

ORAL GENRES IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING

OS GÊNEROS ORAIS NO ENSINO DE LÍNGUA ESTRANGEIRA

GÉNEROS ORALES EN LA ENSEÑANZA DE IDIOMAS EXTRANJEROS

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ABSTRACT: This article aims to discuss the work with the oral genre in the teaching of Foreign Language (FL), in comparison with the teaching of Mother Language (LM), through the reading and review of the National Curriculum Parameters (1998a) and related articles (BOTLER&SUASSUNA, 2015; ALVEZ, n.d.). This proposition was made due to the explicit lag in English language teaching within regular schools, in particular, due to the lack of activities focused on oral comprehension and the exercise of the spoken language. As a result of these factors, together with the theoretical discussion, we made a proposal for class planning based on the storytelling genre, understanding the advantages of the oral histories approach within foreign language education.

KEYWORDS: English Language Teaching. Oral genres. Storytelling. Elementary school – final years.

RESUMO: Este artigo tem como objetivo discutir o trabalho com o gênero oral no ensino de Língua Estrangeira (LE), em comparação com o ensino de Língua Materna (LM), através da leitura e revisão dos Parâmetros Curriculares Nacionais (1998a) e artigos relacionados (BOTLER; SUASSUNA, 2015; ALVEZ, S.d.). Essa proposição foi feita em razão da explícita defasagem do ensino de língua inglesa dentro das escolas regulares, em especial, pelo fato da ausência de atividades focadas na compreensão oral e exercício da língua falada. Em decorrência desses fatores, juntamente com a discussão teórica, realizamos uma proposta de planejamento de aula tendo como base o gênero storytelling, compreendendo as vantagens da abordagem de histórias orais dentro da educação de idioma estrangeiro.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Ensino de Língua Inglesa. Gêneros orais. Storytelling. Ensino Fundamental anos finais.

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RESUMEN: Este artículo tiene como objetivo discutir el trabajo con el género oral en la enseñanza de la Lengua Extranjera (FL), en comparación con la enseñanza de la Lengua Materna (LM), a través de la lectura y revisión de los Parámetros Curriculares Nacionales (1998a) y artículos relacionados (BOTLER; SUASSUNA, 2015; ALVEZ, S.d.). Esta propuesta se hizo debido al rezago explícito en la enseñanza del idioma inglés dentro de las escuelas regulares, en particular, debido a la falta de actividades enfocadas en la comprensión oral y el ejercicio de la lengua hablada. Como resultado de estos factores, junto con la discusión teórica, realizamos una propuesta de planificación de clases basada en el género narrativo, entendiendo las ventajas del enfoque de historias orales dentro de la educación de lenguas extranjeras.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Enseñanza de lengua inglesa. Géneros orales. Cuentacuentos. Escuela primaria - últimos años.

Introduction

Since the 16th century, historical documents have been observed, in the existence of Foreign Language Teaching (E.L.E) in Brazil, with the spread of the Portuguese language (L.P.) among natives of the new colony, by missionaries, as a means of communication, and mastery. For several centuries to come, the Jesuits remained responsible for the model of education, not only of L.P., but also of other languages, at first classical, Latin and Greek, to later enhance modern ones: English, French, German and Italian.

During the colonial period, before and after the expulsion of the Jesuits by the Marquis of Pombal, Greek and Latin were the dominant disciplines. The others, including the vernacular, history and geography, were usually taught through classical languages, in translation exercises and in the comments of the authors read (FRANCA, 1952). It was only very slowly, at first with the arrival of the Royal Family in 1808, later with the creation of Peter II College in 1837, and finally with the reform of 1855, that the secondary school curriculum began to evolve to give the teaching of modern languages a status at least similar to that of classical languages. (LEFFA, 1999, p. 3-4, our translation).

The methodology used for both categories – classical and modern languages, however, did not differ, because translation and grammatical analysis predominate. From the First Republic, which began during the last decade of the 19th century, Greek left the curriculum and the E.L.E. declined, with the reduction of its workload by 50% and the learning of languages such as Italian became optional (LEFFA, 1999). The turnaround in favor of E.L.E. would only occur in the 1930s, when, for the first time, the government would modify the archaic methodology for the direct method, hitherto considered more efficient by many experts. The method emphasized the importance of developing reading, listening, speaking

and writing skills in another language. However, according to reports gathered, much of the proposal failed to reach the classrooms in general (LEFFA, 1999).

