INCLUSIVE TEACHING OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE: (AUTO)BIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVES OF PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS

ENSINO INCLUSIVO DE LÍNGUA INGLESA: NARRATIVAS (AUTO) BIOGRÁFICAS DE PROFESSORES DE ESCOLAS PÚBLICAS

ENSEÑANZA INCLUSIVA DE LENGUA INGLESA: NARRATIVAS (AUTO)BIOGRÁFICAS DE PROFESORES DE ESCUELAS PÚBLICAS

Larissa Mirelle de Souza PAIVA[1]
e-mail: mirelle_uzl16@hotmail.com

Simone Maria da ROCHA[2]
e-mail: simone.rocha@ufersa.edu.br

Emerson Augusto de MEDEIROS[3]
e-mail: emerson.medeiros@ufersa.edu.br

Editors:	Prof. Dr. Rosangela Sanches da Silveira Gileno
Deputy Executive Editor:	Prof. Dr. José Anderson Santos Cruz

[1] State Secretariat of Education, Culture, Sports, and Leisure of Rio Grande do Norte (SEEC), Caraúbas – RN – Brazil. Master's in Education. Teacher in the State Basic Education.
[2] Federal University of the Semi-Arid Region (UFERSA), Caraúbas – RN – Brasil. Brazil. Doctorate in Education. Permanent professor of the Graduate Program in Teaching (Posensino/UFERSA).
[3] Federal University of the Semi-Arid Region (UFERSA), Mossoró – RN – Brazil. Doctorate in Education. Permanent professor of the Graduate Program in Teaching (Posensino/UFERSA).

ABSTRACT: This text addresses the inclusive teaching of the English language. It presents research aimed at reflecting on English language pedagogical practices developed with students with disabilities in public schools in the Municipality of Caraúbas (RN) through (auto)biographical narratives of teachers. The study employed a qualitative approach and was grounded in (auto)biographical research. As research subjects, two teachers who taught the English language in the final years of elementary education in two public schools in the municipality participated. Reflective interviews were used as a technique for data production, crediting the (auto)biographical narratives of the teachers. Among other aspects, it was concluded that inclusive teaching of the English language is not carried out in isolation from the work in the school as a whole. There needs to be dialogue and collaborative actions in the institution and classroom to promote the inclusion of students with disabilities in education.

KEYWORDS: Inclusion. English Language Teaching. Special Education. Public School.

RESUMO: *Este texto tematiza o ensino inclusivo de língua inglesa. Apresenta uma pesquisa que objetivou pensar, por meio de narrativas (auto) biográficas de docentes, práticas pedagógicas de língua inglesa desenvolvidas com alunos com deficiência de escolas públicas do Município de Caraúbas (RN). O estudo fez uso da abordagem qualitativa e se encorou na pesquisa (auto) biográfica. Como sujeitos da pesquisa, participaram dois docentes que ensinam língua inglesa nos anos finais do Ensino Fundamental em duas escolas públicas do referido município. Como técnica para a produção dos dados, utilizou-se de entrevistas reflexivas, creditando as narrativas (auto) biográficas dos docentes. Concluiu-se, entre outros aspectos, que o ensino inclusivo de língua inglesa não se faz de modo desarticulado do trabalho na escola como um todo. É preciso haver o diálogo e ações colaborativas na instituição e em sala de aula para a promoção da inclusão dos estudantes com deficiência na educação escolar.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Inclusão. Ensino de Língua Inglesa. Educação Especial. Escola Pública.*

RESUMEN: *Este texto aborda la enseñanza inclusiva del idioma inglés. Presenta una investigación cuyo objetivo fue reflexionar, a través de narrativas (auto)biográficas de docentes, sobre las prácticas pedagógicas del idioma inglés desarrolladas con alumnos con discapacidad en escuelas públicas del Municipio de Caraúbas (RN). El estudio utilizó un enfoque cualitativo y se basó en la investigación (auto)biográfica. Como sujetos de la investigación participaron dos docentes que enseñan inglés en los últimos años de la Educación Primaria en dos escuelas públicas de dicho municipio. Como técnica para la producción de datos, se emplearon entrevistas reflexivas, atribuyendo las narrativas (auto)biográficas de los docentes. Se concluyó, entre otros aspectos, que la enseñanza inclusiva del idioma inglés no se lleva a cabo de manera desarticulada del trabajo en la escuela en su conjunto. Es necesario establecer diálogos y acciones colaborativas en la institución y en el aula para promover la inclusión de los estudiantes con discapacidad en la educación escolar.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Inclusión. Enseñanza de Lengua Inglesa. Educación Especial. Escuela Pública.*

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Introduction

This study focuses on inclusive English language teaching in public schools in the municipality of Caraúbas, Rio Grande do Norte, Brazil. The research is a segment of the master's dissertation developed in the Teaching Postgraduate Program (Posensino), which is a broad association between the State University of Rio Grande do Norte (UERN), the Federal Rural University of the Semi-Arid Region (UFERSA), and the Federal Institute of Education, Science and Technology of Rio Grande do Norte (IFRN).

