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ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDENTS' TALES OF THEIR LANGUAGE LEARNING

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To all my lovely family.

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ABSTRACT

EFL STUDENTS' TALES OF THEIR LANGUAGE LEARNING

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2011

Supervising Professor: Gloria Gil

Bearing in mind the recent research concern with individual lives, this study reports a biographical investigation of sixteen tertiary English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students from the state of Rio Grande do Norte/Brazil. The research study aims at capturing the specificities and complexities in the developmental processes of two groups – eight undergraduates and eight graduates – of EFL students' language learning approaches, in an attempt to understand (a) how they conceive their own English learning as well as (b) how they view themselves as English students. Both groups voiced their past English learning experiences in different settings through semi-structured interviews. Students' biographical accounts were organized into learning stories and analyzed through a narrative approach. Their accounts revealed that students' adopted learning approaches are particularly influenced by the impact of the different learning settings to which they have been exposed throughout their educational process. The research results indicate that the two sets of learning approaches seem to be highly concerned with (a) teacher-as-a-transmitter; (b) job-orientedness; (c) self-reliance; and (d) English-course-orientedness in the undergraduate group; and (e) book-centeredness; (f) self-effort; (g) teacher-reliance; and (h) reticence in the graduate group. The results also suggest that these approaches are flexible, fluid and subject to constant shifts, thus being capable to interweave among themselves.

RESUMO

CONTOS DE ALUNOS DE INGLÊS SOBRE SUAS APRENDIZAGENS

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2011

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Considerando pesquisas recentes que se preocupam com o estudo do indivíduo, este estudo relata uma investigação biográfica de dezesseis alunos universitários de Inglês do estado do Rio Grande do Norte/Brasil. O estudo objetiva capturar as especificidades e complexidades nos processos desenvolvimentais de dois grupos de alunos de Inglês como língua estrangeira: oito alunos de graduação e oito de especialização. Assim, a pesquisa tem o intuito de compreender (a) como esses alunos concebem suas próprias aprendizagens de Inglês e (b) como eles vêem a si próprios enquanto alunos de Inglês. Os dois grupos de alunos verbalizaram, por meio de entrevistas semi-estruturadas, suas experiências passadas com a aprendizagem de Inglês em diferentes contextos. A biografia dos alunos foi organizada em estórias de aprendizagem e analisadas sob uma abordagem narrativa. Essas biografias revelaram que as abordagens de aprendizagem adotadas pelos alunos são particularmente influenciadas pelo impacto dos diferentes contextos de aprendizagem sob os quais eles estiveram expostos durante o processo educacional. Os resultados da pesquisa indicam que os dois grupos de abordagens parecem estar altamente vinculados ao (a) professor-transmissor; (b) orientação para o trabalho; (c) auto-dependência; e (d) orientação para cursos de Inglês no grupo da graduação; e (e) centralização no livro; (f) auto-esforço; (g) dependência no professor; e (h) passividade no grupo da especialização. Os resultados também sugerem que essas abordagens são flexíveis, fluidas e sujeitas a mudanças constantes, e que, portanto, são capazes de se entrelaçarem uma com as outras.

Número de páginas: 176
Número de palavras: 23.876

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Recent studies on EFL students' learning approaches[1] have shown the usefulness in contrasting sets of different learning approaches (e.g. Miccoli, 2001; Gao, 2005; Paiva & Braga, 2008; Paiva, 2007; Kanno & Norton, 2003; Norton & Toohay, 2001). These studies have produced interesting and cogent findings concerning the ways students conceive their foreign language learning as well as the way they view themselves. Gao's (2005) biographical inquiry of two tertiary English students, for instance, has found that they are extremely exam-oriented in their learning approaches; while Miccoli's (2001) study of the learning experiences of two learners has pointed out the presence and the absence of a clear motive to learn English in their learning approaches.

Thus, as some of these studies have suggested and also to have a clear picture of EFL students' learning approaches, it becomes crucial to listen to students' stories of their own language leaning since the moment they begin the formal study of English. It is believed that the particular way they experience certain learning complexities as well as face some challenges in school life is a major component to comprehend the dynamics of foreign language learning processes. In this way, new research trends welcome studies that reveal particular learning approaches of those students involved in the learning of a foreign language, especially because these approaches can provide relevant data for a better understanding of how a foreign language can be learned.

Life stories, however, have not been a tradition within the field of Applied Linguistics, and so few studies have been conducted on students' own stories of learning a language, especially in the Brazilian scenario. On the other hand, they have proven to be effective in capturing students' developmental processes of learning English; and this kind of research has significantly increased since the last two decades. According to Roberts (2002), "life stories commonly refer to

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[1] The definition of *learning approach* in this study has been adapted from Biggs (1993, cited in Benson & Lor, 1999, p. 461): students' predispositions to adopt particular developmental processes to learn English across differente educational settings in Rio Grande do Norte.

'real' events and experiences – and often the tellers may be the only witnesses to such happenings" (p. 08). Thus, in this investigation, stories serve as both the object and method of study (Telles, 1999), in an attempt or meet the objectives which are presented in the following section.

1.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objective of this study is to capture the specificities and complexities in the developmental processes of two groups of EFL students' language learning approaches. In light of such intent, the investigation seeks to understand the following:

1. What are some of the significant learning approaches of the EFL undergraduates being studied?

2. What are some of the significant learning approaches of the EFL graduates being studied?

Hence, I should observe that it is not my intention here to question the local institutions' efficiency and effectiveness in terms of the teaching and/or learning of English. Indeed, as some of the studies cited above have suggested, students can (or cannot) learn albeit the institution's learning context. Rather, what I am interested in here is on the drawing of a vivid picture of how EFL students approach their own language learning as well as on how this drawing can provide a picture of some of the students' representations of their own language learning.

1.3 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Considering such intent, it is with caution and yet determination that I set out to face this challenge. Assuming that this study underwent several changes since its beginning, including changes in its main focus, it is relevant to mention some of the factors which led me to design a research study investigating EFL students' learning approaches. First of all, in the last years I have thoroughly reflected on the process of EFL students' own learning, and this has brought to me intriguing points such as how a foreign language can be learned as well as how this learning is best articulated by those who experience it. Thus, I felt that it was necessary to listen to those involved in EFL learning.

At the same time, however, I felt that by going back to my own experiences of English learning and the trajectories I have been through to learn this language, I could perhaps be provided with a general portrait of the scenario under which most EFL students transit in order

to learn this language. Thus, my own learning story would be, in some way, interwoven with those of the students'.

According to Roberts (2002), it is important for the researcher to incorporate his/her own experiences in the research report, especially because in telling others' stories, the researcher also tells his/her own tale. Besides the fact that they socially interact when listening to students' own learning stories, researchers inevitably recognize their own experiences. In fact, some researchers have acknowledged the importance of telling their own autobiographical learning narratives[2] in the research report. Lin et al. (2002), for instance, included their own accounts of English learning in EFL settings. They write about their own tensions and significant events during their English learning development. In this light, Roberts (2002) states:

> To place the researcher fully within the research is to recognize that **we all have stories** [emphasis added] and it seems a fundamental part of social interaction to 'tell our tales'. In the collection of stories (via interviews), interaction is not only helping individuals to reflect and give form and structure to their lives (in the interview situation) but also helping researchers to begin to draw on their own experiences. (p. 13)

Thus, considering this recommendation, I will provide the reader with a brief account of my own language learning. The purpose, however, is not to present a detailed account of my experiences as a language student; rather, it is just a way to broaden the readers' view of the context under investigation, as it can enable them to paint a rich picture of the research participants.

1.3.1 Researcher's learning story

The way my own learning story is organized here is basically the same as the participants' of this research. That is, our stories are presented considering our experiences in primary and secondary school, as well as those in college.

> My name is Cleiton. I was born in Açu, Rio Grande do Norte in 1985. Açu is not a big city,

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[2] Due to the proximity of the definitions to *narrative* and *story* in the literature, in this study, the terms will be used interchangeably.

but it is the major city in the so-called *Vale do Açu*, which is surrounded by other smaller cities. Since my parents work all day long, my older sister was the one who took care of the house and prepared things for us to go to school. I do not remember much about my school years, except that it was nice to get good marks in most of the disciplines. I was 11 when I entered the second part of primary school, this was a hard time for me because it was a higher level and I had to study hard. It was in the fifth grade of primary school that I had my first contact with the English language. And it was, in fact, difficult for me. I had some difficulties in moving on to the subsequent grade, but with my own efforts and the strength of my parents, I succeed. From that moment on, I devoted much more attention to the language, and it was not only in order to get the required marks and move to the next grade, but because I ended up particularly enjoying the language itself. When I finished primary school, because my parents liked the school where I studied, they decided that I would continue my secondary education there, in the same school. I was 15 then and felt happy for having succeeded in the lower level and attending a higher level of education, that is, secondary school. That was a nice time, I could go out and have fun with friends, but always studying hard. I have always enjoyed my studies, especially history, geography and English. Through my own effort and with the help of some teachers, I had a certain confidence to go to university. In the end of 2002, I applied for the *Vestibular*, an entrance examination which students are required to take when they finish secondary school in order to enter university programs. Although I was eager to know the results of the examination, I had a lot of expectations to enter the university. Fortunately, I was successful in the *Vestibular* and, in 2003, I started my undergraduate course (*Curso de Letras/Inglês*). I was very happy for that, especially when my parents and my friends came to congratulate me, and because I liked English very much. I can undoubtedly say that it was a

landmark in my life. However, I knew that together with the excitement for having passed *Vestibular*, I was aware of the responsibility which I had to take. I felt nervous in my first semester of *Curso de Letras*, and the reason for that was a lack of command in English. The first class of the first semester was an English class and the teacher spoke only English in the class. It was very impressive for me. And also very difficult to understand the teacher; when the class ended I was aware of if I wanted to succeed in the academic life, I had to attend an extra course; and this is exactly what I did in the subsequent day. I started university believing that the program would provide me with much exposure to English and that I would learn English there. I was wrong! Even though the classes were in English, I only had one discipline of English, which provided me with just four hours a week of practice in English. I used to say things like: if I did *Letras/Inglês*, I want more disciplines in English. However, because I was attending a private course, which provided me with much more exposure to English than the university classes and also because I was still very excited for being in a tertiary level, I did not complain very much. I saw myself as a learner and my primary purpose was to learn English. One of the things I feel it is important in my process of learning English is that this language provided me with a certain degree of freedom to, little by little, advance even beyond my own learning expectations. Since I was a learner and thus there were not all the duties that adulthood requires, I would say that English broadened my views in terms of what I envisaged for the future. This language was, in my view, the language through which I could expand myself: who I was then and who I wanted to be one day. This happened from the very beginning of the program until the second year of the program. However, in the end of 2003, I started working in a store. Again, I was happy, but I felt I was becoming an adult: studying in a university, working, having plans for the future, and – I would say – with responsibility. Sometimes I wondered if all these

things were not happening too fast in my life. I did not know the answer, but I was enjoying it a lot. In the third year of the program, I started to attend the practicum; it was a new experience for me. I had never been in a classroom as a teacher before. It was a challenge for me, but I started to conceive me as a teacher and I ended up very interested in becoming a teacher. Actually, I became a teacher of English: a year before I graduated in the program, I had my first job as a teacher. It was a temporary teaching in a school (only two months), but I enjoyed the contact with "my students". It was in the last semester of the university that I consolidated my intentions of becoming a teacher. I started to teach English in a neighboring city and spent three years teaching there. However, I had always felt the desire to continue my studies at postgraduate programs; and I had this idea fixed in my mind. Thus, in the end of 2009, I decided to apply for a Master program in a university in the south of Brazil (*Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina-UFSC*). The fact that the MA program is in English could have, perhaps, contributed to my decision. I passed the selection and, in 2010, I moved to Florianopolis. It has been a great experience in my academic, personal and professional life. I want to be a teacher-researcher of my own classroom and contribute to the education in my region.

These experiences have certainly been influential in my critical reflection concerning EFL students' own language learning. In addition to this critical reflection, the need for research focusing on foreign language students' learning stories and the paths students usually choose to follow in life stood for me as the motivating factor for this study. Therefore, the proposed study is conceived as a response to this need.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Taking into account the growing interest in studies focusing on the individual, this study should bring insights into the way EFL students conceive the developmental processes of their own language learning in different educational settings across Rio Grande do Norte. The study is also significant as there is no previous study on the issue of students' learning approaches in the perspective proposed here, especially in the northeast part of Brazil. Also, the study could bring insights into the processes EFL students usually go through to learn English, which are made explicit mainly through their own narratives.

1.5 ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

This thesis is organized into five chapters. Chapter I provides an introduction to the problem investigated, followed by the objectives, background and the significance of the study. Chapter II reviews the literature on the concepts of modernity and identity, students' representations and their learning approaches, as well as on biographical research. Chapter III presents the method and the design of the study by introducing the context in which the study took place, and the participants and procedures used for data collection and analysis. Chapter IV deals with data analysis and discussion of the results. And finally, Chapter V leads to a summary of the study, its findings and limitations, as well as the pedagogical implications and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents an integrated perspective on the theoretical rationale underlying this study. More specifically, it discusses four main themes: late modernity and identity, a brief overview of representation, learning approaches and representation, as well as biographical research and learning approaches.

2.2 LATE MODERNITY AND IDENTITY

The study of the relationship between the individual and the social has strongly increased during the past decade; and it has often been conceived in the context of late modernity. This term was coined by Giddens (1991) to mean the time in which modern institutions, which presented some characteristics related to pre-modern cultures, faced an intense development:

> Modern institutions differ from all preceding forms of social order in respect of their dynamism, the degree to which they undercut traditional habits and customs and their global impact. However, these are not only extensional transformations: modernity radically alters the nature of day-to-day social life and affects the most personal aspects of our experience. Modernity must be understood on an institutional level; yet the transmutations introduced by modern institutions interlace in a direct way with individual life and therefore with the self. (p. 01)

According to Giddens (1991), modernity is characterized by a distinct feature, that is, an ever-increasing bonding between "globalizing influences" and "personal dispositions". In this light, individuals of modernity are exposed to a variety of interactional environments, and these different environments strongly exert control over them. Thus, the self is constantly subject to fragmentation, especially because

individuals are constantly required to exhibit different ways of acting in these environments.

By comparing modern individuals to those of the late modernity, Rustin (2000, cited in Benson & Nunan, 2005) drew on the work of Giddens (1991) to say that contemporary society demands a more flexible construction of the self, as he states:

> Social structures – classes, extended families, occupational communities, long-term employment within a firm – which formerly provided strong frames of identity, grow weaker. Simultaneously, societies expose individuals to bombardments of information, alternative versions of how life might be lived, and requires of individuals that they construct an "authentic" version of themselves, making use of numerous identity-props which consumer society makes available. (p. 33)

In addition to these concepts, the idea of *reflexivity* (Giddens, 1991) also emerges as a postmodern tendency, which, in turn, profoundly affects the self and individual modes of behaving and acting. The constant transitions of the social interactions from one context to another inevitably lead individuals to shift the ways of viewing and construing the self, which also provokes a shift in their identities.