In the following years, with the Laws of Guidelines and Bases (LDB) of the 1960s and 1970s, once again the E.L.E. collapsed, having its hours of dedication focused on a more professionalizing education or, in other words, technician. Only during the 1990s, with the new LDB, the E.L.E. began to gain new relevance, with the postulation of the obligation of at least one matter of L.E. in high school, but without the regulation of a single methodology. Moreover, due to the globalization and attempts to internalize educational institutions, especially higher education institutions, it has again been observed, in recent years, the leverage of the E.L.E, more specifically the English language, due to American dominance, both economic and cultural, throughout the globe.

The publication of the National Curricular Parameters, in the 1990s, brought, as a novelty, the adoption of a learning based on a socio-interactionist bias, as well as the very concept of language in which it was anchored. In other words:

The socio-interactional approach of language indicates that, when engaging in discourse, people consider those to whom they address themselves or who addressed them in the social construction of meaning. The positioning of people in the institution, culture and history is decisive in this process. [...] With regard to the socio-interactional view of learning, it can be said that it is understood as a way of being in the world with someone and is also situated in the institution, culture and history. Thus, cognitive processes have a social nature, being generated through the interaction between a student and a more competent partner (BRASIL, 1998a, p. 15, our translation).

These important changes reverberated in subsequent documents, such as the National Curriculum Guidelines (2013) and the Common National Curriculum Base (2017). Despite all the proposals already implemented, many of those responsible who seek to guarantee young people fluency in a foreign language turn to specialized private institutions. In other words, both the regular private school and the public school still seem to lack further progress to this need.

The domain that students regularly hold, at the end of their school years, is usually limited to the ability to read in another language, with orality greatly compromised, including the vocabulary considered basic. In view of this problem, this article seeks to investigate how the National Curricular Parameters suggest the work of foreign language teaching in the third and fourth cycle (1998 a), in view of its punctual influence on the teachers in action. The justification for the restriction of the analysis of these official texts lies in the fact that the documents published after the Parameters do not bring specific proposals for a significant

change in teaching, until the formulation of the National Common Curriculum Base (2017), which does not integrate *the research corpus*, because it is still in the process of implementation.

The choice not to include other grades, other than those constituents of Elementary School II (E.F. II), is connected to the fact that the first and second cycles do not have the obligation to implement the discipline of L.E. In high school, a model similar to that suggested for E.F. II

This article also seeks to analyze the importance of working with orality in the classroom, through oral genres, in view of the aforementioned problem and propose, as a contribution, a prototype of class, focused on this skill.

Foreign Language Teaching by the National Curriculum Parameters of the third and fourth cycles

The processes of democratization and universalization of school occurred emphatically from the second half of the twentieth century, in Brazil, required the government necessary for its implementation, considering that, until then, teaching, including the public, was intended for people from the middle class and upper middle class, still restricting itself, many times, to the people of the urban centers of the coastal states. Therefore, it can be deduced that much had to be modified, to include the whole new range of students who were now welcomed by the institutions.

In addition to the profile of the new public, Brazilian education also faced the challenge of adapting to the requirements for the formation of the contemporary citizen, a subject who should not only be literate, but also literate. According to the concept proposed by Kleiman⁴ (1995, p. 18), literacy would be a "set of social practices that use writing, as a symbolic system and as technology, in specific contexts, for specific purposes". The literate individual would therefore be able to act appropriately in the spaces in which interaction with writing is required.

The digital revolution and the search for increasingly specialized professionals, in addition to the factors mentioned above, transformed traditional content and the way they were taught into anachronistic.

⁴ Although the documents do not bring a definition of literacy, which would be important, because it is still a relatively recent concept and, in Brazil, renowned researchers still approach it with different ideas in mind, Kleiman's definition was cited because the document itself brings, in its references, the author's books.

Faced with this challenge, the National Curriculum Parameters, approved in 1998, had the purpose of countering criticism against outdated education that was still perpetuated in Brazilian education and proposing a teaching model aligned with its main objective: "to create conditions in schools that allow our young people to have access to the set of knowledge socially elaborated and recognized as necessary for the exercise of citizenship. (BRAZIL, 1998a).

At the same time, the Teaching of foreign language, according to this proposition, as a way to assist in the formation of this citizen, was restricted to the stimulation of a single skill in a foreign language – reading, excluding hearing, speech and writing, generally considered fundamental for the acquisition of a language.