The desire to investigate the topic arose from the experience of one of the authors of this text during their initial training in the English Language Teaching undergraduate program. Through participation in research activities on Special Education from the perspective of Inclusive Education, within the scope of scientific initiation, as well as in the Pedagogical Residency Program (PRP), questions regarding the teaching of the English language to people with disabilities emerged. For example: What is the social and educational function of teaching the English language to students with disabilities? What pedagogical practices, with students with disabilities in English language teaching, can be considered inclusive in the context of public schools? Thus, there was a need to investigate the theme.

The research was conducted in 2022, with the participation of two teachers who teach English language in the final years of Elementary School in two public institutions located in the municipality of Caraúbas, Rio Grande do Norte, Brazil. The main objective was to think, through (auto)biographical narratives of teachers, about pedagogical practices of the English language developed with students with disabilities in public schools in the Municipality of Caraúbas (RN).

From a methodological perspective, the study employed a qualitative approach, grounded in (auto)biographical research, using reflective interviews as a technique for data collection. We mention that the research unfolded in two stages. This text refers to the stage focused on inclusive English language teaching.

It is worth highlighting that the two teachers participating in the study were invited to collaborate in the research, mainly credited for their time working in public schools, teaching the English language, and their professional involvement with students with disabilities. The two schools and the research sites were invited to collaborate through the education department of the municipality of Caraúbas (RN). Furthermore, it should be noted that one of the authors of the text, at the time of the research, was serving as a teacher in Basic Education in the

aforementioned municipality, which heightened the desire to investigate the theme in these spaces.

With this brief introduction, we organize the remainder of the text into three more sections and the final considerations. Firstly, we briefly discuss the historical process of including people with disabilities in the social and educational context, aiming to understand part of the historical struggle for these individuals to exercise their social rights, such as the right to education. Next, we discuss English language teaching, focusing on the main pedagogical methods used in its promotion over time. In the third section, we present the data constructed in the research through the (auto)biographical narratives of the teachers. In the final considerations, we revisit the main aspects discussed in the study.

We hope this article contributes to the debate in the educational field and to research on the inclusive teaching of the English language to students with disabilities in the context of public schools. Furthermore, we hope it fosters reflections on this issue, perhaps sparking the desire for further studies among the readers of *Revista EntreLínguas*.

Inclusion versus Exclusion: a Historical and Educational Approach to People with Disabilities

To better understand inclusive education in Brazil, it is necessary to first comprehend the historical process that inclusive education has undergone and the processes of excluding people with disabilities from society up to the present day. Therefore, this section discusses the historical context of people with disabilities, aiming for their inclusion in school education.

Throughout much of human history, individuals with disabilities (at times referred to as deformities) were punished, rejected by their families even as infants, and often sentenced to death. Castro (2009 p. 8, our translation) notes that "in ancient Rome, malformed babies were abandoned or drowned." It is worth remembering that, even in antiquity, the child was seen as a miniature adult, expected to take care of the household; domestic chores were assigned to girls, while manual labor was directed to boys. Thus, in ancient civilizations, individuals were envisioned as "healthy" to fulfill the societal ideal of the subject (man and woman) conceived for the social development of that time (Castro, 2009).

During this time, prejudice against people with disabilities has always been present in our society and social interaction. Unfortunately, such prejudice is still evident today. In the

21st century, discrimination against those who deviate from socially imposed standards still persists. However, according to Castro (2009), this aspect is a cultural inheritance from other times, such as ancient civilizations, when there was a division regarding what was considered suitable for children, adults, men, and women. Castro (2009) further elaborates:

> Plato considered that the only virtue of children seems to be the fact that they are 'easily molded,' that is, they can be turned into adults. Despite this sentiment towards the child, Plato argued that education should be public, where boys and girls received equal instruction (Castro, 2009, p. 9, our translation).

It was only in the 18th century that society began to gradually separate children from adults, with the emergence of schools. However, due to poverty, schools were not accessible to all, and girls were not allowed to study; they were expected to take care of the household and dedicate themselves to domestic labor, and in some contexts, depending on existing cultural practices, prepare for marriage.

In this discussion, it is important to note that marginalization was not only based on social classes or specific groups; anyone with any kind of "deformity" (understood as a disability) was also prohibited from studying. If they had survived the sacrifices imposed by the laws of the time, they would be removed from society and taken to asylums or forced to live isolated from others.

> The Hebrew people also had the biblical view that disability was a sign of impurity and a representation of sin, whether committed by the individuals themselves or even by their parents. Among the Roman people, drastic measures were taken against individuals with disabilities (Castro, 2009, p. 9, our translation).

Overall, people were expected to live according to what society determined for that civilization. Individuals with disabilities who survived faced prejudice and exclusion from the social environment in which they lived. A historical approach easily reveals the inhumane and cruel conditions in which people with disabilities found themselves. However, for the time, all rejection, malice, and discrimination were commonplace. Each context had its laws, and often, the social conditions for people with disabilities were deplorable. In some societies, according to Castro (2009), religion perceived people with disabilities as something terrible, resulting from "sin" or "divine punishment."