The notion of institutional reflexivity is complemented by Giddens' (1991) when he argues that social life is profoundly affected by processes of reorganization of time and space and disembbeding[3] mechanisms. For him, the blending of these notions as well as that of institutional reflexivity contribute to the dynamism of the modern social life.

Among the important traits of late modernity, reflexivity appears to be a distinct one in the discussions of identity and brings several consequences for late modern individuals. Reflexivity refers to the new ways of viewing and thinking social life, new ways for the construction of knowledge; it is exactly through reflexivity that identities are formed. According to Giddens (1991), differently from traditional societies, post-modern individuals are afforded more opportunities, which include choosing their own way of living life, and opportunities to be inserted in the globalization.

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[3] Reorganization of time and space, disembbeding mechanisms and reflexivity are the three major components of late modernity proposed by Giddens (1991).

The notions of identity and the self proposed by Giddens (1991) are important for this study in the sense that the author places identity and the self as emerging in opposition to that generic self of earlier times, and the newer self presupposes a relative consciousness. The self, thus, is reflexively comprehended in terms of the individual's biography. In other words, the agent is the one who reflexively interpret the continuity supposed in the identity:

> In the post-traditional order of modernity, and against the backdrop of new forms of mediated experience, self-identity becomes a reflexively organized endeavour. The reflexive project of the self, which consists in the sustaining of coherent, yet continuously revised, **biographical narratives** [emphasis added], takes place in the context of multiple choice as filtered through abstract systems. (p. 05)

In light of this, the discussions regarding identity appear to have gained an extreme impetus in the field of Cultural Studies, especially from the 1960s on with proficuous writers such as Stuart Hall. Cultural Studies, thus, emerge as a response to structuralism with the central notion that social subjectivity should be given much more attention in the way this subjectivity is construed and "shaped by a constitutive process" (Hall, 1997). In this sense, culture should be formally studied as a field in which subjectivity is the primary concern. Subjectivity is understood by Hall (2006) in terms of identities, which in the past were fixed, stable and unchangeable. However, since changes occurred in the social world, these identities entered in crisis, and started to be conceived as fragmented and decentered. As a result, this process called the attention of researchers interested in a better understanding of the self in view of the social.

Another contribution regarding subjectivity and identity has been proposed by Norton (1995), who draws on her own data to define identity as multiple, a site of struggle and changing over time. The author also coined the term *investment*, instead of motivation, as an extension of the reconceptualization of the individual in theories of Second Language Acquisition. The central idea of investment is the student's own commitment to learn the target language in contrast to the psychological constructs (*integrative* and *instrumental*) of motivation.

Thus, considering the discussion raised hitherto, the parochial feeling of "belongingness" to a homeland appears to have been strongly

affected by the constant transitions of late modernity, in such a way that afforded individuals to migrate from their local places to intra- and inter- "national" borders. As a consequence, issues such as one's "nationality" and one's "mother tongue" have become problematic.

This problem of nationality has also been pointed out by Gao (2005), who draws on the Chinese context to argue that "concepts such as 'Chinese learners' or 'Chinese cultural values', often evoke notions of monolithic ethnic groups and ethnical cultural values and tend to suppress the reality of existence of many different subgroups of individuals learners and sets of divergent sub-values" (p. 02). It appears to be the case that it is no longer appropriate to refer to different peoples of the world through "nationality", given that there are different subgroups and/or different "small cultures" (Holliday, 1996, cited in Gao, 2005). Gao (2005) further states that: "in fact, most of the established research on Chinese learners involves learners broadly categorized as 'Chinese' at different localities including North America, Europe, Southeast Asian as well as Mainland China" (p. 02)

Similarly, Brazil can also be characterized by its continental dimensions and is also a dynamic and diverse multicultural land. This type of "broad categorization", however, seems to have also been referred to in investigations conducted in the country, without considering the specificities and complexities of the participants' particular settings.

In addition, studies concerning students' own language learning experiences conducted in Brazil are particularly scarce, especially in the northeast part of the country, and they seem to be concentrated on language students "from high-profile cities or universities" (Gao, 2005, p. 02). Furthermore, the main focus of the studies has traditionally fallen upon teachers' instead of students' developmental processes of their language learning approaches.

As an alternative, however, Holliday (1996, cited in Gao, 2005) has argued about the importance of a "small culture" approach to embrace students' language learning approaches and their specific and complex traits. According to Gao (2005), in these small cultures "researchers take a step back from the position of national/ethnic culture to focus on processes and interactions in small contexts" (p. 02). The author also reminds us about the crucial role which the integration of institutions, students and teachers play in revealing the students' adopted language learning approaches, which are brought about through the way they represent their own language learning process.

2.3 REPRESENTATION: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

During the past two decades, the term *representation* has largely been used in studies conducted in social sciences, especially in Applied Linguistics and Cultural Studies. These areas have presented several definitions for the term, but none of them is presented as conclusive. In this study, I discuss representations only as a way to reach the scope of the research, that is, the establishment of links between the two main themes under investigation: students' language learning approaches and identity formation. To do this, I will first contextualize the term by presenting a brief overview of representations as well as its implications for this research.

According to Aragão (2009), one of the first attempts to discuss representations appeared long back in the Middle Ages with Plato's curiosity to find something through which an expression could acquire its meaning. The primary hypothesis at the time was that language had a direct correspondence with the object. This correspondence, therefore, was an intriguing point at that time and raised subsequent discussions regarding the term representation.

In the eighteenth century, the term representation was widely used in the philosophy of Kant, meaning the image of objects, and latter turned its meaning to signify the meaning of words (Aragão, 2009). The term was used with this meaning for several years. However, it received trenchant critiques with the advent of the poststructuralist movement, which conceived language as a bunch of "unstable and undetermined structures" (Silva, 2000). According to Silva (2000), however, these critiques were not sufficient to preclude writers such as Stuart Hall to revitalize the concept of representation, which then acquired a meaning connected to a theorization about identity and difference.

Hall (1997) views representation as directly related to culture, which is anthropologically defined as the process of construction of shared practices, values and meaning among a group of people. For him, it is through our own representations of things that we add meaning to them: "it is by our use of things, and what we say, think, and feel about them – how we represent them – that we give them a meaning" (p. 03).

To explain this, the author draws on a metaphor of building a house and how people represent it as a home: "It is our use of a pile of bricks and mortar which makes it a 'house'; and what we feel, think or say about it that makes a 'house' a 'home'" (p. 03). In other words, things acquire meaning through the manner they are represented in the mind. These ideas, therefore, tie in with the central focus of this research

due to the nature of individuals to attribute meaning to things and events which happen to them. The author further cogently elaborates his concept of representation by stating:

> In part, we give things meaning by how we *represent* them – the words we use about them, **the stories we tell about them** [emphasis added], the images of them we produce, the emotions we associate with them, the ways we classify and conceptualize them, the values we place on them. Culture, we may say, is involved in all these practices which are not simply genetically programmed into us – like the jerk of the knee when tapped – but which carry meaning and value for us, which need to be *meaningfully interpreted* by others, or which *depend on meaning* for their effective operation. Culture, in this sense, permeates all of society. It is simply what is biologically driven. Its study underlines the crucial role of *symbolic* domain at the very heart of the social life (p. 03)

The idea of "cultural symbols" in the paragraph above presupposes the issue of linguistic signs through which people can express and understand concepts and feelings. It is exactly through linguistic signs that people represent these concepts and feelings, in such a way that meanings are constantly produced and reproduced based on their representations. The place where meanings are constructed, however, appears to remain an intriguing point. Hall (1997) draws on what he calls cultural circuit[4] to illustrate his view of meaning construction. For him, meaning is the result of different and shared practices in one's cultural circuit, which also fosters **identity formation**. Yet meaning is produced "when people weave **narratives**, **stories** [emphasis added] – and fantasies – around them" (p. 04). In other words, meanings are achieved in every single interaction where individuals negotiate their social lives, and language is the paramount medium through which these meanings are constructed. The author summarizes his view of meaning construction in the following statement:

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[4] According to Hall (1997), the cultural circuit is related closely to "identity construction and the marking of difference, in production and consumption, as well as in the regulation of social conduct." (p. 04)

> …meaning arises in relation to *all* the different moments or practices in our 'cultural circuit' – in the construction of identity and the marking of difference, in production and consumption, as well as in the regulation of social conduct. However, in all these instances, and at all these different institutional sites, one of the privileged 'media' through which meaning is produced and circulated is *language* (p. 04)

The concept of representation is understood by Hall (1997) as "signs" which carry meaning. In this sense, the author views meaning as a constant dialogue, which is "always partially understood, always an unequal exchange" (p. 04). Signs are, therefore, the manifestation of language and thus encompass not only the written mode of language, but its spoken and visual modes, including gestures and sounds. Thus, signs are articulated into language and are the medium through which thoughts are translated into words, sounds or images.

The term representation presented by Hall (1997) is crucial and yet profound in the theorization about identity formation, as it is through representation that meanings are produced and shared. However, his concepts of representation will be, in the scope of this study, strictly understood as a way through which meanings can be attributed to students' own experiences of English learning as well as the way they see themselves. In other words, it is exactly the meanings which students attribute to their own stories – how they "represent" these stories, as stated by Hall (1997) – that this study wishes to capture.

In this light, to deepen the notions of students' own representations of their language learning process, the discussion turns its focus into the field of Applied Linguistics, where representations have also been discussed more recently by Benson and Lor (1999), investigating what students think they are learning and how this learning takes place in a certain setting. These representations are articulated, among other forms, in terms of approaches to language and language learning, which will be discussed in the following section.

2.4 LEARNING APPROACHES AND REPRESENTATION

Research on students' approaches to language and language learning has shown an increasing interest in understanding their developmental processes in different educational and institutional environments by attempting to capture the main representations of students' adopted approaches to language learning (e.g. Gao 2005; Block, 1998). Gao's (2005) study of two mainland Chinese, for example, found that students are highly exam-oriented in their adopted learning approaches, extremely dependent on their self-will and effort as well as on their teachers' support and attention; while Block's (1998) case study contrasted two different ways of identifying his participant's language learning approach to evaluate the course he attended, which revealed, as a result, weaknesses regarding the conventional questionnaire-based method of final evaluation.

Considering that the term *learning approach* will be used in this study as the main working concept, it is important to take into account what Biggs (1993, cited in Benson & Lor, 1999, p. 461) has cautioned concerning the term approaches to learning. According to the author, the term approach has acquired two distinct meanings. The first underlines "the processes adopted prior to, and which directly determine, the outcome of learning"; and the second addresses students' "predispositions to adopt particular processes" in their own learning.

In light of this, the term learning approach will be used here in the latter sense proposed by Biggs (1993), but it will be rather narrowed to specifically mean students' predispositions to adopt particular developmental processes to learn English across different educational settings in Rio Grande do Norte/Brazil. In order to be clear for the reader, it is important to present what Biggs (1993, cited in Benson & Lor, 1999, p. 461) meant by predispositions:

> A predisposition to this or that learning approach is the individual student's way of achieving balance in the system as perceived by the student. Given an individual's goals, self-perceptions as to ability, the mode of teaching and assessment, the outcome, and the student's attributions for that outcome, so the student will after exposure to a particular teaching/learning environment find a certain approach to be viable and personally comfortable in day-to-day coping with that environment, and thus be predisposed to use deep

or surface strategies for particular tasks in that
context.

Furthermore, it is also likely that the same student may show a
predisposition to adopt different learning approaches. However,
students' approaches appear to be largely dependent on contextual
factors, among which are those of quality of teaching and the process of
students' evaluation. From this dependence on the demands of
contextual factors, it is possible to hypothesize that students will be
predisposed to adopt this or that learning approach if provided with at
least appropriate conditions to foster acceptable learning.

This variation in learning can possibly be explained by students'
own representations of the setting to which they are exposed, and also
by the ways of construing their own language leaning, which in turn will
influence the effects of contextual factors of the educational setting.
Thus, it seems that only a shift in these representations can lead to an
effective turn in students' adopted approaches. Therefore, this issue of
variation on students' learning approaches is largely dependent on
students' own representations of language and language learning, to
which the discussion turns now.

2.4.1 Representations of language and language learning

Drawing on several studies from the field of educational
psychology, Benson and Lor (1999) provide a cogent definition for the
term representation. They proposed to distinguish between two levels of
representations in students' thinking of their learning: conception and
belief. According to the authors:

> Conceptions of learning are concerned with what
> the learner thinks the objects and processes of
> learning are, whereas beliefs as conceived in the
> SLA literature are concerned with what the
> learner holds to be true about these objects and
> processes, given a certain conception of what they
> are. (p. 464)

In light of this definition, the authors argue that representations
are organized hierarchically and conceptions are in a somewhat "higher
level" as compared to beliefs. However, for the purposes of the present
study, I will refer to both students' conceptions and beliefs of language
and language learning as representations, due to the variable character of

the terms and their direct relation to students' learning approaches. In this way, representations are not fixed and stable; rather, they are subject to constant change and may vary according to the person who holds them.

In order to make their point regarding representations of learning, Benson and Lor (1999) have drawn on results of earlier studies which investigated what means learning a foreign language and what it is constituted of, and they presented six different representations of learning[5]:

1. Increasing knowledge;

2. Memorizing;

3. Accumulating[6] facts, procedures, etc. which can be retained and utilized in practice;

4. Abstracting meaning (understanding);

5. Interpreting process aimed at the understanding of reality (seeing something in a different way); and

6. Changing the person.

These representations of learning are directly related to learning approaches and the first three have been identified as quantitative, and thus reflect a low-level understanding concerning the way the learning environment is connected to the student's own learning. Representations 4, 5 and 6, on the other hand, have been identified as qualitative, and thus reflect a better understanding of the relationship between the learning environment and the consequent student's own learning. Hence, it is generally said that students who hold quantitative representations of learning show a more passive and reserved role regarding their learning, and view themselves as subjects of learning;

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[5] The representations of learning as presented here have been adapted from Benson and Lor's (1999) conceptions of learning using -*ing* form (except representations 2 and 3, which were originally -*ing* form).

[6] I use *accumulating* instead of *acquiring* (Benson & Lor, 1999) in an attempt to alleviate the apparent negative connotation of the verb acquire.

whereas those who hold qualitative representations of learning are more active and are therefore the agents of their own learning.

Nevertheless, the reality of students in contemporary world has shown themselves to be open to difference, and the fact that a certain student holds one type of representation does not necessarily mean that s/he is not open to hold another one(s). It is this openness to diversity which can contribute to the variability in students' adopted language learning approaches. And it seems that through students' understanding of the constant struggles and shifts in their own representations they will have a predisposition to adopt the learning approach which they think it is suitable for them and appropriate to learn a foreign language. In other words, research seems to have witnessed subjective ways of viewing reality being more important than any objective ones (Benson & Lor, 1999); and it is exactly this interwoven nature of students' adopted learning approaches which this study is proposed to capture through their own biographical accounts.