Learning a foreign language should guarantee the student his/her discursive engagement, that is, the ability to engage and involve others in speech. This can be done through learning teaching processes that involve the student in the construction of meaning by the development of at least one communicative ability. It is important to guarantee the student a unique experience of constructing meaning through the mastery of a discursive basis, which can be expanded, when necessary, in his future life or when the conditions existing in schools allow it (BRASIL, 1998a, p. 19-20, our translation).

Among the concepts on which the document is based for the formulation of teaching proposals is language, from a socio-interactionist perspective, implying that the interlocutors of a communication process are influenced by extradiscursive elements (such as the social status of the speaker) and intradiscursive (grammatical knowledge of the language), during the process of creating meaning.

According to this reasoning, the defended perspective is understood, that "the learner uses systemic knowledge, of the world and about textual organization, besides having to learn how to use them in the social construction of meaning via Foreign Language." (BRASIL, 1998a, p. 15). However, it is worth mentioning that the National Curricular Parameters of Portuguese Language (1998b), also following the socio-interactionist view of language, bring clear influences of Bakhtinian studies and, therefore, the discursive genres are not only mentioned, as conceptualized, characterized and listed, so that they can be more easily selected by teachers, according to their characteristics and the objective that the professional intends to achieve in his class. Although, in their references, the Foreign Language PCNs (1998a) also contain Bakhtin's work and, similarly, the focus is on exercises involving texts,

preferably with the preservation of their social character, yet not even the word 'gender' is quoted.

Grammar, in this model of education, is decentralized, and becomes just another instrument of reflection and understanding of the language itself, surpassing its dominating role according to traditional and archaic teaching. Similarly, the role of reading is also reformulated:

The reading view adopted differs from that traditionally followed in the classroom and didactic material, centered on aspects of decoding the written word, in which the only knowledge used by the reader-student is the systemic, based on a reading conception in which the meaning is inherent to the text and not a social construction (BRASIL, 1998a, p. 93, our translation).

Linguistic variation, one of the controversial themes, especially in Portuguese-speaking PCNs (1998b), in which critics said it was a 'wrong' way of teaching grammar to students, it was, according to its initial proposal, the use of local and previous linguistic knowledge of students for the construction of language exercises. With this scope, linguistic variation is also recognized in the new proposal of foreign language teaching, as relevant for the critical consideration of the linguistic system and its various aspects.

The issue of linguistic variation in foreign language can help not only the understanding of the linguistic phenomenon of variation in the mother tongue itself, but also the fact that the foreign language does not exist only in the standard variety, as the school usually presents. Here it is not enough to show the relationship between different social groups (regional, social class, professional, gender, etc.) and their linguistic achievements; it is also necessary to indicate that linguistic variations mark people in order to position them in the discourse, which can often exclude them from certain material and cultural goods (BRASIL, 1998a, p. 47, our translation).

These innovations and concerns in favor of a fruitful learning did not avoid a lag in the work with orality and other skills, but reading, understanding that the Brazilian student would not need to develop them to become proficient in the language and not even for any situation that requires such knowledge. Resuming the objective of this article, which is restricted to question the relevance of orality in the acquisition of a foreign language, it is valid to expose the following excerpt, which justifies the focus on reading in the teaching of L.E. and makes optional the exercises related to oral practice.

[...] considering the development of oral skills as central to foreign language teaching in Brazil does not take into account the criterion of social relevance

for their learning. [...] the use of a foreign language seems to be, in general, more linked to the reading of technical or leisure literature. It should also be noted that the only formal exams in Foreign Language (entrance exams and admission to graduate course) require the mastery of reading ability. Therefore, reading meets, on the one hand, the needs of formal education, and, on the other hand, it is the skill that the student can use in his immediate social context (BRASIL, 1998a, p. 20, our translation).

Thus, it is inferred that the authors of the Foreign Language PCNs assume the view that the majority of citizens come into contact with other languages through reading and that a significant part of Brazilians does not need the development of writing, hearing and speaking in a foreign language. Considering these articulations as presuppositions, they propose a teaching limited to the opportunity of reading exercises. This predetermined restriction, as expected, causes explicit damage in the fluent domain of any language, which confirms the justification of the proposition of this research, by emphasizing the work with orality, because this is a less stimulated skills in elementary school classrooms in the discipline of L.E.