In this regard, those who were not considered "normal" suffered abandonment, with death being the solution for a child born with any "deformity." Adults who, for some reason, did not die as children were clearly excluded from society, forced into humiliating roles such as "court jester" or relegated to working in circuses. People with disabilities could not study or work with dignity. Castro (2009, p. 11, out translation) further notes:

> Individuals with deafness were seen as uneducable or possessed by evil spirits. [...] it was only at the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the Renaissance that the perspective shifted from religious to rational, and disability began to be analyzed from a medical and scientific standpoint.

Throughout much of human history, religiosity or some form of belief that excluded and socially marginalized individuals with disabilities prevailed. As mentioned in Castro (2009), at the beginning of the Renaissance, disability began to be analyzed scientifically. However, only those from wealthy families could receive any kind of "treatment," aimed at repairing, when possible, the "disability." Meanwhile, those of humble origin were victims of various forms of exclusion. It is worth noting that the common treatment for people with intellectual disabilities, for example, was shock therapy (Castro, 2009). From what we can gather, people with disabilities spent centuries trying to be included in society, and due to a lack of knowledge, ignorance led to cruelty in the historical journey of individuals with disabilities.

We note that in addition to social exclusion, people with disabilities have suffered greatly over the years from rejection within their own homes and among their families. In the present moment, we still encounter much prejudice. Not long ago, we witnessed situations where people with disabilities were locked in isolated rooms of the house, separated by iron bars, among other realities.

We also emphasize that in the history of people with disabilities, there was a period of compassion, during which actions stemming from philanthropy and protection were present (Mazzotta; Sousa, 2000). In the study by Mazzotta and Sousa (2000), it is highlighted that this period was crucial for the demands of individuals with disabilities for their rights to gain prominence. Thus, gradually, inclusion began to emerge and was more strongly perceived in the social context.

According to Mazzotta and Sousa (2000), assuming the perspective of social inclusion presupposes the recognition of exclusion. To assume this role, it was necessary to acknowledge the constant wrongdoing towards people with disabilities, namely their social exclusion,

something still recent in the history of inclusion in the country. In Brazil, we only have the first Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education, and we have an official legal provision that clearly directs education for people with disabilities. However, such provision was made from the perspective of integration, which, according to Mantoan (2003) and Castro (2009), is not the same as inclusion. Let us see what Castro (2009) says:

> In 1961, in Brazil, with the ratification of Law No. 4,024/61 on Guidelines and Bases, the education of people with disabilities began to be integrated into the regular education system. However, Law No. 4,024/61 stated in Article 88 that this integration could only occur when feasible. In this sense, it can be understood that special education remained on the sidelines of the school system (Castro, 2009, p. 11, our translation).

We understand that people with disabilities were banished and socially excluded for much of history. In ancient civilizations, they were abandoned and killed when they were still babies. In medieval civilizations, disability was seen as something evil associated with sin and divine punishment. At the beginning of the Renaissance, disability was conceived as an illness, and the possible treatments, depending on the type of disability, were torture. Thus, we highlight that in the arduous journey toward the inclusion of people with disabilities, much suffering was consolidated. Castro (2009) provides a synthesis of the process of inclusion of people with disabilities:

> In Brazil, the inclusion of people with disabilities in history, in a concrete way, occurred when Dom Pedro II ordered the construction of the Imperial Institute for Blind Children on September 12, 1854, which later changed its name to the Benjamin Constant Institute (IBC), serving blind people for over 150 years. It was also Dom Pedro II who paid attention to the deaf-mute, through the Institute for the Deaf-Mute in 1857 (Castro, 2009, p. 13, our translation).

With the emergence of laws that ensured social rights for people with disabilities, we were able to reduce their exclusion, aiming to include them in schools on a regular basis. As we know, education is the right of all, regardless of their biopsychosocial condition. It is worth clarifying that inclusive education, or inclusive teaching, occurs in schools because today, we have the modality of special education in formal education institutions that truly aim to promote inclusion. Mazzotta and Sousa (2009, p. 39, our translation) state:

> Special Education is a set of resources and special educational services organized to support, supplement, and in some cases, replace common

educational services, to ensure formal Education for learners who have educational needs very different from the majority of children and youth.

With the emergence of Special Education in school spaces through special classrooms and resources that teachers can use in regular teaching, we can indeed perceive the materialization of Inclusive Education and inclusive teaching in the country. An important point to highlight is that teachers need continuous qualifications to work with students with disabilities in order to meet the reality of the community and the specificity of the person with disabilities. Students with disabilities cannot just be placed in classrooms. Inclusion must happen.