2.5 BIOGRAPHICAL RESEARCH AND LEARNING APPROACHES

It is generally said that some forms of introspection and qualitative methods to conduct research are particularly related. Introspection has been developed throughout the years and is currently called 'biography'. The term 'biography' has gained a variety of definitions; however, Roberts (2002) provides a convincing way to define studies conducted under the heading of biographical:

> Biographical research is an exciting, stimulating and fast-moving field which seeks to understand the changing experiences and outlooks of individuals in their daily lives, what they see as important, and how to provide interpretations of the accounts they give of their past, present and future. (p. 01)

This definition is particularly important to this study in the sense that it encompasses not only the changing experiences of the participants in different settings, but also how they consciously interpret their own life stories.

2.5.1 Students' stories and their learning approaches

The formal study of life stories and narratives has increased since the 1980s in a large number of fields, including psychology, gender studies, education, anthropology, sociology, linguistics, law and history (Benson and Nunan, 2005). Roberts (2002) draws on the work of Atkinson (1998) to elaborate his definition of one's life story, which for him refers to the narration of the story and its context by the author:

> A life story is the story a person chooses to tell about the life he or she has lived, told as completely and honestly as possible, what is remembered of it, and what the teller wants others to know of it, usually as a result of a guided interview by another . . . A life story is a fairly complete narrating of one's entire experience of life as a whole, highlighting the most important aspects. (p. 03)

In similar lines, but in the field of Second Language Acquisition, Pavlenko (2001b, cited in Block, 2007, p. 867) describes learning stories as the intimate relationship between language and identity:

> L2 learning stories...are unique and rich sources of information about the relationship between language and identity in second language learning and socialization. It is possible that only personal narratives provide a glimpse into areas so private, personal, and intimate that they are rarely – if ever – breached in the study of SLA, and at the same time at the heart and soul of the second language socialization process.

In light of these definitions, it is worth observing that research conducted in social sciences, especially in Applied Linguistics and Cultural Studies, are on the verge of a biographical "turn" (Benson and Nunan, 2005; Roberts, 2002) and the biographical interview has become "the preferred method of data collection for researchers interested in the interface between history and sociology, society and individual personality, and structure and agency" (Block, 2007, p.867).

According to Roberts (2002), this "turn" must be articulated in the context of cultural institutions such as schools, universities and so

on. Hence, story-telling and narrative studies on these learning environments have considerably mushroomed during the past decades.

One of the earliest studies in the field of Applied Linguistics which concerned with participants' learning stories and their learning approaches appeared in the 1960s, with Carroll's (1967, cited in Norton & Toohey, 2001) attempt to indentify successful language learning individuals in the journey of learning more than one language. Subsequently, in the 1970s this type of research was marked by Schumann's (1978a; 1978b, cited in Benson & Nunan, 2005) case studies, which later became known as his pidginization hypothesis. Although the focus of these studies was primary on individuals' linguistic outcomes, they were particularly based on individuals' life stories. Further, in the 1980s there was a large body of research focusing on individuals' effective strategies to learn the target language. However, there also had attempts to understand the life stories of the participants involved in the study; for instance, Schmidt (1983, cited in Benson & Nunan, 2005) longitudinal study consisted of an extensive amount of recorded data and field notes of his participant, which the author presents as a life story. In the 1990s, and particularly in the beginning of the twenty-first century, story-telling and narrative data played "a more prominent role, influencing both the degree of emphasis on linguistic developments and the structure of the published work" (Benson & Nunan, 2005, p. 15)

One example of such a study is that of McKay and Wong (1996), in which the authors draw on four Chinese students to understand and asses their linguistic development in English language. Yet less concern with linguistic outcomes, another cogent narrative study is presented by Norton (2001), in which the author highlights the stories of Katarina and Felicia to argue about both their investment to learn English and their imagined communities. Katarina's story, in a different study (Kanno & Norton, 2003) is compared to that of Rui's, a Japanese teenage who has several experiences in English-speaking countries. Kanno and Norton (2003) analyze the two stories in a theorization of identity construction not only in terms of an investment in the – as the authors say – "*real*" world, but also in the "*possible*" worlds. The two stories together can, in fact, contribute to the understanding of the theoretical notions of investment and imagined communities.

In more recent studies, however, the focus of biographical studies is much less concerned with linguistic outcomes (Benson & Nunan, 2005). In Asia, Gao's (2005) study of two mainland Chinese, for instance, is mainly concerned with particularly significant features in

their adopted language learning approaches, while Lam's (2005) study of four adult Chinese learners is concerned with the changes in language policy in China. In Europe, this non-linguistic trait is also found Block's (1998) case study, in which the focus has fallen upon "learners interpretations and evaluations of class events and processes rather than developments in their language proficiency" (Benson and Nunan (2005, p. 15). In North America, the collection of Clemente and Higgins' (2008) learning narratives usefully illustrates the different and complex journeys which Mexican students usually take to perform English in contemporary world. Furthermore, the studies conducted by Bonny Norton in the Canadian setting provide substantive amount of narrative data illustrating the decreasing concern of recent studies with participants' linguistic outcomes.

It is important to mention, however, that most of these studies were conducted in Second Language contexts, which means that the quality and amount of participants' exposure to English is higher than Foreign Language contexts. When these Foreign Language contexts are taken into account, however, as Block (2007) has pointed out, this type of research is particularly scarce; and it shows a tendency to "focus on transformations in individuals as language learners" (p. 869). The author mentions only three significant studies in this type of context: Lantolf and Genung (2003) and McMahill (1997; 2001). The former reports the experience of one of the authors learning Mandarin in an American university; and the two latter studies are concerned with feminist issues in Japan.

In South America, specifically in the Brazilian scenario, as I have already mentioned, the situation is not particularly different. However, it is also possible to find few attempts to understand individual experiences of learning a foreign language (e.g. Miccoli, 2001; Paiva, 2007; Paiva & Braga, 2008). Although these studies are not placed under the heading of biographical by their authors, they do show students' stories and narratives as a way to understand their adopted approaches to learn the target language. Miccoli's (2001) comparison of Ana Esther and Paula, for instance, found that the respective presence and absence of a clear motive to learn English was the most salient feature in the two participants' adopted approaches. Likewise, the study of Paiva (2007) presented a collection of students' narratives from different places in Minas Gerais, and the author argues that students'

adopted learning approaches[7] are complex, unpredictable and diverse. As a result, the author found a strong desire to develop oral skills in the students' learning approaches. In another study, Paiva and Braga (2008) draws on several students' narratives to propose their model of students' autonomy. The authors concluded that students' autonomy, in their perspective, is intimately linked to the environment on which students are exposed. Attempts to understand individual experiences have also been the concern of Joao Telles' narratives, but the focus of his studies has traditionally fallen upon teachers instead of students' language learning experiences.

2.6 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter has presented a review of the literature on late modernity and identity, representation and learning approaches as well as on the relationship between biographical research and language learning approaches. The next chapter provides the methodological procedures adopted in this investigation.

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[7] What Paiva (2007) calls students' *learning systems*, I understand as students' learning approaches.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter II has presented the rationale on which this study is based, particularly the notions of students' representations and their language learning approaches, which can be manifested through their biographical narratives. As I have already mentioned, the objective of this study is to capture the specificities and complexities in the developmental processes of two groups of EFL students' language learning approaches. In this way, this chapter addresses the methodological procedures adopted in order to meet this objective. The first section (3.2) of the chapter presents the methodological background. The second section (3.3) provides the context in which the study was conducted. The third section (3.4) introduces the research participants. The forth section (3.5) raises the research questions by which this study is guided. The fifth section (3.6) presents the procedures used to collect data. The sixth section (3.7) explains how the data were analyzed. And finally, the seventh (3.8) provides a summary of the chapter.

3.2 METHODOLOGICAL BACKGROUND: BIOGRAPHY AND ETHNOGRAPHY

The formal study of lives, commonly called biographical research, has never been as poignant as in contemporary times; and this study "shares a common outlook with qualitative research more generally" (Roberts, 2002, p. 03). The present study, thus, is particularly informed by the legitimization of this relationship as well as the endorsement of its main tenets, in an attempt to draw a vivid picture of EFL students' learning approaches through their own views of learning. According to Nunan (1992), participants' views play a crucial role in understanding human behavior, as it "cannot be understood without incorporating into the research the subjective perceptions and belief systems of those involved in the research, both as researchers and as subjects" (p. 54).

Assuming that the views of the researched are important traits in the qualitative paradigm, they are understood here as rich sources

through which detailed accounts of the social context as well as their specificities and complexities are meaningfully provided. In this way, the forms of narrative inquiry into students and their foreign language learning can be an appropriate process of gathering data from natural telling, which makes the biographical study largely accepted as having a particular bearing on students' language learning approaches.

For Bell (2002), narratives expose researchers to holistic views of the stories told by the participants, which emphasize them as important sources fostering identity formation:

Narrative inquiry involves working with people's consciously told stories, recognizing that these rest on deeper stories of which people are often unaware. Participants construct stories that support their interpretation of themselves, excluding experiences and events that undermine the identities they currently claim (p. 209)

Furthermore, Bell (2002) has proposed three main reasons which researchers should consider when conducting narrative research:

• Narrative allows researchers to understand experience. People's lives matter, but much research looks at outcomes and disregards the impact of the experience itself. In my case, the narrative approach highlighted the unexpected physical impact of the learning struggle.

• Narrative lets researchers get at information that people do not consciously know themselves. Analysis of people's stories allows deeply hidden assumptions to surface. My efforts to develop Chinese literacy allowed me to discover assumptions about the goals, purposes, and methods that I had no idea I held. As reflections of standard Western stories of literacy, these assumptions had direct implications for teaching and learning.

• Narrative illuminates the temporal notion of experience, recognizing that one's understanding of people and events changes. In my work, this was demonstrated by my shifting interpretation of my Chinese tutor's actions and my changing notions of good teaching practice (Bell, 1997b). Other research methods would have captured understandings at certain points, not at the important intervening stages. (p. 209)

In addition, participants' stories are always contextualized, that is, they do not "exist in vacuum, but are shaped by lifelong personal and community narratives" (Bell, 2002, p. 208). In Brazil, although Telles' (1999) concern has fallen upon teachers' narratives, his concept of individuals' stories as both the object and the method of study can appropriately be applied to this research in the sense that it is through narrative research that representations of learning can be constructed. The author conducted several studies concerned with teachers' narratives, which has strongly contributed to the understanding of individuals' lives.

Therefore, as the narrative approach has often been used as an attempt to understand individuals' lives, it will serve as the ground pavement for this study in order to understand the participants' developmental language learning processes in different settings across Rio Grande do Norte/Brazil.

3.3 CONTEXT OF INVESTIGATION

Since the outset of this research study, all the processes involved in data collection as well as its subsequent phases were drawn with the permission of the EFL program (*Curso de Letras/Inglês*) situated in the Açu campus of the Rio Grande do Norte State University (*Universidade do Estado do Rio Grande do Norte-UERN*). Before describing the EFL program in which this study was conducted, I will contextualize the scenario of investigation through a general presentation of some socioeconomic information of the region where the program is situated, that is, the so-called *Vale do Açu*.

3.3.1 Setting: *Vale do Açu*

Vale do Açu is a region located between the middle and the west part of the state of *Rio Grande do Norte* and its regional division includes nine cities: *Açu, Alto do Rodrigues, Carnaubais, Ipanguaçu, Itajá, Jucurutu, Pendencias, Porto do Mangue e São Rafael*. The current population is estimated in 140.534 inhabitants (IBGE, 2010) and the region has a territorial size of 4.756.079 km2 (IBGE, 2010). In order to become clear for the reader, the following picture illustrates the state of Rio Grande do Norte/Brazil, with the emphasis on *Vale do Açu* and its cities.

Figure 2.1 – *Vale do Açu/RN* **(Albano & Sá, 2009)**

Açu is the major city of the valley and many people usually go there to work and study. The organization of the social structure includes a small upper-class elite, an increasing middle class and a large and diverse popular class. Economically, there still exists a large gap between the formal and informal sectors of the local economy, especially among the rural population. However, the local labor market has envisaged important achievements aiming at developing the region. Furthermore, the region has recently been recognized for its touristic potential based on its natural landscapes and beautiful lakes. The main economic activity is agriculture, especially the cultivation of banana; commerce, with regional manufactured products; and industry, with the oil and gas companies. Besides these economic sectors, there is also a large and increasing service sector (IBGE, 2010), which is mainly composed of small land owners, civil servants, teachers and self-employed professionals.

Due to the reality of globalization, especially for the frequent contact with "foreigners" from the big companies in the region and the presence of some exchange students who spend about a year studying in Açu, more and more people are becoming aware of the social and economic importance associated to English today. In this way, people know that a certain level of command in English can provide them with much better opportunities of succeeding in getting a good employment.

According to Clemente and Higgins (2008), how well people "can perform English provides them with the means to accumulate various forms of linguistic and cultural capital that they hope can be converted into economic capital" (p. 32). This can be, in fact, a general portrait illustrating the different kinds of journey to learn English taken by the students from different cities within and outside *Vale do Açu*.

3.3.2. EFL programs

The program where I collected data from is *Curso de Letras/Inglês*, in Açu, Rio Grande do Norte. As already mentioned, Açu is the main city of the region and students come from different nearby cities to undertake their academic studies in the only campus of UERN in the region of *Vale do Assu. Curso de Letras/Inglês*, as it is called, has only the option of *Licenciatura* available, and does not have *Bacharelado*; for this reason, the curriculum is designed mainly with pedagogical disciplines and the main objective of the program is to promote English teacher education. Although this is not widely recognized by the EFL program community, the program has two cycles. In the first cycle, from the first semester up to the fourth, students have to attend disciplines of oral and written practice of English language, that is, Basic English Language[8], English Language I, English Language II and English Language III. From the fifth semester on, they start the second cycle, which has methodological disciplines, the teaching practicum as well as English Language and American and British literatures.

Among other methodological disciplines, Teaching Methodology I and Teaching Methodology II are the mandatory ones, and students are required to (a) plan some class activities, (b) observe some classes taught by their classmates, (c) teach some classes supervised by the teacher in charge of the discipline, and (c) write a report of all the steps and activities carried out throughout the discipline. It is also in the second cycle that students start their teaching practicum: they have to attend a school environment outside the university classroom. Students first have to observe a teacher in a school of the community and then the students themselves have to experience the practice of teaching. As a final assignment, they have to write a report of their experience in the practicum.

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8 *Fundamentos de Língua Inglesa*

Since proficiency in English is not a prerequisite to be admitted in the EFL program, many students enter *Curso de Letras/Inglês* with vary basic knowledge of the English language; and that can be the reason why students need to attend disciplines of oral and written English to develop their communicative competence in this language.

Regarding the graduate course, which is called *Specialization Course in the teaching of English*, students have to attend disciplines of reading comprehension and English writing in the first year of the program. The disciplines are monthly organized and the classes are attended every sarturday. In the last year of the program students have to conduct a research study as a final assignment.