The relevance of working with orality

The National Curriculum Parameters (1998), following the Law of Guidelines and Bases (1996), do not restrict the teaching of foreign language to the English language, because it covers any considered relevant, to be selected according to the idiosyncratic need of each school institution.

This article, in view of the massive universalization of English – in such a way that the Common National Curriculum Base (2017) proposes the exclusive teaching of this language – restricts to its study the relevant aspects to be considered in the teaching of this linguistic system in Brazilian classrooms. In this scenario, the speech stands out, as McDonough & Shaw postulates:

With the recent growth of English as an international communication language, there is clearly a need for many students of talk and interact in a multitude of situations through language, whether for trips abroad, business or other professional reasons. In many contexts, speaking is often the skill upon which a person is judged "by appearance". In other words, people can often make judgments about our language competence by speaking, rather than any of the other language skills. (MCDONOUGH; SHAW apud ALVES, 2015, our translation).

This seems to be the most recognized skill when the legitimacy of an individual's fluency is put to the test. Moreover, the knowledge of a language, because it is not restricted to the understanding of its grammatical laws, requires, from its speaker, the understanding and

processing of information through it (ALVES, 2015), making it essential the ability of auditory cognition and responsive articulation. Harmer (2001) reiterates that linguistic-communicative competence is only achieved when the speaker dominates elements of discursive communication, such as: *connected speech, expressive devices; lexis and grammar; negotiation language*. So much so that admittedly there is a significant number of people who resort to private language courses, with the intention of learning English language.

In the classroom of the regular school, it is essential that the teacher finds ways to provide the engagement of all in communicative situations, as Alves (2015) asserts: "The stimulus to the interaction and exposure of the opinions of each learner from the beginning of learning is revealed as a crucial factor for success in oral production to be achieved."

In Brazil, the obstacle to the execution and development of oral activities in the teaching of L.E. is related, among several factors, to inequality, to the lack of incentive to educational programs of teacher training to know how to deal and insert the student effectively in the work with orality, the use of inefficient materials, the existence of numerous rooms (ALVES, 2015). In summary, there is the recognition of the effective use of orality as an integral part of language competence, but some aspects become obstacles to its integration in Brazilian education.

As already mentioned, although in the L.E. PCNs there is no mention of the term gender, both the projected teaching of the Portuguese and Foreign languages, by the Official Brazilian documents, are permeated by Bakhtinian studies, so much so that, from page 95 of the L.E. PCNs there are "didactic guidelines for the teaching of oral comprehension" that extend to oral production, through discursive genres:

Example 2

Goal: Capture specific information.

Phase: oral comprehension.

Activity: from a recording, fill in, for example, information sheet on a particular subject.

Activity: After hearing a message on a desk electronic, fill out a sheet of a block of scraps for a friend to receive the information they need.

Example 3

Goal: to develop conditions for students to understand the different possibilities of intonations patterns: question, statement and exclamation.

Phase: oral comprehension.

Activity: Fill in a chart indicating which lines of a dialogue are questions, statements or exclamations (BRASIL, 1998a, p. 95-96, our translation)

Such a claim is made in view of the following concept of gender:

The use of the language takes place in the form of concrete and unique utterances (oral and written), which emanate from the members of one sphere or another sphere of human activity. The utterance reflects the specific conditions and purposes of each of these spheres, not only for its content (thematic) and for its verbal style, that is, by the selection operated in the resources of the language — lexical, phraseological and grammatical resources — but also, and above all, for its compositional construction. These three elements (thematic content, style and compositional construction) merge inextricably into the whole of the utterance, and all of them are marked by the specificity of a sphere of communication. Any statement considered in isolation is, of course, individual, but each sphere of use of the language elaborates its relatively stable types of utterances, which we call discourse genres (BAKHTIN, 1997, p. 279, our translation).

Moreover, in agreement with the thought that language is learned not by dictionaries or grammars, but by concrete utterances, by dialogical interaction, because "we speak by utterances and not by isolated prayers and, even less, it is obvious, by isolated words" (BAKHTIN, 1997, p. 301-302), this article defends the idea of the effectiveness of working with the discursive genre in the classroom. Therefore, in the next section, the lesson suggestion is based on the choice of a fairy tale for the execution of activities related to orality, believing in the productivity generated from the use of a genre of great circulation and knowledge of the students, to ensure a class in which there is engagement and a good development of their skills.