Over the years, we have managed to advance with inclusive activities and pedagogical actions in schools and regular classrooms. However, we assert that inclusion's responsibility should not be solely on the school. Respect should begin within our homes and extend to the doors of educational institutions. In school, individuals develop and engage more intensely in society, learning new values in addition to the knowledge accumulated by humanity. In order to ensure this for people with disabilities, educational institutions must ensure accessibility, encourage student autonomy, strive for better teaching quality, and guide students always to seek the best path, which is education (Mantoan, 2003). In this perspective, the educational system as a whole bears weight and participation.

In conclusion, we emphasize that inclusion is about acceptance and recognizing others in their plurality. Despite the barriers created, it is necessary to seek means to break down these barriers, for example, by learning Brazilian Sign Language (LIBRAS) to communicate with deaf people, understanding intellectual disability, physical disability, among others. It is through building knowledge that we can include ourselves and also promote inclusion in the lives of people with disabilities.

English Language Teaching in Public Schools

English is the most widely "spoken" language in the world. Its importance is increasingly evident in countries where it is not the native language, especially amid the process of globalization. Learning English is crucial not only for communication with native speakers but also for the personal and cultural development of each individual, representing a significant advantage in the job market. It is important to note that learning the English language goes beyond the walls of the school classroom.

Rajagopalan (2014, p. 76, our translation) states:

> The English language has become a 'lingua mundi' or what I prefer to call 'World English'. [...] It is a 'novi-language' in the full sense of the term popularized by George Orwell. It has already escaped the hands of the English, the Americans, the Australians, the New Zealanders, [...] all those who until recently were considered owners of the language.

English is everywhere, with terms from the language easily encountered, and for it to be increasingly integrated into daily life and taught in schools, there needs to be more relevance given to the English language discipline in the school curriculum. As we know, public schools face challenges, and the role of the English teacher is to educate students to be citizens capable of dealing with all forms of English (Rajagopalan, 2009). Despite the complexity of the school curriculum, there are arguments in favor of greater dedication to English language teaching in schools, surpassing the currently established 100 annual class hours. Offering only two classes per week may not provide students with advanced language proficiency.

English as the predominant language internationally is present in digital technologies, serving as an ally in English language classes and facilitating student learning. After all, young people are increasingly immersed in a multi/intercultural dimension. In this sense, we consider:

> […] focusing on the issue of cultural plurality represented by countries that use English as the official language. In addition, of course, to the educational motivation implicit in this historical-social perception of the English language, it is also a means of focusing on socio-political issues, which must be considered in the process of teaching and learning a foreign language (Brasil, 1998, p. 49, our translation).

The discipline of the English language was introduced into the curriculum of public schools during the period of 1809, initiated by Dom João VI. However, the teaching of English was relegated to a secondary position compared to the prioritized teaching of the French language. These two foreign languages, English and French, were the two languages taught in the 19th century in Brazil, alongside Portuguese, due to the commercial relations that existed with France. Consequently, due to the demand in the job market, the first English teachers began to emerge during this period.

Often, students leave primary education with minimal linguistic competence that does not allow them to engage in short dialogues or to comprehend/elaborate small texts in English,

among other deficits in learning the English language. As a positive point, digital technologies are starting to change this scenario a bit, allowing oral contact with native speakers.

It is worth noting the lack of theoretical and practical reflections on school assessment of students with disabilities, in the context of English language teaching. To work with the English language in the school curriculum, it is essential to consider the methodological dimension. In these terms, we emphasize the need to understand pedagogical methods in English language teaching. According to Vilaça (2008), the concept of the pedagogical method is related to stages that must be followed and the necessary paths aimed at achieving objectives and results. We start from the idea of pedagogical principles that the teacher relies on to guide the student to a new language in school.

There are several pedagogical methods for teaching English, and we will highlight some that have been widely used over time in English language teaching in Brazil. Let's see: Grammar Translation, Direct Method, Audiolingual Method, Total Physical Response (TPR), and Community Language Learning. An archaic method used for many years was the "Grammar Translation" method, which is still used today by many teachers. In this method, the focus of teaching and learning revolves around the translation of literary texts, as the method is used to assist students in reading these texts in a foreign language. Initially, there was no focus on oral skills.

Unlike "Grammar Translation," the second method corresponds to the "Direct Method." With this method, classes are conducted in the target language, with various conversation exercises, completely disregarding the native language. According to Celce-Murcia (2001, p. 30, our translation),

> With the direct method, although the teacher directs the activities, the student has a more active role in their learning than in the traditional method. Teachers and students are partners in interaction, and teachers assist language learners in self-correction, usually presenting the student's incorrect option and the correct one in the form of a question.

The "Audiolingual Method" focuses on the development of oral skills, with an emphasis on listening and speaking, only later addressing reading and writing. It is based on the principle that language acquisition comes through repetition and memorization. The goal is to make the student fluent in the language, prioritizing oral communication.

> In the behaviorist psychology of Skinner (1957) and Pavlov (1927), the Audiolingual Method places the teacher at the center of the process, directing and controlling the linguistic behavior of the student. The teacher serves as the model of linguistic usage that language learners imitate. Thus, the teacher is like the conductor of an orchestra: leading, guiding, and controlling the performance of their students (Celce-Murcia, 2001, p. 37, our translation).