3.4. PARTICIPANTS

The participants of this study were sixteen Brazilian EFL students: eight from the undergraduate course and eight from the specialization course of Rio Grande do Norte State University (UERN). The former group was attending the first period of their tertiary studies, and the later group was taking a two-year specialization program. The participants' ages ranged from 17 to 49 years old and, out of the sixteen students, seven were female and nine were male. Although the attentive reader can become familiar with the research participants through their own learning stories (see Appendixes A and B), it seems appropriate to advance some of the details of their profile. Following a chronological and institutional order, before the presentation of the graduates' (Table – 3.2), I will present the undergraduates' (Table – 3.1) profiles. Pseudonyms will be used in order to protect the participants' privacy.

Table 3.1 – Undergraduates' profiles

NAME	CITY OF ORIGIN	AGE	OCCUPATION	PHASE OF STUDY
Ana Claudia	Afonso Bezerra	17	Student	First
Ben	Jucurutu	17	Student	First
Irene	Açu	18	Receptionist	First
Jefferson	Açu	30	Student	First
Jessica	Itajá	31	Seller	First
Naiane	São Rafael	23	Student	First
Watson	Caiçara	22	Student	First
Wilson	Janduis	36	School Assistant	First

Table – 3.2 Graduates' profiles

NAME	CITY OF ORIGIN	AGE	OCCUPATION	YEAR OF GRADUATION
Angelina	Açu	36	Teacher of English	2001
Carlos	Açu	27	Executive secretary	2009
Claudio	Açu	48	Teacher of English	2008
Edson	Açu	26	Teacher of English	2008
Fatima	Açu	25	Teacher of English	2009
James	Açu	23	Teacher of English	2010
Joel	Açu	29	Teacher of English	2007
Raele	Açu	26	Student	2009

3.5. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

During the process of reviewing the literature on students' language learning approaches and representations as well as analyzing the data collected, many studies have been influential in the designing of the questions to guide the present investigation. From these studies, however, I have been particularly informed by the work of Gao (2005) and Benson and Lor (1999). From Gao (2005), to whom I owe much inspiration, I have drawn on a general research question: how can EFL students' biographical narratives inform us about the developmental process of their language learning approaches across different educational settings in Rio Grande do Norte? The establishment of this broad question led me to raise the following two specific questions:

1. What are some of the significant learning approaches of the EFL undergraduates being studied?

2. What are some of the significant learning approaches of the EFL graduates being studied?

3.6. DATA COLLECTION

Guided by the broad research question, and with the primary purpose of interpreting the meanings which the participants bring to their own learning stories (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 03), I drew on the qualitative paradigm to start the process of data collection. It began

in the first semester of 2011, specifically in the first week of April by means of interviews.

3.6.1 Interviews

As the use of interviews has largely been recommended by studies concerning students' leaning stories (Block, 2007; Benson and Nunan, 2005; Gao, 2005; Roberts, 2002), I utilized this method as the primary method of data collection for this research. Thus, the interviews provided helpful accounts of the participants' learning stories.

In April, 2011, I conducted interviews with the initial fourteen undergraduate students and with the eight graduates. However, out of the fourteen undergraduate participants, six did not provide substantive data concerning their own learning story, that is, through their own voices I could not establish any meaningful relationship in comparison to the other participants. This fact led me to take them out of the research project. Therefore, the process of data collection through the interviews ended up with eight undergraduate interviews and eight from the graduates.

The interviews lasted about 25 minutes and the participants were asked a set of open-ended questions in Portuguese (see Appendix D). The questions were based primarily on their previous experiences with English learning across different educational and institutional environments in Rio Grande do Norte. The research interviews were audio-taped and later transcribed verbatim.

3.7. DATA ANALYSIS

In this study, the model adopted to analyze data was the narrative approach (Paiva & Braga, 2008; Connelly & Clandinin, 1999), which is within the scope of ethnographic analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). According to Paiva and Braga (2008), using students' narratives is essential in conducting SLA research, as narratives enable researchers to have access to the most intimate feelings and views of the researched:

> The narratives of second language learning describe sequences of actions, mental states, educational events, personal experiences, beliefs, fears, desires, preferences, personal and institutional relationships, stable situations, disturbances, and unbalances characteristic of the

> learning process. The genre sheds light on the acquisition process upon revealing learning experiences that, generally, have not received due attention within the community of Applied Linguistics researchers. The individual comprehension of how a language is learned, in addition to revealing singular experiences, may in fact highlight common aspects in a series of stories and stimulate important insights regarding recurrent phenomena in language acquisition… (p. 12)

Paiva and Braga's (2008) argument can be complemented by that of Connelly and Clandinin's (1999, cited in Bell, 2002, p. 210), who claim that narrative research consists of the formal understanding of how individuals represent their experiences and reality, and how they interpret them through the telling of their own stories, as they state:

> Narrative researchers are concerned with the representation of experience, causality, temporality and the difference between the experience of time and the telling of time, narrative form, integrity of the whole in a research document, the invitational quality of a research text, its authenticity, adequacy and plausibility.

The authors also argue that, in retelling participants' stories, researchers are equally telling their own stories, in a constant process of knowledge construction and promotion of changes in the way people view and experience life. Thus, narrative research provides the paths to know why and how individuals do what they do, in such a way that both participants and researcher benefit from this process.

As the participants' stories were used in this study as both the object and method of study (Telles, 1999), the analysis of data was conducted through the following steps:

Part – 1

A. Identification of undergraduate and graduate students' interviews through the audio material;

B. Transcription of the interviews into text format (see Appendix C);

C. Organization of the participants' accounts according to the educational settings to which they have been exposed since the beginning of their English learning experiences. This process allowed me to build up the complete students' stories, which can be found in Appendixes A and B.

Part – 2

A. Extensive reading of students' learning stories with the primary purpose of establishing relations among students from each group.

B. Attempt to construct meaning through the representations students holds about their language learning. This process was carried out through the attempt to verify whether some relationships could be established between the research participants' representations of learning to those six representations of learning presented in the review of literature and identified in Benson and Lor (1999, p. 463). It is important to remember that the term representation here is also being used in the sense proposed by Hall (1997), that is, students give meaning to their own stories through how they represent these stories. Thus, I sought for these meanings in their stories and compared them with the other students', which led me to find commonalities between pairs[9] of students. These commonalities, therefore, were clustered as students' learning approaches.

C. Identification of undergraduate and graduate students' learning approaches through the clustering of each one of the commonalities.

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[9] The reason why I paired up students is justified by the fact that the most salient representations emerged between pairs of students. In some cases, more than two students held one type of representation, but I paired up those who clearly emphasized the type of representation they held.

3.8 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter has presented the methodology used in this study. I have presented the methodological background adopted in this research study, the context of investigation, the participants, the research questions, and the procedures adopted in data collection and analysis. In the following chapter I shall present the analysis of the data and discussion of results.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with the analysis of data and discussion of results. The data analysis, which was carried out by the narrative approach within the qualitative paradigm, attempts to reach the general objective of this study: to capture the specificities and complexities in the developmental processes of two groups of EFL students' language learning approaches. As already mentioned, data were gathered through semi-structured interviews. Thus, the chapter is organized taking into account the following research questions on which this research study is based, that is:

1. What are some of the significant learning approaches of the EFL undergraduates being studied?

2. What are some of the significant learning approaches of the EFL graduates being studied?

The organization of this chapter reflects on each one of the research questions, that is, the first section (4.2) focuses on the analysis of research question one; and the second section (4.3) addresses the analysis of research question two.

4.2 WHAT ARE SOME OF THE SIGNIFICANT LEARNING APPROACHES OF THE EFL UNDERGRADUATES BEING STUDIED?

The main concern of this section is to present the analysis of EFL undergraduates' learning approaches, in an attempt to capture the representations of learning held by the students in their own stories. The complete stories which I shall refer to here can be found in Appendix A.

4.2.1 Analysis of the undergraduates' language learning approaches

The students' learning portraits illustrate different kinds of journey to learn English from different settings across Rio Grande do

Norte. Through a closer look at the paths students usually go about learning English, it is possible to observe the particular language learning approaches adopted. These approaches will be discussed in the following.

4.2.1.1 A teacher-as-a-transmitter approach: Irene's and Watson's stories (see Appendix A.1)

Reliance on teacher's responsibility to transmit ("*passar*") knowledge to students is most salient in Irene and Watson's learning stories. They attended their primary school in two different settings, but both faced many linguistic hurdles in the attempt to learn the language. For Irene, learning English consisted of acquiring vocabulary ("*não exigia da gente tentar aprender o vocabulário*"). For Watson, learning a language was more associated with memorization (Benson and Lor, 1999) of rules and tasks ("*o professor passava todas as regras do Inglês para os alunos + os alunos mais decoravam*"). As a result, in this initial phase they seem to have failed in achieving progress in their English learning.

Both Irene and Watson had different experiences in secondary school. The first two years of Irene's secondary level were marked by the instability in the teachers' availability to teach English. However, in this period she had a demanding teacher, whose contents were not in accordance with her "transmition" approach, thus making her learning more difficult. In the last year of her secondary school, however, she had a "good" teacher, who "transmitted" the contents she expected: "vocabulary and text interpretation". In the case of Watson, secondary school was much better than the previous level, especially because the teachers of the course he attended outside school transmitted ("*passava*") to students what they had learned before: "*eles passavam tudo + aquilo que eles aprendiam eles passavam para os alunos*". Besides that, what he accumulated from his teachers was utilized as a procedure (Benson and Lor, 1999) in his own practical life ("*utilizei aquilo que eu tinha aprendido*"), which shows a quantitative view of learning.

Although Watson entered tertiary level apparently more prepared in terms of linguistic knowledge, his previous experiences seem to have reinforced his conception that teachers should find effective ways to transmit their knowledge to students, thus being also very much dependent on his teachers: "*acredito que ele deve passar todos os conhecimentos que ele aprendeu + porque é o que nós esperamos*

também". However, it is often recognized that "good and autonomous learners require little involvement from teachers in their language learning" (Gao, 2005, p. 14). For Irene, the fact that the teacher is transferring contents and knowledge for students to "assimilate" and "record" ("*ele vai aos poucos + vai passando os conteúdos aos poucos e agente esta conseguindo assimilar o ritmo… você vai começando a gravar...*") is seen by her as progress in her individual learning.

The way they conceive their own language learning allows lead us to point out at least two possible consequences of their adopted approaches. First, they construe learning as a process involving language reproduction (Gao, 2005); and second, in their view, knowledge of the language should be enhanced through the collection of things to be learned ("*eles passavam tudo aquilo que eles aprendiam*"). For Watson, who also demonstrated to be reticent in his adopted learning approach ("*aqui eu não estou sendo muito participativo não + to não + eu espero que os professores me ajudem também a aprender a me soltar mais*"), learning English from teachers is his great expectation for the program. For Irene, who experienced many uncertainties in her learning life, graduating with an intermediate level of English is her pre-established expectation for the course.

Nevertheless, the two students also voiced a certain degree of awareness that self-will is constantly required when learning a foreign language, as shown in Irene's statement: "*eu tive muita força de vontade + porque é o que eu queria desde o início + então fui lá e batalhei*". Thus, their learning approach has been mainly characterized by the role teachers play in transmitting knowledge to students.

4.2.1.2 A job-oriented approach: Ben's and Wilson's stories (see Appendix A.2)

Job-orientedness is the salient characteristic of Ben and Wilson's approaches to learning English. Since their primary school, they have faced intense difficulties concerning their English language learning. For Ben, who came from a limited financial situation and a rural background, learning English was reduced to the memorization of a set of single words which the teacher transmitted ("passava") to him, given that the teachers he had did not expose students to oral contents at the time ("*Eles falavam pouco + acho que eles tinham medo ou + não sei por que + medo dos alunos não entenderem*"). For Wilson, who began to study English earlier than Ben and thus seems to have faced even more traditional teaching, learning English was basically concerned with

the translation of words, sentences and even texts ("*chegava lá jogava você e um dicionário junto e você que resolvesse lá + e ficava muito complicado de chegar a um consenso numa tradução nesse ponto ai*")

Fragments of the primary school experiences were present again, but with less intensity, in Wilson's secondary level, even though he had a teacher who was more committed to her students' learning. Similarly, Ben did not seem to have significantly shifted his view of learning English: for him, language learning consisted of accumulation of words ("*no ensino médio eu consegui aprender algumas palavras a mais*") and its consequent repetition, which he thinks was better than the primary school ("*ai era melhor + melhor do que no ensino fundamental + progredi muito*").

The two different learning paths got together in the same setting in tertiary level. Both Wilson and Ben decided to take *Curso de Letras/Inglês* and are currently studying English at college. It is important to observe that the poor socio-economic conditions to which they were exposed during their previous experiences as opposed to the contemporary discourse of English as a way to increase social and material capital (Clemente & Higgins, 2008) appear to function as an encouraging factor for them to learn English, which have possibly led them to be very much interested in studying the language. As a result, both of them demonstrate to have an approach to language learning strongly oriented towards competing for a good employment in the labor market.

Wilson does not seem to reject the opportunity he was given to reach his educational and professional goals, and he takes for granted that the program and the teachers will lead him to achieve success in his language learning ("*eu espero que na universidade eu encontre professores que possam desenvolver normalmente essas capacidades e aprimorar cada vez mais*"). For him, the "*acquisition*" of fluency in the language is a personal demand to appropriately respond to the requirements of the labor market ("*eu preciso mais de que tudo adquirir uma certa fluência… porque eu passei num concurso para professor da área e preciso da conta do recado*").

Ben's primary concern is to find a job to help his family; and he views the learning of English as a way to achieve his pre-established objectives. The way he conceives language learning is completely concerned with aspects of the labor market: "*Aprender Inglês pra mim significa ter boa qualificação + ter bom desempenho + ser mais dinâmico*". He equally thinks that the only changes that will occur when he graduates are in terms of employment qualifications: "*Acho que o*

que vai mudar na minha vida será só a qualificação + porque eu estarei em outro ramo + terei aprendido uma outra língua + posso usar ela para arranjar um emprego".

In light of this, it becomes clear that they do not seem to view the learning of English with the eyes of a learner. They seem to be under pressure to learn English and are frequently demanding of themselves to reach their outcomes.

The adoption of such a job-oriented approach inevitably brings consequences for the two students' own language learning. One of these consequences is that they conceive learning as an "increase in knowledge" (Benson & Lor, 1999). For Wilson, knowledge is "*systematized*" and teachers are responsible to "deposit" (Freire, 2005) this knowledge into the students' head, whereas for Ben, his previous experiences proved that learning English through the accumulation of contents led him to fail in learning the language.

4.2.1.3 A self-reliant approach: Ana Claudia's and Naiane's stories (see Appendix A.3)

Throughout Ana Claudia and Naiane's stories, self-reliance is the most emphasized aspect of their adopted learning approaches. Since the beginning, they show different and sometimes similar views of their own language learning. When asked to comment on some of her experiences of English learning, Ana Claudia begins her story by saying that her experiences with the language were "*normal*", both in primary and secondary school. She indicates that she did not learn English during her primary and secondary education. Perhaps influenced by the general belief that "non-English-learning" at primary and secondary school is "normal", she took her turn and voiced: "…*eu só tive aula normal no ensino médio e ensino fundamental…*". By stating this, it is possible to impher, between the lines, that she is situating the institution where she studied (a public school) as a place where English learning does not take place, as if those students who want to learn English should attend at least some classes in a private English course (see section 4.2.1.4 An English-course approach, p. 63). That is, students do not learn English at "normal" primary and secondary schools. A similar finding has also been found in one of the narratives reported by Paiva (2007), in which the student conceived school as a place of failure in one's English learning.