Lesson proposal - storytelling

Among the various methodologies of working with orality, the focus was on *storytelling*, which has been gaining prominence and is a recurring tool in the successful teaching and learning process of children and young people. The tradition of storytelling is adopted for the propagation of knowledge in formal education. Although it is a usual practice since the dawn of humanity, with the invention of writing and modernization by technology, the graphocentric world has made this modality less prestigious. However, his rescue has been effective. Studies both in the area of education and in others, including the exact sciences, have used the methodology for the transfer of knowledge generated, including in the conduction of research.

Storytelling serves as a teaching tool whose purpose is to contextualize language and vocabulary in a universe of ludicity. It can be applied both to present new vocabulary and to bring to the educating a perspective of how to use the grammatical structure of the English

language in a narrative context. It is proposed here that the stories be of a cultural canon suitable for the language – that is, English, American and Irish folk tales – and the teaching period – with tales that can reflect the season of traditional holidays such as *Halloween*, *St. Patrick's Day* and *Thanksgiving*.

Initially, the student must generate interest in reading and establish with him a connection with history. The teacher must establish an environment in which the student can invest, change the intonation and the voice, use visual strategies, so that it is not only a moment of contemplation, but entertainment. If the text includes speech, some students can be assigned the function of interpreting the characters while reading.

During the preparation of activities, the choice of text is a moment of crucial significance. With the knowledge of the target audience and the appropriate selection, the teacher must practice reading, making notes and marks of emphasis, to know which grammatical elements will be worked during the class and predict the reaction of students to the activity. It is an indispensable step, so that students are not only passive recipients, which would result in an ineffective proposal.

Within the teaching of English language for elementary school, *storytelling* can be a response for the teacher who seeks to fulfill his objectives through the engagement of his students, by using stories known to his audience.

As an example, among the various lesson plans available related to *storytelling*, a text published on *the British Council website* was selected to make up this proposal. It can be accessed by the following link: <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/little-red-riding-hood>

The execution of the resources that the site provides, in a simplified way, could proceed as follows: presentation of the vocabulary in English, in this case, related to the *fairy tale Little Red Riding Hood*, such as the name of the relevant characters, nouns and adjectives; story telling; playful activity, *such as memory game*, with vocabulary previously taught; and, finally, reading together the *tale Little Red Riding Hood*.

To foster the interest of students, especially those in the early years of the E.F.II, some pedagogical tools can be used to enhance the class experience. Puppets, for example, can be manipulated – and their making can be part of the pedagogical activity. Another interesting element is *flashcards that* contain illustrations of the vocabulary presented by the story, or even that show specific excerpts narrated by the teacher. This material can also be made together, in the classroom, with proper preparation.

Other resources to be linked to storytelling are: activities with music, making or using costumes, finger paintings and dynamics that relate to the story to be told – such as adaptations of games such as *tag*, *touch and go*, or *hide and seek*. Scenarios should be encouraged for students to establish a connection with the experience provided by the educator, departing from creativity and experimentation.

Videos can also be used, from preferences animations available free of charge, so that students have the opportunity to interact not only with words, but also with the audiovisual resource. Short-lived performances can be crafted as a small movie activity.

To reinforce grammar, the classroom framework is a visual strategy for students to recognize the structures used in the text. However, in order for them to assimilate reading and writing, it is essential to associate complementary activities related to the text. The use of paraphrasing, so that students can rewrite the history, using the memory and a few words given, in addition to activities in which gaps are completed, can stimulate the recognition and application of the lexicon used in the text.

Artistic activities, such as the illustration of parts of the story, can also be encouraging, so that the student remains immersed in the universe proposed by the narrative. The dialogue on the themes presented during history – or its morals, in the case of a fable – can be a valid strategy for working on speech, especially with a focus on creating unpublished sentences, based on the reinforced grammatical point.

Final considerations

The literature review highlighted the need for oral integration, especially in the process of teaching and learning the Foreign Language, due to the relevance of this modality for the development of a successful articulation of the individual between the various discourses in which he is part. From this perspective, storytelling can be an instrument to be used by teachers to achieve a fruitful teaching.

The dynamics have the potential to provide the educating of a more instigating teaching and more focused on the interaction and interpretation of the language, in a context established by the educator, and can serve as a basis for working the aspects inherent to the teaching of the language.

Thus, through the analysis of some possibilities of exploration and oral interaction of storytelling in the classroom, with the perspective directed to the preparation and application

of contents, this text hopes to have contributed to the teaching actions in the process of teaching and meaningful learning of foreign languages.

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