On the other hand, with the *Total Physical Response* (TPR) pedagogical method, students are instructed to follow the teacher's commands, using bodily movements to experience language teaching. They repeat words while mimicking along with the teacher. Then, the teacher repeats the words with the students, making gestures individually or as a group. Subsequently, students repeat the words without the presence of the teacher, either individually or as a group (Oliveira, 2014).

With the Community Language Learning method, the teacher encourages students in conversation, allowing autonomy in task completion. Many students may feel apprehensive or embarrassed about not understanding the language being studied, but with this pedagogical method, the focus is on communication, and errors are seen as a natural part of the learning process. Oliveira (2014, p. 15, our translation) further elaborates on the discussed method:

> Competency-based language teaching has methodological characteristics that emphasize successful student functioning in society - focusing on the linguistic forms required by the situations they live in and teaching centered on performance or tasks, thus highlighting behaviors. This method modularizes objectives, explicitly stating, *a priori*, the outcomes (specified in terms of expected behaviors and continuous assessment), disregarding the process.

The English language discipline is introduced into the school curriculum only from the 6th grade of Elementary School in public schools. Students face difficulties in understanding a new language, unlike students in private schools, where the study of English begins as early as Preschool. There is a clear disadvantage when comparing the introduction of English language teaching between private and public schools.

In this context, there is a need to mitigate the existing gaps in society regarding English language teaching. In this sense, the role of the teacher in the teaching and learning process assumes increasing importance, focusing on promoting meaningful learning and stimulating creativity, regardless of the presence of any disabilities among the students. This aims to ensure that students with disabilities do not feel excluded during classes.

We remember that, depending on the school, when there is no trained teacher in the field, another teacher trained in another area works on the English language curriculum. Regarding the teaching of the English language, it is worth questioning: how do students learn English, considering the reality described above?

We need to change the still entrenched mindset in schools that English can be taught in any way. It is a universal language, important to learn, just like any other subject in the school curriculum. To achieve this, it is necessary to transform pedagogical practices in classrooms, developing more interactive lessons and group activities involving all students, including students with disabilities. This way, everyone learns together. Sometimes, it is necessary to move away from the textbook and listen to the students; it is essential to be a humane teacher. Oliveira (2014) completes:

> [...] the teacher does not teach grammar just to teach grammar, but rather to help the student develop their communicative competence, their ability to perform linguistic functions such as persuading, informing, motivating, and inviting. Grammar is an important means, but only a means to achieve communicative ends (Oliveira, 2014, p. 151, our translation).

Knowing that the English language discipline is relevant in the school curriculum, it is necessary to give it more importance than we usually do. All students are capable of learning a new language. There are four skills that can be explored in English language teaching classrooms: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

We know that there is a growing concern about English language teaching, evidenced by the increasing availability of language courses, which have been growing over the years. Therefore, the importance of teaching English in public schools is emphasized. In the context of globalization, the English language assumes an extremely relevant role. It is considered a universal language and is present in almost everything. In the digital age, it is increasingly present in videos, movies, series, games, and electronic devices, among others. English is part of our lives. It is necessary to emphasize the teaching of this language to all Brazilians. People with disabilities also have the right to learn it.

Inclusion in the Classroom: (Auto) Biographical Narratives of English Language Teachers

Biographical research allows study participants to record their experiences, considering what has been formative and remarkable in terms of lived experience (Delory-Momberger, 2008; Josso, 2010; Cordeiro, Rocha, Silva, 2021). In this research, we understand that teachers recorded, through their (auto) biographical narratives, their experiences in inclusive English language teaching, from the perspective of what they conceive as reference for thinking about the promotion of inclusion in the classroom, with their pedagogical practices.

Once again, we clarify that the research unfolded in two stages. In this text, we refer to the stage focused on inclusive English language teaching. In this stage, as we conducted reflective interviews with the teachers, we anchored ourselves in six questions, which were discussed with the teachers at each moment. From now on, we will focus on understanding their (auto) biographical narratives, analyzing the questions and what we were able to grasp about them.

We inform that in the process of data production, in dialogues with the teachers, we referred to them as the narrative teacher and the narrative teacher, aiming to protect their authorial identity. We emphasize that they authorized recording their (auto) biographical narratives and participation in the study through the Informed Consent Form (ICF).

As the initial question that comprised the moment, we asked the two English language teachers about their initial experiences with students with disabilities. Among them, they emphasized:

> Working with a foreign language is really cool, you can develop at least four skills with the students: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. What we call reading, writing, listening, and speaking. I find it more challenging, for me, nowadays, it's with the deaf student. I can't work on the oral part with him. So, my knowledge, today, leaves me to work on reading and writing. [...] The students love it when I bring music, and then I bring a beautiful song. In that specific classroom, there was a deaf student. So, that day, it hurt me a lot, because all the children were loving the class with that music, she was completely aloof[4] (Narrative Teacher, Caraúbas – RN, 2022, our translation).