Although Ana Claudia seems to recognize the importance of English as the medium of interaction in English classes, she confesses

that she failed in learning English in primary school. Naiane, who was influenced by songs and her sisters throughout her English learning journey, also holds the view that her learning was "weak" because of the "simple" contents: "*Foi fraco + era essas coisinhas simples + nomezinho pequenininhos*". However, different from Ana Claudia, she demonstrates that she was at least intrigued, because she had to adapt herself to the level of the class, and this adaptation seem to have prevented her from moving on in her own improvement (…*tinha uns três ou quatro alunos que poderia avançar no Inglês + mas por causa dos outros a gente não podia*…)

The apparently failure in the initial phase of their learning can possibly be explained by the fact that they conceived their language learning as the mere acquisition of vocabulary and expressions. In this way, they viewed the contents and tasks as "normal", "basic" and "simple", thus emphasizing the traditional representation that public schools are not appropriate places to learn English.

However, entering secondary education, it is noticeable a slight shift in their adopted learning approach. They seem to have recognized the importance of learning English in contemporary society; and this recognition was strongly influenced by TV advertisements and movies in Ana Claudia's approach; and by songs and a teacher in Naiane's adopted approach. This "awakening" led them to be fond of learning English, and cultural artifacts such as the TV advertisements, movies and songs played a crucial role, as they are inherently linked to the social use of language (Paiva, 2007). It seems reasonable to say, thus, that it is through these cultural artifacts that foreign language students demonstrate predispositions to learn the target language.

Furthermore, both Ana Claudia and Naiane think that secondary school was better than the previous level, especially because they had to study more. For Ana Claudia, it was better because her teacher demanded more of herself in the task of speaking English; and in this way she had to look for ways of appropriately responding to her teacher demands. For Naiane, who even recognizing that secondary school was basically "the same thing" as the previous level, it was better because of the songs she had to translate and complete, and also the influence of her English teacher, who gave special attention to her interests by encouraging her to attend *Curso de Letras/Inglês*. Besides the fact that she had to pay more attention to the contents and tasks, songs played a particularly important role in her secondary education, as they functioned as a learning strategy for her to achieve her goals. This strategy, among many others, is largely associated with the mediation of

the foreign language through the aforementioned English cultural artifacts (Paiva, 2007).

Their desire to learn English became more salient when they entered tertiary level. For example, Ana Claudia felt strongly disappointed when she discovered that she had only one English meeting per week. But it seems important to observe that, even with her great interest to learn the language, sometimes she felt a complex of inferiority for not mastering English, as she states: "*na sala eu me sinto inferior + me sinto inferior porque eu acho que tipo + só eu que não sei falar muito e tipo + outras pessoas sabem e eu não sei entendeu*". However, Ana Claudia decided to put this complex aside and not care about what people think about her; thus, she demonstrates herself as an independent and active student, strongly prone to organize her own learning trajectory.

For Naiane, the fact that she passed *Vestibular* contributed significantly to her recognition of the importance to learn English. She is aware that she has not been a high-profile student, and this awareness led her to adopt a learning approach which is very much self-reliant. Like Ana Claudia, she voiced shyness when the teacher tried to involve her in the classroom interaction; but perhaps the most important aspect is her feeling that she must overcome her shyness, which she thinks hinders her own development.

As both Ana Claudia and Naiane come from smaller cities, they view university as an opportunity for personal development, and this is brought about through the social interaction with different people they meet at college, as seen in Ana Claudia's statement:

> ...porque sei lá + aqui na verdade quando a pessoa entra na universidade + você conhece pessoas de vários tipos + de personalidades de vários tipos entendeu? + aí tipo + não é só aquilo que você via na sua cidade + na sua escola + aquela mesma coisa + as mesmas pessoas + não + aqui é muito diferente...

This view of transcending their own 'parochial' places appears as an important factor for them to learn English, and one which promoted changes in themselves. For example, Ana Claudia feels more active than before her entrance at college in terms of her own process of learning, and because of this change, she is more interested in English readings ("*estou lendo mais livros + assim tipo + livros relacionados a Inglês*").

Although Naiane thinks she will become more unpopular, she hopes to help people to translate things they do not know. In doing this, she thinks she will be satisfying herself, especially because she lacked this kind of help in her previous level of English learning. Thus, they acknowledge the importance of transiting from their own localities to a different place and also show themselves more keen to learn English.

One of the consequences of such a self-reliant approach is that the two students conceive learning as a process which involves changes in one's life; and these changes are constantly associated with personal development and a sense of self-responsibility for their own learning, perhaps promoted by the transitions from smaller cities to bigger ones. For them, learning should be constructed through a constant search for knowledge. For Ana Claudia, learning English means knowledge of, and socialization with, people from other cultures, and in order to achieve this socialization, she highlights the importance of oral practice in order to be successful: "*Aprender Inglês é você conhecer + é você aprender também + é se socializar + conhecer outras culturas + enfim é conhecer + conhecer outras culturas + outras pessoas... esse tipo de coisa + e é bom o professor sempre ta falando em Inglês…*". In a similar way, Naiane conceives learning as knowing different things and the consequent search for appropriate ways to reach this knowledge. The self-reliance in Ana Claudia's and Naiane's learning approach, therefore, is particularly manifested in the reduced role they attribute to the teacher, as reported in the following statements:

> O professor pode até ajudar + mas se você não quiser + você tipo se deixar levar também + se você não correr atrás também + você não aprende + você tem que também querer além dele tá ajudando + você tem que pesquisar + tem que estar estudando sempre. (Ana Claudia)
> Se eles os alunos realmente desejarem sair do curso fluentes + eu acho que é possível + eu acho que isso não depende só do professor + depende de as pessoas terem realmente a vontade de aprender + se você tiver vontade de aprender você aprende qualquer coisa. (Naiane)

For Ana Claudia and Naiane, the traditional view of the teacher as the "provider" of knowledge and as the most highlighted element in the classroom seems to have decreased in its importance. Instead, as

Naiane asserts, there are many resources today for students to learn English.

4.2.1.4 An English-course approach: Jefferson's and Jessica's stories (see Appendix A.4)

Jefferson's and Jessica's adopted approach is particularly marked by their constant reliance on private English courses. These courses are generally said to be an alternative to those students who disregard from the formal school the task of learning a foreign language.

By attaching increasing importance to English courses, the two students recognized that they provided to them what they lacked in their formal language education: opportunity to succeed in learning English. An interesting point, however, is that this recognition emerges in opposition to their formal school education. In Jessica's story, her first statement shows the deficient character of the formal school in promoting an acceptable foreign language education. For her, to learn English in public schools is a utopia ("*Inglês na escola pública praticamente não existe*"). Since the beginning of her story – when she was asked to state some of her past experiences of English learning – Jessica seems to have always been interested in English, but she equally seems to reduce her primary school by commenting on the rules of the verb "to be", perhaps due to the fact that she was extensively exposed to this verb in her primary years and marked her primary experiences. On the other hand, Jefferson did not particularly like English, especially because of his difficulty in assimilating[10] things. For him, the problems associated with English in public schools are concerned with the teaching method used and the unprepared teachers. Thus, it becomes clear that their initial linguistic hurdles may have been caused by their view of language learning as a collection of things to be learned, and the assimilative character of their approach, which seemed to hinder their own development.

Both Jessica and Jefferson experienced two different settings in secondary school, which consequently led them to hold different views of their own language learning. For Jefferson, secondary school was better than primary, especially because of the "technical" role of his vocabulary acquisition: "*…foi um pouco melhor + porque ai já veio a questão de algo mais técnico dentro das palavras…*". Thus, he thinks he

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[10] This word was strongly emphasized by Jefferson during his interview. For him, English should be assimilated.

progressed mainly due to the words, sentences and texts he was "memorizing" (Benson & Lor, 1999) for *Vestibular*. In other words, he did not seem to have changed his view of language learning as an assimilative process. That is, he should be exposed to a collection of things (names, sentences and texts) in order to learn the language. Jessica was exposed to a technical secondary school environment (*Curso de Magistério*), which gave her a credential to be a primary teacher. However, she seems to regret having taken that course, especially because important disciplines such as English were not devoted much attention. She studied English only in the first of the four years of secondary technical school; and although she had a teacher who tried to implement oral tasks, she was one of the students who did not feel prepared to actively engage in learning English at the time.

The two students finished secondary school with the feeling that they had failed to learn English, and in their view, primary and secondary school were the settings where English learning did not occur (Paiva, 2007). In fact, their experiences of learning English had proven it as a truth that learning would not be achieved with an assimilative view of language learning.

Perhaps due to this recognition, their learning approach does seem to have shifted when they entered tertiary level: their focus on the free English course has now become salient. However, the way they view the English course is somewhat different. Jessica had already attended two years of an English course before her college entrance, which means that, to a certain extent, she was influenced by the course in her decision to take *Curso de Letras/Inglês* as her tertiary educational level. In addition, it also means that her beginning experience at university is not being particularly difficult ("*...ele ((professor)) começou assim com coisa bem básicas ((risos)) eu até estranhei um pouquinho + porque eu pensei que já ia começar de algo um pouco mais pra frente...*"); instead, her willingness to improve English is evident in her adopted learning approach. She acknowledges the importance of the English course through her awareness that most of her peers may not have had the opportunity to attend an English course as she had, which for her is completely understandble: "*mas eu compreendo também porque tem muita gente na sala que eu percebo que não tem muito contato com Inglês + talvez tenha tido o mesmo contato que eu tive na escola fundamental e ensino médio + pronto + creio que tem muita gente assim + que não teve a oportunidade de fazer um cursinho de Inglês*". In other words, Jessica shows enthusiasm about the beginning of her experiences at university, which is strongly

emphasized by the similarities of the university classes to those of the English course she previously attended ("…*aqui na universidade o início das aulas esta mais parecido com o início de aula dos cursinhos de Inglês…*")

On the other hand, Jefferson's reliance on the English course emerges as an alternative to his self-struggle to learn English at college. He views himself as a product of a deficient language education in his own institutional environment ("*eu vim de um ensino fundamental e médio muito degradado*"); and he contends that this is primarily due to the lack of teachers' practice in, and command over, English. However, it is worth noting that, as he has been exposed to an EFL learning setting and contact with the target language is often restricted in amount and quality, he attributes to the teacher, instead of to himself, the task of "providing" knowledge of, and practice in, English. That is, he does not seem to be the agent of his own learning, with the teacher being the only one from whom he can learn and have practice in English. Here, it seems important to remember the approaches of Irene and Watson, whose strong reliance on their teachers did not effectively contribute to their own development. And so it appears to Jefferson, following in Irene's and Watson's footsteps: teachers must effectively provide knowledge while students must effectively receive it. Furthermore, Jefferson feels under pressure, and learning English at university is a synonym of personal struggle, as he states: "*…eu estou aprendendo o Inglês batendo assim* ((*estalos*)) *na parede mesmo + forçado mesmo + e isso esta acabando comigo*". In addition, he feels confused about his choice for *Curso de Letras/Inglês*, which has led him to try a vacancy in the portuguese group. Due to this confusion and all the pressures upon him, the English course appears to him a way to reach his goals: to construct a good résumé and pass *concursos*. It is important that he learns English so that he can achieve these personal goals. In this way, Jefferson thinks English vocabulary should be accumulated – as he states ("…*estou estudando Inglês para assimilar as palavras*") – in a "relaxed" way, without university pressures upon him.

Both Jefferson and Jessica hold apparently confusing views of what learning English means for them. For Jessica, it is concerned with abilities to communicate, which includes talk and comprehension: "*…é compreender + é se comunicar mesmo + é você conseguir conversar com alguém que seja nativo ou não nativo…*". For Jefferson, it is less concerned with individual competences and it is more associated with the transcendence of one's own limits, which involves transitions from different cultures: "*Aprender Inglês significa aprender outras... outros*

limites da vida da pessoa + porque você entra já em outros universos + em outra cultura + em outro aprendizado + em outras relações com outras pessoas". Interesting enough, Jefferson's conception of English learning is closely tied in with that of Ana Claudia, whose learning approach is marked by her self-reliance to learn the language. Besides Jessica's and Jefferson's shared view that exposure to extra readings can enhance their own learning, they think they themselves and their peers will not succeed in learning English if they do not attend a private English course, which is often seen as the setting which foreign language learning effectively occur. One of the consequences of such a course-oriented approach, therefore, is that learning is often seen as a process involving changes in the person; even when this learning is sometimes "*assimilated*", which in turn may lead to breakdowns in one's developmental process of language learning.

4.3 WHAT ARE SOME OF THE SIGNIFICANT LEARNING APPROACHES OF THE EFL GRADUATES BEING STUDIED?

This section seeks to answer research question two by presenting the analysis of EFL graduates' learning approaches, and attempts to capture their representations of learning held by the students in their learning stories. The complete learning stories which I shall refer to here can be found in Appendix B.

4.3.1 Analysis of the graduates' language learning approaches

The graduates' learning experiences represent different journeys to learn English in different settings across Rio Grande do Norte. From students' own accounts, it is possible to observe salient representations of learning in their adopted language learning approaches. These approaches will be discussed in the following.

4.3.1.1 A book-centered approach: Fatima's and Raele's stories (see Appendix B.1)

Much of Fatima and Raele's learning experiences were significantly permeated by the book-centeredness of their adopted approaches to learn English. Focus on the textbook was a salient feature throughout their structured learning lives. Although Fatima was particularly interested in learning English and aimed at acquiring a certain command over the language, she appears to be passive in her

school classes, showing a view of language which was primarily concerned with "memorization" (Benson & Lor, 1999) of contents and activities in order to do the school examinations.

By looking at Fatima's learning story, particularly the following statement, it is possible to extract two emergent features:

> Às vezes acontecia muito de a gente querer decorar + mas como era o... a gente tinha acesso ao livro + a gente queria decorar pra fazer no dia da prova, entendeu?

First, when she says "*agente queria decorar*" she is clearly including herself in this process of memorization of contents. Through memorizing words, sentences and even texts, she tried to understand the tasks written on the textbook, but only in order to remember them for the examinations. An interesting point, however, is that examinations themselves were strictly the focus of students (Gao, 2005), that is, they wanted to get good grades and succeed in school. Book-centeredness is another salient characteristic which emerged not only from Fatima's statement, but also from Raele's learning story ("*basicamente o professor utilizava um livro didático para começar um capítulo*"). As the activities using the book were common, they consequently led Raele and Fatima to develop a book-centered approach to learn, drawing on it whenever they had English classes, especially when exams were around the corner.

