakers, as a vast field of stylistic alternations is available to language users. All students who arrive at the school are already competent users of their mother tongue, but they need to expand their communicative resources in order to meet social conventions, “which define the appropriate linguistic use for each textual genre, each communicative task, each type of interaction”³⁰ (BORTONI-RICARDO, 2004, p. 74). The informant, with this answer, reveals a conception of language that is dissociated from the pedagogy of linguistic variation.

In (02), thus, as in the previous excerpt, the teacher also reveals that she believes that either the speaker dominates the educated norm or makes use of discredited varieties, and that there is a direct correlation between two dichotomies - on the one hand, “educated norm” and “formal”; on the other, “discredited variety” and “informal”. Thus, the teachers ended up characterizing the fragments by the dichotomy that reduced formality/informality, without considering the discursive game of social relations involved in the communicative event.

Linguistic variability becomes naturally intrinsic to each speaker, because their social and cultural life is diverse. The user of the language builds, through his experiences in different social practices, a varied linguistic repertoire, dominating several records of the language. The heterogeneous reality that is characteristic of every language and society is immensely dynamic, that is, the linguistic varieties undergo slow and continuous changes and change as society changes. Despite this, the ideology of linguistic “error” and the standard language usually operates under an idealized and imposing

²⁸ (02) *Os dois fazem uso de registros bem diferentes em relação à formalidade/informalidade dos textos.* [PROF_A_02F].

²⁹ (03) *O texto II possui frequentes erros de concordância, que sugere uma linguagem coloquial, diferente da apresentada no texto I.* [PROF_B_02M].

³⁰ “que definem o uso linguístico adequado a cada gênero textual, a cada tarefa comunicativa, a cada tipo de interação”

conception of immutability and static, as we can observe with the response of the informant PROF_B_02M, in 03. According to Bortoni-Ricardo (2004):

Portuguese errors are simply *differences* between varieties of the language. These differences are often present between the variety used in the home domain, where a culture of orality predominates, in relationships permeated by affection and informality [...] and literacy cultures, such as that cultivated in school (BORTONI- RICARDO, 2004, p. 37, author' highlights).³¹

All speaking is, above all, an identity tool, so it is pedagogically incorrect to use the “error” discourse as an opportunity to humiliate or devalue the student's speech. From the perspective of a *culturally sensitive pedagogy*, faced with the realization of a “non-standard” rule, the teacher must, primarily, make students aware of the difference so that they can expand their communicative resources and, thus, manage to monitor their own style, but this has to be done with respect to the cultural characteristics that they carry. It is worth noting that the professor PROF_B_02M (excerpt 03) states that the "concordance errors" suggest a colloquial language, resuming, once again, the problematic of the dichotomy between formality/informality.

The notion of linguistic "error" was quite recurrent in the responses of teachers, suggesting that the concept of language that runs through the school institution is dissociated from the concept of heterogeneous, variable and dynamic language (LABOV, 2008 [1972]). The following excerpts also highlight the imagery of Right X Wrong:

(04) *text I presents a coherent organization of ideas, with the correct use of the rules of agreement, punctuation, cohesion, among others. Text II, on the contrary, has a very large deficiency in all these aspects.* [PROF_A_02F].³²

(05) *I usually make an individual correction with the student so as not to expose or embarrass him, and sometimes I use the text with such errors to work with the room, making the necessary corrections and adjustments, if the student allows/authorize the use of their text, without revealing name, of course. This is the way of thinking about the error for the other students.* [PROF_A_02_F].³³

³¹ Erros de português são simplesmente *diferenças* entre variedades da língua. Com frequência, essas diferenças se apresentam entre a variedade usada no domínio do lar, onde predomina uma cultura de oralidade, em relações permeadas pelo afeto e informalidade [...] e culturas de letramento, como a que é cultivada na escola (BORTONI-RICARDO, 2004, p. 37, grifo do autor).

³² (04) *o texto I apresenta uma organização coerente de ideias, com o uso correto das regras de concordância, pontuação, coesão, entre outros. O texto II, ao contrário, apresenta uma deficiência muito grande em todos esses quesitos.* [PROF_A_02F].