> Due to their concentration, it is quite difficult to teach English to these students [with special educational needs[5]]. Sometimes, we need to be someone they

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[4] We preserved the (auto)biographical narratives of the teachers during the transcription of their records, with minor linguistic revisions, aiming to comply with the standard Portuguese language norm.

[5] At this point, the Narrative Teacher referred not only to students with disabilities but to all students with special educational needs.

> really like and not just someone there to teach; it is very important to captivate them. I once had a student with Down syndrome, who had no support at all. It's very sad, but unfortunately, she left school without knowing how to read, not even her name, she knew it well, but we noticed the lack of support. And the system progresses (Narrative Teacher, Caraúbas – RN, 2022, our translation).

According to Bondía (2002), experience is not only what happens to us. It is, above all, what happens and touches us, transforming us (the subject of the experience). As we noticed in their statements, the narrative teachers mentioned their challenges in teaching English to students with disabilities in the initial moments of their teaching trajectory. In terms of experience, the challenges are present in English language teaching that seeks to promote inclusion.

The Narrative Teacher referenced the difficulty of using activities focused on teaching orality with deaf students (one of the four skills considered for English language teaching, in general), but highlighted the possibility of other activities that can replace oral practice in English language classes with students with disabilities, such as reading and writing practices. We share the thinking of Kupske (2018, p. 104-105, our translation): "when faced with deaf students, the English language teacher should address the importance of English in the international scenario, as well as analyze writing and reading skills in L2, in order to proceed with their didactic planning".

The Narrative Teacher described the challenge of teaching students with special educational needs, highlighting the lack of concentration of some students during classes. However, she emphasized that, from her first experience with a student with Down syndrome, she realized that developing captivating moments made the classes more engaging. This approach is aligned with the ideas of Mozer, Drago, and Dias (2021, p. 08, our translation) regarding pedagogical practice in English language teaching for students with disabilities: "The teacher must always stay updated and seek new teaching methodologies, put their creativity into practice, develop dynamic and attractive lessons, enhance their knowledge, innovate their pedagogical practices [...]". Making English language teaching attractive will certainly contribute to making it inclusive as well.

Next, we asked the teachers to describe pedagogical practices in English language teaching with students with disabilities, validating their realities at the moment. They narrated:

> In pedagogical practices, we now try to know the student better. I used to focus a lot on the disability, on the training about the disability. I won't say it was

> useless knowledge. Quite the contrary, it's important to know about that situation, but now I'm trying to know more about the student (Narrative Teacher, Caraúbas – RN, 2022, our translation).

> I learned a lot when I was in the Pedagogical Residency Program[6]. The residents brought new things, and I started to adopt them in my classes, always innovating in playful activities for students with disabilities [...]. Since the year I started teaching until today, I try to improve. I confess I am still very flawed, but I try to seek new things for the classroom, not to be stuck to the book. I like to work with music with them (Narrative Teacher, Caraúbas – RN, 2022, our translation).

The Narrative Teacher emphasized the importance of training focused on the inclusion of students with disabilities in the educational context. He highlighted that seeking continuous education is always valid, especially when it comes to training to work in the field of special education, which is often neglected in the official curriculum proposals of teaching degree courses (Medeiros; Dias; Olinda, 2020). It is relevant to produce knowledge about inclusive pedagogical practices, as well as to understand disabilities, among other issues. However, the aforementioned narrator delineated everyday experience with students with disabilities as fundamental to underpin and qualify his pedagogical practice in the context of inclusive English language teaching. It is on the school ground, primarily, that teachers, as Tardif (2011) states, become teachers.

The Narrative Teacher described the influence of the Pedagogical Residence Program in her classes, which added to the rethinking of her pedagogical practice, especially the methodological dimension, making it more attractive for her students with disabilities. The experience in the Pedagogical Residence Program awakened her teaching practice. Her narrative certifies the importance of initial teacher training programs in the public-school environment. Through the exchange of knowledge and experiences, teaching and learning make sense to those who experience them (Freire, 1996).

Once again, we present other narratives from the two teachers about pedagogical practices developed with students with disabilities. Let's read:

> Many times, we neglect, when we are planning. We are thinking about a collectivity, in that classroom, for those students. So, that student who deserves special attention, we forget. I improved in that, I was aware of this neglect (Narrative Teacher, Caraúbas – RN, 2022, our translation).

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[1] The Pedagogical Residence Program is an initial teacher training program managed by the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES), aimed at fostering the training of teachers in undergraduate courses through learning centered on experiences and activities in schools (Brasil, 2018).

> I have an activity that I use a lot in classes which are the flashcards that have illustrative images and you have to associate the word with that image. So, I use it with students with disabilities. I really like working with that. But it also depends on the audience we have at the moment, in each classroom (Narrative Teacher, Caraúbas – RN, 2022, our translation).