For Raele, who experienced a somewhat similar primary learning context, the book equally permeated much of her tasks. However, different from Fatima, Raele's view of the book was that it served as a particular device to practice a procedure previously acquired, that is, the representation of learning as "acquiring facts" (Benson and Lor, 2007): "*a noção era que a gente soubesse traduzir palavras pra tentar traduzir o texto e em seguida responder algumas questões do livro didático*". Thus, they both showed quantitative views of learning as they were highly committed to, at least in their initial phase of school, a book-centered approach to language learning.

Entering secondary school, they took different paths in their trajectories to learn English; and these different paths included different settings of learning. For Fatima, who was experiencing a federal technical school environment, her secondary education was much better in quality, especially because teachers effectively contributed to students' own learning: "*explorava mais questão de... do listening + lá*

já explorava"; and there was significant increase in the amount of interaction compared to the primary school. Her view of language learning did seem to have changed; and this change included a shift into a far more qualitative representation of learning, which she considers a progress. This can be observed in some of her verbs (e.g. "*explorar*", "*conseguir*") to express this gradual turning in the direction of an acceptable approach to learning.

For Raele, however, the book was again in the core of much of her learning, but now with translation tasks for *Vestibular* examination and vocabulary acquisition. In fact, her view of learning had not significantly changed ("*então eu adquiri muito vocabulário*") towards a more qualitative direction. However, she was aware that her approach was not enough for her, showing, in some occasions, a slight transition to a qualitative representation, as clearly seen in the following statement: "*fui instigada a ler muito + eu queria ler um texto em voz alta*". But she failed in transcending to a far more appropriate approach to learning, at least up to that moment, ending up articulating her learning and being situated in the centeredness of the book and in the mere vocabulary accumulation.

Both Raele and Fatima attended *Curso de Letras/Inglês* and studied together in the same learning setting. At college, their ways of construing language learning seemed to be highly centered on their own individual will and effort (Gao, 2005) to learn English. Raele comments on this individual effort of university students in general through the following statement: "*eles têm mais curiosidade + eles têm vontade de falar mais + de se comunicar + ele tem vontade de perguntar mais o professor*". Even within the same learning context, however, they again took different paths in their trajectories to learn English. Fatima seems to be aware that she could have demanded more of herself to study and to learn English. She equally acknowledges the fact that her lack of interest to, and commitment with, her own learning, to a certain extent, harmed her pre-established goals of mastering English. On the other hand, Raele, who had never been exposed to such an interactive environment before, marks the beginning of her turning to a more qualitative view and consequently, an acceptable approach to learning, as she states: "*Na faculdade a prática da oralidade foi que começou a aparecer*".

4.3.1.2 A self-effort approach: Claudio's and Edson's stories (see Appendix B.2)

Self-effort[11] is the most distinctive feature inferred from Claudio and Edson's learning approaches. While Edson's perception of a story being told in the videogames marks the initial phase of his English learning, for Claudio, the accumulation of some English sounds did seem to impact the starting point of his journey to learn English. Both of them are aware that, to succeed in learning a language, they had to demand self-will and effort of themselves. They had, nevertheless, different ways of construing language as an object of learning: for Edson, language is a code, which conveys a clear conception of language as a collection of signs to be deciphered and absorbed by students, that is, his representation of learning a language is that this language is "acquired" (Benson & Lor, 1999); for Claudio, language equally seems to be a collection of things (vocabulary, structures, etc), which conveys a view of language as "memorization" (Bensor & Lor, 1999) and its consequent mechanical use by students. Thus, they showed two different quantitative representations of language learning within the same approach.

In primary school, they articulated their English learning in two very different settings. Edson demonstrated a slight shift in his representations by his predisposition to learn much more outside school than properly within it; and perhaps the most important: for pragmatic reasons ("*eu tava aprendendo coisas por mim mesmo e na escola eu ia aprender outras coisas e eu praticamente não usava aquilo que aprendia na escola"*). He particularly liked English, but to use it for the sake of the videogames ("*isso pra mim era demais"*). However, learning English at school was not his primary interest.

Differently, Claudio had the experience of primary school particularly concerned with vocabulary acquisition ("*agente acabou aprendendo pelo menos vocabulário"*) and "memorization" (Benson & Lor, 1999) of words. However, this experience would have, latter on, a deep impact on his own views of English learning; for he started to situate himself in a position strongly based on the accumulation and

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[11] The two students' approach, certainly, shares some similarities with that of the undergraduates Ana Claudia and Naiane (a self-reliant approach). However, the basic difference between the approaches is that the graduate one is particularly concerned with exposure-based opportunities to practice Englsih, while the undergraduate approach demonstrate a strong predisposition to rely on themselves instead of teachers.

increasing of knowledge, that it, a quantitative way of conceiving language learning.

The particular contexts in which they attended secondary school also contributed to their adopted approaches to self-effort learning. While Edson thinks he "*systematized*" his knowledge of English with the help of a "good" teacher he had in the very beginning of his secondary education (…*ele sistematizou aquele meu conhecimento que eu já tinha e isso foi muito valioso*…), Claudio believes that his secondary experience was totally the opposite as compared to that of Edson's: "*A minha aprendizagem no ensino médio eu lhe diria que foi catastrófica*". Among the many difficulties they faced to learn English, they explain their different views of some contents of the traditional curriculum to which they were exposed. One of these views is that of the teachers' repetitive concern with the verb "to be". For Claudio, there was not any practical way to articulate the verb "to be" within everyday conversation, especially because there was not any type of English-medium conversation. On the other hand, Edson seems to acknowledge the importance of the verb to be, for students to use it as a basis to comprehend subsequent contents ("*se os alunos não aprendem esse conteúdo básico + esse conhecimento básico da estrutura da língua Inglesa + como da continuidade?*"). Therefore, Edson's view of the use of the verb "to be" appears to be, again, more qualitative than that of Claudio's.

Even though Edson and Claudio adopted self-effort approaches to language learning, both seemed to attach, in some contexts, increasing importance to exposure-based (Benson & Lor, 1999), practical, and significant experiences outside the structured settings of the school; thus developing far more active approaches to learning. They did seem to be aware of the fact that, if they did not demand of themselves to learn English, perhaps their pre-established learning goals would be frustrated. Edson, for instance, considered to be more important than school the particular experience of talking to an Israeli engineer; as he himself states: "*o salto qualitativo não se deu por causa da escola + mas se deu por causa de uma experiência que eu tive durante o terceiro ano*". Following a somewhat similar line, Claudio sought outside the school walls his particular way of achieving what he wanted: "*o meu programa de final de semana era ir para as praias pra encontrar gringos e ficar ouvindo eles falarem*". He equally marks this phase of his learning life as a predisposition to adopt a far more appropriate approach to his English learning, as clearly seen in his statement: "*Há um despertamento meu com relação a aprendizagem nesse sentido +*

muito do gostar + do querer + ai construir espaço dessa aprendizagem..."

From this statement, it is also possible to note that the words he uses to describe this turning point in his learning representation also shifted. He uses "*despertamento*", which is derived from "*despertar*", and also "*contruir*", which are far more related to a qualitative approach to language learning; given the "deficiency" of the teaching he was exposed to. However, even with a slight shift in his view, Claudio's approach to language learning seems to be the same, that is, knowledge (a verb tense, in this case) should be increased and accumulated little by little, as seen in the following statement: "*Um ponto que marcou pra mim + foi + foi onde eu vim aprender o presente continuo + foi + foi onde eu realmente aprendi como utilizar o presente continuo que até então pra mim era algo muito solto*".

From Claudio's learning account, it is possible to suggest that he expressed qualitative representations of learning when "listening to *gringos* on the beach", but shifted to quantitative representations when talking about grammar and vocabulary tasks. Thus, it appears to be the case that his constant transitions from one learning path to a different one caused him contradictory ways (Benson & Lor, 1999) in conceiving his language learning.

Edson and Claudio's self-will and effort to learn increased when they entered the university. Each of them experienced two significant moments during their academic life. For Claudio, the university itself was a landmark in his learning journey, especially for it "systematized" his English (…*a prória universidade… foi onde eu vim sistematizar o meu Inglês*…) Besides that, his contact with foreign students at the end of tertiary level was also an important feature for him. However, Claudio's approach at college appears to move back and forth in such a way that his representations of language learning were constantly going from a qualitative movement to a quantitative one. On the other hand, Edson spent much of his tertiary level being a reticent student and did not expect to have more interests in English. However, his first encounter with Rob, another foreigner he used to talk to, seems to have significantly impressed him; and he gave his best to be situated in the direction of an appropriate approach, which seems to have been consolidated by the newer experience as a teacher of English. Therefore, the two stories are full of transitions in their own representations of learning, but with the predominance of a qualitative way of experiencing reality, which for them constituted an effort-based approach.

4.3.1.3 A teacher-reliant approach: Angelina's and Joel's stories (see Appendix B.3)

Reliance on teachers[12] is the most salient feature of Angelina and Joel's learning approaches. By attaching increasing importance to them, they strongly voiced their dependence on their teachers' support and attention. Both attended primary school in different settings and developed different representations of learning English. Angelina demonstrates impotence regarding her learning context, as shown in the beginning of her story:

> Inicialmente a minha experiência como aprendiz não foi boa + porque eu vivenciei um período em que a estrutura de **ensino aqui na região era muito limitado** e os professores de línguas eles geralmente... é na verdade tinham outra formação + então **eu via desde cedo** + tinha vontade de aprender + mas via que o sistema não me oferecia um ensino de qualidade com relação à línguas + hoje + eu vejo que já houve um avanço + muito embora tenha muito mais pra melhorar + **mas percebo que** os profissionais de hoje + já encontramos mais profissionais formados realmente em línguas trabalhando nas escolas do que no período em que eu estava cursando.

Such an impotence is illustrated by some of Angelina's statements (e.g. "*eu via desde cedo...*", "*o ensino aqui na região era muito limitado*" "*mas percebo que...*"). The way she construed her language learning expressed an often comparison between having and lacking good and prepared teachers for her effective learning, which shows, to a certain extent, a more active role upon her learning difficulties. On the other hand, Joel was much more prone to succeed in examinations (Gao, 2005) and to get good grades through his tricks to apparently succeed in his studies. It is clear, therefore, that he appears to

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[12] The two students' approach, certainly, shares some similarities with that of the undergraduates Irene and Watson (*Teacher-as-a-transmitter approach*). However, the basic difference between the two approaches is that the undergraduate one is particularly concerned with "transmission of knowledge" ("*passar conhecimento*"), while the graduate approach is more centered on the support as well as on the figure of the good teacher itself. However, in discussing Angelina's and Joel's approach, I often make reference to that of Irene and Watson's.

be more passive in his actions, as compared to Angelina: "*eu freqüentava a escola + então eu ia pra escola + chegava da escola jogava meu material lá e ia brincar + entendeu?*"; thus showing a less active character of his primary learning.

Although much of Angelina's experience is permeated by quantitative ways of viewing her learning, she expresses far more qualitative representations of language learning than Joel. While she seemed to interpret her reality by "seeing" and "observing", Joel was more concerned with memorizing contents and tasks (Benson and Lor, 1999) in order to remember for the school examinations, which became easier for him with the memorization of tasks. However, perhaps due to the transitions from one context to another, Angelina's started to slightly shift her approach towards a less active degree.

Both Angelina and Joel had a deficient primary school; and they complain that it was primary because of their teachers: they were unprepared and were only paying a debt. What is implied in Angelina's way of seeing her teachers was that, if they were prepared, they could have developed her English skills, which clearly demonstrates the dependent characteristic of her own approach to learning in that particular setting. It is worth observing, thus, that she was strongly reliant on teachers' attention and help, that is, she needed a reference to draw upon during her learning. And this reference was the teachers themselves.

The two students attended secondary school in two very different settings. As a consequence, they also had two different ways of construing language learning as being very much influenced by their particular environmental factors. For Joel, the fact that he went to study in the capital and particularly because he was then experiencing a new way of learning, which was "cool" for him, he emphasizes his perception that, prepared teachers promote good learning. For Angelina, whose secondary education was attended in a technical school, teachers' dependency was again a central issue for her. The way she viewed the teaching, the tasks and the contents made her feel uncomfortable. However, she appears to be reticent and subject of her own learning, relegating to teachers the task of being responsible for an activity which was hers by nature: self-management of her own language learning.

Although Joel was more comfortable with his new English learning experiences, he and Angelina showed quantitative ways of seeing language learning, which were primarily committed with the teacher being the "provider" of knowledge and stimulus to succeed in their learning life; that is, they seem to reject transition to more

qualitative representations of their own learning. Here, Angelina's and Joel's approach appear to show some congruence with that of the undergraduates Irene and Watson: teachers must transfer his/her knowledge to students. However, Angelina and Joel seem to be, in this case, much more concerned with the presence of "good" and "prepared" teachers than the undergraduates. By frequently comparing past with newer experiences learning English, as well as comparing primary to secondary teachers, Joel becomes, in the end of secondary school, highly oriented to succeed in school competitions and examinations; and this exam-orientedness (Gao, 2005) was developed primary for the sake of *Vestibular*, which was around the corner, and demanded much more effort from both, he himself and his teachers.

The experience at university seems to have led Angelina to see her own learning with a far more qualitative eye ("*se você for comparar como você entra na faculdade e como você sai + você avança*"). Her verbs also seem to prove her transition to a comfortable approach to learning: "*observer*", "*perceber*", "*despertar*". However, she also seem to be, again, particularly concerned with "acquiring procedures" (Benson & Lor, 1999) from her teachers to use in her practical life, thus being prone to adopt a the previous teacher-dependent approach to learning. On the other hand, Joel consolidates his clear representation of learning as a collection of things to be learned ("*...quando eu entrei no curso de letras eu já tinha uma base da língua Inglesa + o Inglês fundamental + o Inglês básico...*"). He also highlights his teacher-dependence by comparing tertiary teachers to those of the previous levels, and exacerbates the qualities of the former: "*tivemos na faculdade professores compromissados*".

In light of their predisposition to adopt a teacher-dependent approach to learning, it is possible to observe that, if their main representation of language learning was that of being taught by good and prepared teachers, they should have succeeded in their English learning within the English-medium setting of tertiary level, given that it had good and prepared teaches available. As a result, however, the impact of their adopted approaches to learning seems to have led Angelina, and with less intensity, Joel, to a certain level of frustration in mastering the language effectively. This is what they revealed in the following statements:

> ...Eu achava que sabia Inglês + eu poderia ter produzido bem mais na faculdade se por acaso eu tivesse ingressado na faculdade sem nenhuma

> noção de Inglês + porque eu iria ter mais vontade de procurar + de aprender aquilo... (Joel)

> ...Mas eu não sai com fluência + e isso foi uma frustração pra mim... (Angelina)

While Joel's statement seems to fit on Benson and Lor's (1999) metaphor of English as a burden, which the basic quantitative idea is that of a "declining rate of return on effort: the more you know, the less you are able to learn for a given amount of effort" (p. 468), in Angelina's statement, it is clear her feeling of failure for not having succeeded in the process of learning English, which consequently appears to have caused her a feeling of inferiority.