³³ (05) *Normalmente faço uma correção individual com o aluno para não expô-lo ou constrangê-lo e, algumas vezes, uso o texto com tais erros para trabalhar com a sala, fazendo as devidas correções e*

(06) *I would point out the errors in text II with a brief explanation of agreement [...]. [PROF_B_02M] (Our highlights).*³⁴

The language is covered with an imaginary that guides us on how to make sense of linguistic varieties, establishing what is valuable and what is not. Thus, speakers believe that they can censor the linguistic behavior of others, stating that certain varieties constitute “wrong” ways of speaking the language, based on a normative conception that assumes that there are qualitative differences between the varieties. In this regard, the National Curriculum Parameters (PCNs, Portuguese initials) advise that: “The issue is not one of error, but of adequacy to the circumstances of use, of adequate use of language”³⁵ (BRASIL, 1998, p. 31).

The mention of the use or not of agreement as a difference between the fragments, seen in the excerpts (03), (04) and (06), was already expected, mainly considering the social stigma that the absence of VA marking carries. Such responses show the social value that the variant without the explicit plural mark carries within society. However, we know that the non-marking of the plural does not change the meaning of the statements. The absence or the morphological presence (*Os meninos fala*∅ vs *Os meninos falam*) “signals different varieties, registers and modalities, which together constitute a complex variable network and generically configure a characteristic of Brazilian Portuguese”³⁶ (VIEIRA; PIRES, 2012, p. 169).

In addition to the two beliefs revealed in the teachers' responses - “the unique-style speaker” and the “linguistic error” -, we were also able to observe the attribution of the value of “superiority” of one fragment in relation to the other. This is seen in excerpts (07) to (09):

(07) *I would say that section I follows rules of agreement, regency, punctuation, spelling more competently in relation to the second section, which provides a better understanding due to the established cohesion and its coherence. [PROF_A_01F].*³⁷

adequações, isso se o aluno permitir/autorizar o uso de seu texto, sem a revelação de seu nome, é claro. Esta é a forma de reflexão sobre o erro para os demais alunos. [PROF_A_02_F].

³⁴ (06) *Apontaria os erros no texto II com breve explicação sobre concordância [...]. [PROF_B_02M] (Grifos nossos).*

³⁵ “A questão não é de erro, mas de adequação às circunstâncias de uso, de utilização adequada da linguagem”

³⁶ “sinaliza variedades, registros e modalidades diversos, que, em conjunto, constituem uma complexa rede variável e configuram genericamente uma característica do Português do Brasil”

³⁷ (07) *Diria que o trecho I segue normas de concordância, regência, pontuação, ortografia de forma mais competente em relação o segundo trecho, o que proporciona um melhor entendimento devido à coesão estabelecida e sua coerência. [PROF_A_01F].*

(08) *Both texts convey messages clearly, but text II has errors. Thus, we can consider text I "superior".* [PROF_B_02M].³⁸

(09) *The first excerpt would receive a better "grade", but I never assign these grades publicly. I usually make a personal record and, in the text, I provide guidelines regarding how the student should proceed when reflecting on his textual production and the improvement of the conditions of his own correction in the rewriting or future productions.* [PROF_A_01F].³⁹

Regarding the excerpt (07), the teacher's reaction may not only be a reflection of her attitudes about linguistic phenomena being evaluated, but may also include a set of attitudes related to the qualities of the language user. When the teacher refers to section I as "more competent", she is, metonymically, evaluating the text producer. The questions to be asked are "what does it mean to be more competent?" and "How can we assess a speaker's competence through a (single) text?"

We have already seen that all students who arrive at the school are competent users of their mother tongue, and it is up to the school "to create conditions for the students to develop their communicative competence"⁴⁰ (BORTONI-RICARDO, 2004, p. 78). Thus, the use of the word "competent" to differentiate one fragment from the other comes loaded with negative values in relation to the language, but mainly to its user.