In relation to the pedagogical practices of English language teachers, we understand that they have evolved over the course of their experiences with students with disabilities. While the records may not encompass the entirety of teachers' daily experiences, they highlight inclusion as a continuous and contextual process based on each class and each curriculum content taught to students. Teachers' awareness of the need to innovate their pedagogical practices, their participation in training activities, and the development of new, especially dynamic methodologies are examples that can validate pedagogical practices in inclusive English language teaching in the investigated context.

In this perspective, we allude to the idea that "the common school becomes inclusive when it recognizes the differences of the students in the educational process and seeks the participation and progress of all, adopting new pedagogical practices," new paths arising from each reality (Ropoli; Mantoan; Santos, 2010, p. 09, our translation). Based on the (auto) biographical narratives of the teachers, we emphasize the continuous need to seek new devices and tools that enhance, daily, teaching work in the context of special education in the regular classroom.

As a follow-up question, we inquired about the main resources or didactic pedagogical materials they use to teach the English language to students with disabilities. In the same vein, we asked if these resources are adapted. They testified:

> I have my projector. I buy materials; I don't wait for the government to provide them. I invest in my work. By purchasing my tools, I save myself emotionally. I have less stress when there is good didactic material. Teachers spend a lot of time writing on the board; I just use slides. I save time. I am a lover of technology, information, and education. They love it when I bring something from their lives into the classroom, like the Free Fire game (Narrating Teacher, Caraúbas – RN, 2022, our translation).

> In terms of didactic material, students with special education needs do not use the textbook. It's more about elaborated activities; we have adapted resources that the AEE [Specialized Educational Assistance] teacher is always assisting us with. Assessments are also differentiated. As for other resources, I have my materials. I have a projector and a sound system. I use my resources in class (Narrating Teacher 02, Caraúbas – RN, 2022, our translation).

The use of technological resources is increasingly evident in schools. In both accounts, the teachers emphasized that they have started to adopt their material, such as their projectors. They highlighted the use of technological tools, which facilitate knowledge construction, reducing bureaucracy. They also pointed out that sometimes teachers try to bring something new to the classroom, but there is no material provided by the institutions. Due to English having a shorter class time as a curricular component in schools, time becomes valuable. All of this implies that teachers make their adaptations and bear part of their work's cost, according to Tardif and Lessard (2008).

Furthermore, in the dialogue with the Narrating Teacher, we identified that he uses virtual games in his classes, aiming to incorporate elements from the lives of students with disabilities, prioritizing the contextualization of the English language. We agree with Tardif and Lessard's assertion (2008, p. 49, our translation), once again when they argue: "Teaching is acting in the classroom and the school in the function of the learning and socialization of the students, acting on their capacity to learn, to educate and instruct them."

The Narrating Teacher also emphasized the partnership with the Specialized Educational Assistance (AEE) teacher, who assists with specific and adapted resources, contributing to fundamental activities for special education students.

Regarding the fourth question, we asked the teachers about the main challenges experienced in their pedagogical practice in inclusive education with students with disabilities, as well as what strategies they use to overcome them, whether they receive support from the school, and in what way. Let's explore their work realities:

> I'll be very direct. Many of our challenges are only resolved with money; there's a lot of talk and a lot of discussion. There's a lot of chatter, but what we really need in Inclusive Education, and not just in Inclusive Education, is money, investment for schools to be structured, and adapted technologies for that specific audience. So, there should be resources for the visually impaired student to have their reading instrument and resources for the hearing impaired students to have some kind of learning and reading channel. So, what is lacking is due to investment. And not only that, but more continuous training for teachers, because in our undergraduate studies, we do not receive proper training for this audience, indeed (Narrating Teacher, Caraúbas – RN, 2022, our translation).

> The challenges are these difficulties with families. Our [initial] training is very precarious, but the school, according to reality, has supported us. And the school is always helping us overcome these difficulties, even with words of encouragement or with some conversation between coordination and teachers,

> but I believe that to overcome them, it would be with proper training [since undergraduate studies] (Narrating Teacher, Caraúbas – RN, 2022).

The narratives of the two teachers delineate similar scenarios. The first concerns the lack of adequate investment in Special Education in public schools. Even though Brazil's National Policy for Special Education has advanced in recent decades, within the school context, such a policy has not been able to meet the specificity of each reality, either due to financial management issues or due to reasons confined to the schools themselves. This aspect resonates with Mainardes (2006), who points out that no policy is implemented as we see it on paper, in decrees, guidelines, etc. Educational policy is interpreted and materialized according to the conditions of each reality. Schools, school management, teachers, and the school community, in general, create policies locally and in the micro-social context.

The second aspect we perceive in the narratives is the lack of initial training for work in Special Education. In specific undergraduate courses in Brazil, according to Medeiros, Dias, and Olinda (2020), the bachelor's training model predominated, focused on the curriculum content of the subjects to be taught by teachers in Basic Education. The absence of training in education itself and educational knowledge became evident. In the narratives of the two teachers, initial training presents itself as a challenge in pedagogical practice. Additionally, emphasized by the Narrating Teacher, is the need for greater dialogue and involvement of the families of students with disabilities in schools.