4.3.1.4 A reticent approach: Carlos' and James' stories (see Appendix B.4)

Reticence is a commonality in Carlos' and James' approaches to learning English. Throughout their learning experiences, they took different paths and transited in different settings in order to articulate their language learning. Both James and Carlos had their primary school permeated by linguistic hurdles, especially in Carlos's story ("*foi um contato muito fraco mesmo*"). As he did not particularly like English, he consequently did not demonstrate any type of resistance to that particular situation he was experiencing: he did not act in favor of a shift in his learning approach. For James, who began to study English earlier than Carlos, studying the language provided him with more enjoyment, and he soon found a way of get a scholarship to study English in a private course. Although James did seem to be highly oriented to learn the language, he equally demonstrated a certain acceptance and reticence to the obstacles of that learning context, as he revealed in this statement:

> A aula no ensino fundamental + naquele tempo eu considerava razoável + mas hoje em dia eu vejo que era bem precária + tem pouca coisa que a gente conseguia realmente tirar dali… a aula basicamente era o professor indo à lousa e a gente + os alunos + na carteira acompanhando com o livro e escrevendo + só.

Carlos' and James' learning approaches appear to represent two different ways of conceiving language as an object of learning. Carlos' view is more concerned with language as a collection of grammatical aspects and vocabulary for students to acquire and consequently increase their knowledge (Benson and Lor, 1999). James' way of construing his own learning approach appears to be more concerned with language as the acquisition of a procedure for students to use in everyday life: "com o método que eu aprendi no ensino médio + o método que eles usaram foi melhor". From the first part of this statement, it is possible to observe that, students should have a method to learn English. However, when he further talks about this method, it seems to be implied in his words that the method was not actually learned, but "acquired" from the teachers, which shows the quantitative character of his representation and the passive role he played in his learning approach.

As both of them had studied some years in a private English course, they appear to show certain self-confidence in tertiary level. For example, Carlos argues that his previous knowledge was not enhanced when he entered the university: "o meu aprendizado na faculdade foi muito pouco + porque eu já sabia já de praticamente todo conteúdo que o professor dava em sala de aula". This statement shows that he viewed his learning at the university as a burden (Benson & Lor, 1999), which the primary quantitative idea is that "the more you know, the less you are able to learn" (p. 468). As he showed a reticent approach to his learning, this idea of English as a burden appear to be, according to Benson and Lor (1999), "rationale as long as the learner holds to a conception of language as consisting of a definite number of items to be learned" (p. 468). Although Carlos demonstrated self-confidence regarding his command of the language, he appears to confess that he himself was an example of unsuccessful learning by stating that: "o aluno que realmente se interessar em aprender Inglês teria como aprender na universidade". This statement inevitably lead us to observe that Carlos seems to exclude himself from those students actually interested in learning English, which becomes clear that he consolidates the subjective character of his approach to language learning.

James equally demonstrates the passive trait of his adopted approach by stating his absent role ("não houve um aprendizado específico em língua Inglesa"); instead, he hoped that the program should have been responsible for his own development by "providing" him with knowledge and stimulus ("eu acredito que não me

engrandeceu quase nada"), thus becoming clear that he was not the agent of his own learning, but a mere subject of it.

In light of James' and Carlos' adopted approaches, therefore, the two students' language learning experiences were significantly permeated by the lack of active engagement in their individual learning. As James hoped for a rapid increase in his amount of English knowledge through the university, he seems to carry a feeling of resentment and bitterness regarding his learning in tertiary level. In the case of Carlos, a mixture of frustration with a feeling of time wasted appears to be between the lines of his story-telling.

4.4 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter has presented the analysis of data, which was guided by the two central research questions proposed for this research. At first, I provided the analysis of the undergraduates' learning approaches through their own stories (see Appendix A) of English learning in different educational settings across Rio Grande do Norte. Secondly, I presented the analysis of the graduates' learning approaches as revealed in their own stories (see Appendix B) of English learning in different educational settings across Rio Grande do Norte.

In the following chapter, I shall proceed in the following manner. First, I shall provide a summary of the data analysis, taking into account the two research questions discussed to in this chapter. After this, I shall present the pedagogical implications and limitations of the present study. Finally, I shall offer suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER V

FINAL REMARKS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This concluding chapter aims at presenting a summary of the data analysis shown in chapter IV. In addition, I present some pedagogical implications of this study, as well as its limitations. Finally, I offer suggestions for further research on students learning approaches.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS RESPONSES

As I have already mentioned, the present research sought to capture the specificities and complexities in the developmental processes of two groups of EFL students' language learning approaches in different educational settings across Rio Grande do Norte. In this light, the research design was guided by the two central research questions, whose responses are summarized in the following sections.

5.2.1 What are some of the significant learning approaches of the EFL undergraduates being studied?

As regards the undergraduates' particular experiences of learning English in different educational contexts, their own stories revealed that the students adopted four main learning approaches, which are sketched as follow:

1. teacher-as-a-transmitter;
2. Job-orientedness;
3. Self-reliance; and
4. English-course-orientedness

These approaches emerged primarily from their own representations of language learning, as well as from the way they view themselves. In line with what some scholars (e.g. Gao, 2005; Miccoli, 2001; Paiva & Braga, 2008) have found concerning students' learning approaches, the undergraduate's stories also indicated that the different educational learning contexts to which they have been exposed since primary school had a deep impact on these representations, and

consequently, on their own learning approaches. Yet, that does not necessarily imply that these approaches are unique, stable, fixed and doomed to be inherent to a particular student. Rather, they are in constant change and movement. Thus, it is likely that the same student may hold more then only one of these approaches throughout his/her learning experience. In addition, students adopted approaches have also shown a tendency to allow for some overlapping characteristics. In other words, the approaches do not constitute separate compartments, but are flexible, fluid and subject to the variations of the learning contexts as well as the to the learning experiences to which students are exposed. Figure 5.2 (p. 86) illustrates the undergraduates' approaches interwoven with those of the graduates'.

The first approach, **teacher-as-a-transmitter**, was most salient in Irene's and Watson's learning story. In their view, teachers should find effective ways to transmit their knowledge to students, which also clearly shows a strong reliance on their teachers. This finding seems to touch on the same point suggested by others researchers such as Barci, (2006) and Abrahão (2004), when they discuss what they have found about representations of good language teachers. In this approach, the good teacher is the one who knows how to effectively "transmit" knowledge to students. The words "assimilate", "transmit" and "record" are the ones most emphasized by the two undergraduate students. For them, learning is constructed as a cognitive process involving language reproduction (Gao, 2005); and linguistic knowledge is enhanced through the collection of things to be learned (Benson & Lor, 1999).

The second approach, **job-orientedness**, was a commonality in Ben's and Wilson's learning stories. For them, learning English is a concrete way to reach their objectives concerning the labor market and it is also a synonym of success in competing to enter the market. Interestingly enough, the issue of students' strong wish to increase social and cultural capital has also been found in Clemente and Higgins's (2008) collection of narratives. Due to the global discourse of English as a way to achieve a better economic and social life, the two students seem to firmly envision the English language as a "catapult" (Paiva & Braga, 2008) to personal success. As both of them came from limited economical conditions, it is important for them to learn English so that they can have their employment chances significantly increased, as Wilson revealed in this statement: "*eu sou muito procurado pra trabalhar como professor de Inglês*".

The third approach, **self-reliance**, was the most emphasized in Ana Claudia's and Naiane's learning journeys. Interwoven into their

primary and secondary education were the difficult and sometimes 'good' learning situations. However, their wish to learn English and the sense of self-responsibility with their own learning became much more salient when they entered tertiary level. It is equally important to note that Ana Claudia and Naiane hold the trendy view that they have to extend beyond their parochial places in order to meet their educational and professional goals. They wish to broaden and explore new sets of relationships, which, interestingly enough, is perfectly aligned with Kanno and Norton's (2003) comments of Katarina's and Rui's stories. Ana Claudia and Naiane seem to foresee not only the concrete future world for them, but also a "*possible*" world in which they themselves are the ones responsible to construct it. Thus, the two students seem be in charge of their learning, that is, they are firmly predisposed to develop an autonomous (Paiva & Braga, 2008) learning process.

The fourth of the undergraduates' learning approaches, that is, **English-course-orientedness**, is most salient in Jessica's and Jefferson's learning biographies. Their learning experiences are significantly marked by the fact that they attach increasing importance to private English courses, and through this attachment, they came to the recognition that these English courses provided what they lacked in their formal language education: opportunity to succeed in learning English. In doing so, they seem to deny that the formal school (primary and secondary education) may have the role of promoting foreign language learning. This view certainly resonates with what Paiva and Braga (2008) have found in their narratives of foreign language learning in secondary schools: "In fact, most high school institutions focus only on grammar, translation and sometimes reading. As oral skills are usually ignored, it is common sense that, if one wants to learn a language, one must go to a private language school" (p. 23). However, as Jessica and Jefferson appear to be strongly course-driven, the private English course seems to be the only alternative to learn English. In this respect, even though Paiva and Braga (2008) acknowledge the importance of attending a private course in one's English learning, the authors caution us about the strong reliance on these courses, as they "are not acknowledged as ideal" (p. 23)

The undergraduates' biographical accounts illustrate a range of reasons to learn English (e.g. to listen to songs, to travel, to find a job, etc.). However, most of these reasons are linked to a strong wish to learn and to speak English fluently. This, together with the results of those studies of students' narratives (Paiva, 2007; Paiva & Braga, 2008; Miccoli, 2001), indicates that the trendy discourse of English as a way

for one to expand and increase social and cultural capital (Clemente & Higgins, 2008), which is made manifest mainly through English cultural artifacts, exerts strong influence on students' learning approaches.

5.2.2 What are some of the significant learning approaches of the EFL graduates being studied?

With respect to the graduates' group, it was also possible to capture particular learning approaches. The graduates' own stories reflect that there are four learning approaches, which are sketched as follow:

1. Book-centeredness;
2. Self-effort;
3. Teacher-reliance; and
4. Reticence.

These approaches were, again, drawn from the graduates' own representations of their language learning as well as their particular modes of viewing themselves. As already mentioned, the different educational settings to which they have been exposed throughout their learning lives played a key role in the way students constructed these representations. The fact that the graduate group already experienced tertiary level appears not to have significantly influenced the fluid character of the features surrounding their learning approaches, that is, they are also open to constant changes. Of course graduates seem to be "more experienced" in terms of exposure to the foreign language, but it does not necessarily lead us to consider the features of their own learning approaches as being somewhat different than the undergraduate level. The point is that these approaches can also overlap with those of the undergraduate group, which necessarily implies transitions in the modes of conceiving the language learning and the self. Therefore, the graduates' approaches tie in with those of the undergraduates. In the section that follows, figure 5.2 illustrates this point.

The first particular approach of the graduate group, that is, **book-centeredness**, was most salient in Fatima's and Raele's learning approaches. Both Fatima and Raele were exposed to a private learning context in primary school. Thus, as one of the private institutions' demands was to study the whole book in the school year, the two students consequently began to develop a strong reliance on the school textbook. They entered secondary education in two different schools:

Raele in the same school of the primary level, Fatima in a federal technical school. However, their reliance on the book became much more intense in secondary education. This can possibly be explained by the fact that private schools are generally recognized by their availability of materials and resources for the students to learn, which includes the textbook. In this way, the two stories are extremely permeated by the book-centeredness of the participants, which does not necessarily mean, however, that all students from private schools are reliant on the book. As both of them come from families with certain financial conditions, which means that they were also afforded good educational opportunities, their centeredness on the school book seems to touch on the same point raised by Paiva and Braga (2008), when they discuss about foreign language learning in the country: "In Brazil, poor students are not charged for textbooks in general, but there are no foreign language materials available. If a teacher wants to use a book, students must pay for it. Learning a foreign language in Brazil is, in fact, a commodity for higher classes although it is an obligatory subject in high school curricula" (p. 23).

The second approach captured in the graduate group is that of **self-effort**. This characteristic was a commonality in Claudio's and Edson's learning stories, as both seemed to attach, in some contexts, increasing importance to exposure-based (Benson & Lor, 1999), practical, and significant experiences outside the structured settings of the school. The particular experience Edson gained through interacting with an Israeli engineer together with Claudio's willingness to learn English by listening to "*gringos*" in the beaches of Rio de Janeiro cogently contributes to form the roots of their learning approaches. They seem to leave all the deficiencies of the formal school education aside and seek for significant opportunities to improve their knowledge of the language outside the school fences. This appears to be intimately bonded with Paiva and Braga's (2008) argument that "different students react differently to the context constraints and adapt themselves, constantly searching for alternatives to supply what their school had denied them" (p. 26). The university was also an important factor for them to increase their self-will and effort to learn English. This is clearly seen in Claudio's "*systematization*" of the language as well as in Edson's contact with Rob. In this way, they appear to show total independence and control regarding their own language learning, that is, their investment (Norton, 1995) in language learning led them to be the ones in charge of their own learning, taking strong control over their own learning goals. In other words, they adopted an approach firmly

dependent on their self-effort, which appear to have made them aligned with the autonomy suggested by Paiva and Braga (2008).

The third significant feature emerging from the graduate students was **teacher-reliance**; and it was the most salient of Angelina's and Joel's learning biographies. The two students had different views of their learning, but they shared a common theme: they strongly voiced their reliance on their teachers' support and attention. The way they construed their own language learning expressed an often comparison between having and lacking good and prepared teachers for their effective learning. Although university was a new opportunity for them to be exposed to and practice English, they do seem disappointed for not having demanded more of themselves in order to improve their knowledge of English. Both of them were highly committed with the teacher being the "provider" (Barci, 2006) of knowledge and stimulus to succeed in their learning life. In this way, it can be said that this strong reliance on teachers' support, to a certain extent, hindered their predispositions to adopt a more independent learning. In other words, they do not seem to be the agents of their own learning, which is characterized by their lack of autonomy (Paiva & Braga, 2008).

The fourth of the learning approaches identified in the graduate group was that of **reticence**. This was the most salient in Carlos' and James's biographical accounts. Both of them had their primary and secondary school permeated by linguistic hurdles, but their adopted learning approaches appear to represent two different ways of conceiving language as an object of learning. Carlos seems more prone to conceive his own language learning as a collection of grammatical aspects and vocabulary for students to "increase their knowledge" (Benson & Lor, 1999), while James seems more concerned with "acquiring procedures" (Benson & Lor, 1999). In any case, these two views of language learning may contribute to the reserved and passive character of their adopted approaches. However, the two students seem to be aware, especially when they entered tertiary level, that an active role is constantly required from them, but this awareness does not seem to be translated into real action. This reticent trait of the two students' learning approaches, thus, seems to corroborate what Miccoli (2001) found in Paula's learning story. Therefore, in resonance with the author, a lack of a clear motive to learn a language may contribute to this reserved and reticent character of the students' adopted approaches.

The students' stories illustrate the different paths which graduate students took in order to learn and improve English. The students' learning approaches are subject to constant shifts depending on the

individual who holds them and on the variations in the learning contexts to which the individual is exposed. The following section presents this interwoven character.