PROF_B_02M, in (08), considers fragment I "superior" to fragment II because it does not have "errors". Sociolinguistics has been demonstrating that, from the structural point of view, all linguistic forms and varieties are equivalent, since "all linguistic forms and varieties have a structural organization (a grammar), although only a few receive the qualification of correct"⁴¹ (FARACO, 2008, p. 136). With this comment made by the teacher, we understand his belief that it is the school's duty to seek a linguistic standardization, concentrating efforts on the cultivation of a language ideal, that is, "of a certain set of language facts considered to be correct"⁴² (FARACO, 2008, p. 135). The great aggravating factor of all this is that the school becomes a place where linguistic

³⁸ (08) *Ambos os textos transmitem as mensagens com clareza, porém o texto II apresenta erros. Assim, podemos considerar o texto I "superior".* [PROF_B_02M].

³⁹ (09) *O primeiro trecho receberia uma melhor "nota", porém nunca atribui essas notas de forma pública. Costumo fazer um registro pessoal e, no texto, coloco orientações a respeito de como o aluno deve proceder ao refletir sobre sua produção textual e a melhoria das condições de sua própria correção na reescrita ou futuras produções.* [PROF_A_01F].

⁴⁰ "criar condições para que os educandos desenvolvam sua competência comunicativa"

⁴¹ "todas as formas e variedades linguísticas têm uma organização estrutural (uma gramática), embora só algumas recebam a qualificação de corretas"

⁴² "de um determinado conjunto de fatos de linguagem tidos como corretos"

intolerance and prejudice are reinforced, since the evaluative judgments about languages also become or reveal judgment about their speakers.

In addition to these reflections, in (09) we see that PROF_A_01F would give the best score for the fragment that has the presence of the explicit plural mark, proving that CV is part of the basic requirements for a positive evaluation. According to Vieira and Pires (2012, p. 183), “it is clear that, in an array of elements that characterize a text considered good in terms of a cultured standard, verbal agreement, it seems, constitutes a high salience feature in evaluation of the entrance exam corrective board”⁴³.

Considering the responses obtained from the teachers, we can see that no teacher has a pedagogical practice supported by linguistic variation, that is, they do not have strategies for reflection on linguistic diversity. On the contrary, what we see is a coercive practice, which equates reflection with the correction of 'errors', as it is explicit in the speech, for example, of PROF_A_02_F, in (05) - “I use the text with such errors to work with the classroom, making the necessary corrections and adjustments [...] This is the way of reflecting on the error for the other students”.

Final considerations

In the research section presented in this article, we saw that the attitudes test allowed us to verify the teacher's approach to institutionalized conventions and standards, corroborating the research on this variable phenomenon: the non-realization of the morphological trait of number has a negative sociolinguistic value and is used as a way to disqualify the speaker of the language.

The responses showed that there are images and meanings that cover the language and are reinforced by the school. This hierarchical imagery of a pattern, which creates stereotypes, is inside the classroom and in the teachers' imagination. The mother tongue teachers should be the agents that deconstruct linguistic stereotypes, but what is clear is that there is a strong hesitation in working on the plurality of the language within the classroom, partly due to formation gaps. Although the concept of language, as it is and how it works, is already well described and substantiated by linguists, it has not yet been

⁴³ “fica claro que, em uma matriz de elementos caracterizadores de um texto considerado bom em termos de padrão culto, a concordância verbal, ao que parece, constitui traço de alta saliência na avaliação da banca corretora do vestibular”

possible to change wrong linguistic attitudes and practices in society, not even in the educational context.

We argue that the school can become an environment for linguistic reflection and without damaging the students' social values, but we are aware that we have hard work ahead of us, since we are facing beliefs, stereotypes, conservatism, elitism, power and ideologies, which come from the colonial system that constituted us and which, until today, have fertile roots. However, as language scientists and advocates of egalitarian linguistic practices, we must resist and persist on this path, leading our conception of language to empirically proven at various social levels. It is no longer possible to observe language as a synonym for normative grammar, without making any reference to the heterogeneity of the linguistic system; this would correspond to ignoring the multifaceted and diversified essence that ensures its functionality.

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