Regarding the fifth question, we asked the teachers to describe the main teaching methodologies promoted in English language classes with students with disabilities, which are often part of their daily educational planning. The teachers briefly dialogued:

> [...] I like to do group activities, use games collectively. That way, everyone can participate (Narrating Teacher, Caraúbas – RN, 2022, our translation).

> I use differentiated activities with students, Flash Cards. I also do group activities, use music, and ensure that everyone can participate in the class. More of that! (Narrating Teacher, Caraúbas – RN, 2022, our translation).

In our interpretation, developing activities that can be carried out collectively strengthens the bonds between students and also stimulates motivation to learn. It is known that, in many places, the reality of public education in Brazil is characterized by an educational system with overcrowded classrooms. When the teacher develops collaborative work, students help each other. As Tardif and Lessard (2008, p. 75, our translation) state: "School teaching is

a collective work that takes place over several years and involves various teachers who take turns to carry out an educational action on students."

In general terms, it is observed in the narratives presented above that both teachers seek to develop group activities with the aim of creating more interactive moments in the classroom, aiming for inclusion. Despite working in different schools, the teachers employ similar teaching methodologies, promoting inclusive education for students with disabilities.

The last question discussed with the two English language teachers addressed how learning assessment occurs in English language teaching with students with disabilities. Their reports are described below.

> Assessment has been my greatest challenge as a teacher [in general]. I always felt like I was being unfair, enslaving my students and leaving them at the mercy of the system. Students are required to take many tests, many exams, because outside, these are the instruments that will evaluate them, like the ENEM [National High School Exam], like the IF [Federal Institute of Education, Science, and Technology]. All of this is very traditional, to a certain extent. So, they have to develop reading and writing skills. [...] the system requires that the student be prepared to face the ENEM. So, I have to do that. I am trying my best to gradually remove the summative aspect of these tests. [...] Sometimes, I assign a lot of projects and continuous assessments (Narrating Teacher, Caraúbas – RN, 2022, our translation).

> For my assessments, I do assignments and tests. But, for students with special needs, we do some continuous tasks, with slightly lower levels than the rest of the class. English colors, numbers. Fun activities, also coloring, with illustrative images to identify the word with the drawing. Together with the accompanying teacher, we will try to prepare a test for that student (Narrating Teacher, Caraúbas – RN, 2022, our translation).

The practice of assessment has been a historical dilemma in education. Assessing is a complex pedagogical activity (Luckesi, 1999). When assessment is directed at a student with a disability, it becomes even more challenging, as narrated by the Narrating Teacher. The educational system, associated with large-scale assessments, of a mercantile, summative, and classificatory nature, demands a preparation aimed at the assessment tests of the ENEM and other instances. In terms of the English language, a student with a disability who lacks speaking skills will likely not succeed, following the mercantile logic, in a multiple-choice test that requires reading and writing skills. In this context, we understand that the assessment of students with disabilities should primarily consider their human uniqueness. This is the starting and ending point of assessing the learning of students with disabilities.

The Narrating Teacher explained that in her assessments, the content is adapted to meet the students' learning levels and individual conditions. She exemplified this with the work done with colors and numbers. There is recognition of various pedagogical resources available to be used with students with disabilities, which can serve as assessment tools. The teacher also highlighted her efforts to partner with the teacher from the Specialized Educational Assistance Service (AEE). It is relevant to observe the joint work for the benefit of students with disabilities. The classroom should not be seen as an exclusive space of the teacher, but rather as a collective environment with the main purpose of promoting the integral and humanistic formation of individuals (Medeiros, Fortunato, Araújo, 2022).

Final considerations

As we conclude this text, we summarize some considerations arising from the study's development. We recall that the research aimed to think, through (auto) biographical narratives of teachers, about pedagogical practices of the English language developed with students with disabilities in public schools in the Municipality of Caraúbas (RN). In this sense, our considerations are directed toward teaching English language to students with disabilities.

Firstly, we understand that the narrating teachers emphasized that inclusive English language teaching is not carried out in isolation from work in the public school as a whole. For inclusion to be effective, there needs to be dialogue and collaborative actions among teachers, the pedagogical team, AEE professionals, and the students' families. Additionally, there is a demand for continuous training regarding the promotion of education with students with disabilities.

In the classroom, teachers highlighted collective activities, as well as the contextualization of curricular content, as indispensable elements for the inclusive teaching of English language to students. They emphasized the importance of daily lesson planning to meet the individual specificities of each student, considering that each disability and each student presents particular demands.

We conclude by alerting to the main challenges that arise in the pedagogical practices of teachers, as evidenced in their (auto) biographical narratives, especially the lack of investment that meets the contextual demands of each school, classroom, curricular content, and student with disabilities. Nevertheless, the commitment of teachers to classroom work

focused on inclusion is observed. Their (auto) biographical narratives are educational and formative.

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