5.2.3 The interwoven character of the approaches

By listening to EFL students' own leaning stories, it was possible to capture some of the specificities and complexities of the students' learning approaches. In line with the purpose of this study, the following two illustrations provide (1) a summary of the two sets of approaches captured in the EFL students' learning biographies, as well as (2) the interwoven character of these approaches.
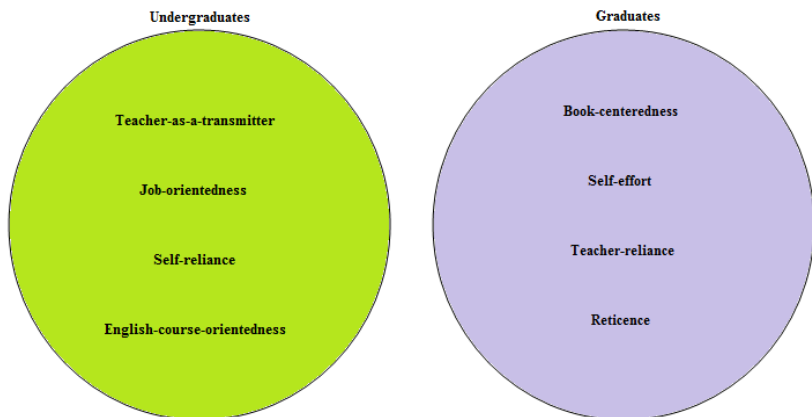
Figure 5.1 – EFL students' learning approaches

These approaches are flexible, fluid and subject to constant shifts. Thus, they are also capable to interweave among themselves throughout the learning experiences of a particular student, no matter the student who adopted such an approach is a graduate or an undergraduate: they are all tied in with one another. For instance, it is likely that the same student may hold just one of these approaches as well as some (or all) of them in his/her whole learning experiences, as show below.
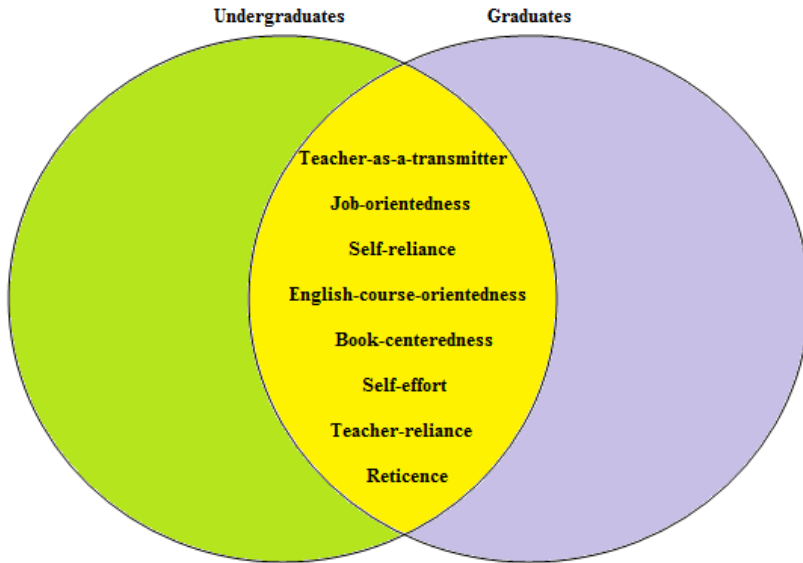
Figure 5.2 – Interwoven character of EFL students' approaches

The fluidity of these approaches has, therefore, important consequences for the understanding of the students' own language learning processes. Many of these approaches are best understood when considered in connection with other(s), which means that they complement one another. The fact that they were presented in chapter IV clustered in a single heading does not mean that they are not part of wider net of relationships with the others.

5.3 PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

As regards the EFL students' learning stories, it is possible to say that they can, to a certain extent, be representative of the journeys which many EFL students usually go about to learn English in similar educational settings within and outside *Vale do Açu*. By nurturing these students to tell their own learning tales it is, undoubtedly, possible for teachers to understand and perhaps help them to overcome some linguistic hurdles, to organize their own learning process, to "alleviate frustrations" as well as to reorient them to develop "cooperative/collaborative activities" (Gao, 2005, p. 17). The results, therefore, suggests that teachers should not neglect the beneficial

component of listening to students' own voices. Through recounting their own language learning stories, socio and cultural issues inevitably emerge, and these issues could be useful resources in helping students to understand their own learning processes. Some of these issues include, therefore, the recognition that they are learning two different languages; the awareness that they have an identity which is fragmented and decentered; and the constant requirements that they position themselves in face of the events which have happened and are currently happening to them.

The research findings also revealed that the different learning contexts to which students have been exposed, whether private or public, municipal or federal, had a strong impact on the students own conceptualizations of their language learning, as well as of themselves (Gao, 2005; Paiva & Braga, 2008). In fact, the data indicate that EFL students adopt a certain approach depending on the contextual factors to which they are exposed, which means that their own learning approaches appear to mirror, and be mirrored by, these contextual factors. Thus, it does not seem overstating to suggest that one can be more predisposed to adopt an active approach to language learning if provided with at least well-developed teaching and its consequent assessment. In contrast, students who are exposed to a traditional curriculum can be, under certain conditions, more prone to adopt a less active approach.

On the other hand, it does not necessarily negate the fact that some students can succeed in learning English even exposed to bad conditions of learning (as some of the studies in chapter II revealed). And still, some students may not show active approaches when exposed to appropriate conditions of learning. My sense is that, above all, students themselves are the ones responsible to choose the learning approaches which best suit them, and fulfill their learning needs, in a process that they themselves are the co-workers of their own learning. In this light, it is crucial that students reflect on their own language learning experiences within those specific contexts and critically analyze the relationship between their behavior and the whole context (Barci, 2006).

What is ultimately most exciting for the author of this study, who followed in the footsteps of researchers conducting cogent work in the field of Applied Linguistics (e.g. Gao, 2005; Benson & Lor, 1999; Lin at al, 2002; Paiva and Braga, 2008; Miccoli, 2001), Cultural Studies (Hall, 1997; 2006; Silva, 2000) and Sociology (Giddens, 1991) is that

the notion of students' interwoven approaches can be theoretically appropriate for the exploration of foreign language learning processes.

5.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study has its main limitation centered on the fact that the data were collected through only one round of interview. Lasting about 25 minutes per student, the purpose of the interviews was to elicit biographical information of the participants. Interviews are, as pointed out by many researchers (e.g. Benson & Lor, 1999; Gao, 2007; Block, 1997; 1998; Roberts, 2002), a useful source to collect the biographical accounts of the research participants. However, only one round of interview raises many future issues and intriguing points which deserve attention on the data analysis stage. These points could, certainly, be retrieved through a second round of interview.

This single-round-interview can be explained by the fact that most of the graduates and undergraduates are from other cities (sometimes very distant from Açu) and thus, they come to university in Açu only at the schooldays evenings in the case of the undergraduate group, and the Saturday's mornings and afternoons in the case of the graduate group. It means that the researcher had several difficulties regarding taking the students out of the classroom in order to conduct the interviews. In addition, most of the students, especially the graduate group, stated having some kind of occupation or work during the weekdays, which prevented the researcher to set an appointment with them.

Furthermore, even acknowledging the efficient role of interviews in collecting story-telling data, it appears that collecting other written and/or visual biographical materials, such as school documents, students' diaries and journals, photos and even videos (Telles, 1999) of the students' educational past events, would certainly be complementary data which could have enriched this research study.

However, although the above limitations have taken place, the present study should serve as an effective contribution to future research on EFL students' learning approaches. Some suggestions for those interested in conducting biographical studies focusing on the particular learning approaches of the participants include: (1) the setting of a research study aiming at investigating university teachers' stories of their own language learning. It would certainly provide useful, interesting and innovative data for the SLA literature concerning

learning approaches; (2) a similar investigation carried out in another northeast university in order to compare the main results with those of the present study; and finally, (3) further research comparing both EFL teachers' and students' own learning approaches in different educational settings. Undoubtedly, it would be, even considering regional differences, a rich portrait of most EFL classes in Brazil.

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APPENDIX A - Undergraduates' learning biographies

A.1 TEACHER-AS-A-TRANSMITTER APPROACH: IRENE'S AND WATSON'S STORIES

IRENE'S LEARNING STORY

At primary school

Irene grew up in São Rafael and attended her primary education in a public school of the city. She likes English since the first year she started to study the language and states that it was the discipline which all students wanted to take, perhaps because it was a new experience for them. Her brother, who lives in New Zealand, seems to have influenced her English learning from the very beginning on.

> Comecei a estudar Inglês na quinta série + que agora é sexto ano + e gostava + era louca para aprender ((risos)) para estudar Inglês + porque quem estuda em escola pública só vê Inglês a partir do quinto ano + no sexto ano + então vixe Maria! era o que todo mundo queria aprender + eu já tinha influência do meu irmão + tudo mais + eu gostava bastante + achava radiante quem sabia falar Inglês.

Her teacher in primary school was very much concerned with traditional procedures in class such as with writing on the board and did not demand from students to learn, but was a good teacher.

> A aula no fundamental + eu lembro de... o básico dos básicos ((risos)) no ensino fundamental + pelo menos eu vi a mesma coisa + sempre a mesma coisa + era uma boa professora + mas ela escrevia + só fazia escrever + ela não explicava + não exigia da gente tentar aprender o vocabulário + só fazia escrever + vai cair isso na prova! vai cair isso! era só isso + isso foi da quinta série a oitava série nesse mesmo ritmo.

At secondary school

She also attended her secondary education in a public school, but in the first two years she faced many difficulties regarding her English learning. These difficulties were caused mainly because of the lack of teachers; and when she had teachers' available, they were not committed with students' learning and did not care of their improvement.

> No ensino médio a professora era bastante chata + a primeira prova dela todo mundo tirou nota baixa + um dois + todos os alunos da sala tirou dois porque a gente não conseguia acompanhar o ritmo dela + aí além de a gente não conseguir acompanhar o ritmo + ela não passava o que agente esperava + aí todo mundo concluiu o primeiro ano + e no segundo ano do ensino médio a gente ficou sem professor de Inglês + a gente passou seis meses sem professor de Inglês + vinha um e escrevia lá um texto + pronto! ele explicava + dava uma pincelada e ia embora + passou + aí quando foi em junho apareceu um professor + mas dava duas aulas e passava três semanas sem ir + e assim a gente concluiu.

Irene mentions her last year of secondary school as being more significant than the previous two years, for she had a good teacher, who was committed with students' learning, and she felt motivated to learn English.

> No médio eu acho que eu só tive alguma base a partir do terceiro ano quando eu estudei com o professor... porque ele foi do início + ele foi do básico dos básicos até tentar colocar produção textual para a gente + interpretar textos + foi bom assim + motivou mais + e eu era participativa nas aulas + bastante + sempre fui ((risos)) eu era a mais chata de todos + porque eu perguntava mesmo + porque xxx ele sempre gostava que agente perguntasse + olhe! tem dúvida? Pergunte! então eu perguntava + às vezes a gente saía de lá mais de cinco e quarenta porque eu perguntava + questionava mesmo o porquê daquilo + por que é desse jeito? + por que se pronuncia assim? então eram coisas que eu não via com os outros

professores + eles passavam lá e diziam + é assim + assim e assim + eu já não tinha estímulo de fazer uma pergunta + porque quando a gente ia perguntar eles diziam + não me pergunte nada! ((risos)) eram bons professores + mas não sabiam passar o conteúdo da forma que a gente esperava + eu acho que era isso + o que faltava era isso.

However, in the last semester of the last year, she again had to see her teacher leave school. She felt deeply disappointed, for the *Vestibular* was around the corner and she was not taking any English class. On the other hand, the contribution of the good teacher she had and her efforts to learn English led her to be successful in *Vestibular*.

Tudo que eu aprendi foi porque eu estudei em casa + tudo que eu sei foi porque eu tive força de vontade de vê em casa + e o professor me ajudava muito + ele tirava dúvida + aí quando foi no meio do ano a gente ficou sem professor também no terceiro ano + aí todo mundo ficou triste + sem querer fazer o vestibular + pelo menos eu me senti assim como ++ sei lá + como se tivesse arrancado meus braços + porque ele era um excelente professor e ajudava bastante + as aulas eram por blocos e a gente concluiu o bloco sem professor de Inglês + então ficou aquela coisa ainda muito vaga + porque no meu tempo de estudo todinho ele passou só uns dois meses + ele passou isso pra gente + foi muito bom.

Beginning college

Entering Curso de Letras/Inglês, Irene explains how her first English class at the university was and says she felt afraid for her lack of knowledge in English.

Quando eu entrei + pode-se dizer + eu fiquei até um pouco assustada na primeira aula de xxx + porque eu achava que eu não ia conseguir + ele já chegou falando em Inglês + tudo mais + a gente já ficou todo mundo assustado + de boca aberta com tudo aquilo + então eu me sentia um pouco constrangida com a situação.

She talks about the development of her English classes and says she is already achieving a little progress in her own learning:

> Estão sendo boas + o professor quer que a gente entenda o que ele esta passando e ele vai aos poucos + vai passando os conteúdos aos poucos e a gente esta conseguindo assimilar o ritmo + conforme ele passa conteúdos a gente esta conseguindo + eu mesma achava que eu não ia conseguir + eu vejo que xxx ele até agora esta sendo um excelente professor + como eu estava até comentando com ele + porque eu não conseguia interpretar um texto em Inglês + não conseguia assimilar as coisas + e a partir das aulas dele a gente já esta começando + porque a questão de ouvir + de pronunciar nas aulas + naqueles diálogos que ele faz + nos ajuda a ter algumas concepções + você vai começando a gravar e vai vendo que aquilo não é a dificuldade que você pensa que é + aquele bicho de sete cabeças.

Irene compares her current experiences at the university to that of the previous levels and explains her improvement:

> Eu não conseguia analisar um texto + não conseguia assimilar algumas palavras num texto em Inglês + agora eu consigo + eu estava estudando para a prova dele dessa semana + e consegui interpretar um texto que eu nunca imaginava que eu conseguisse interpretar + agora ele até incentiva a gente a procurar outros livros ou textos + agora eu estou pegando um livro e estou olhando alguns textos e estou tentando fazer a interpretação pra vê se eu consigo adiantar mais.

She talks about the views which society in general and she herself have on her individual experiences at tertiary level:

> Muita gente + como eu escolhi Letras Inglês + tem gente que já vai achando que você sabe tudo + então faz perguntas que você não sabe responder + aí você fica até assim + um pouco constrangido + porque assim + você não sabe... no início eu me achava assim ++ doida ((risos))

porque eu não tinha uma base de nada e ter escolhido um curso que era... mas assim + eu tive muita força de vontade + porque é o que eu queria desde o início + então fui lá e batalhei + então eu espero que eu consiga + nesses quatro anos + pelo menos sair com um nível intermediário + eu me vejo assim + vou procurar sempre melhorar + crescer + conforme for o andamento do curso eu quero crescer.

WATSON'S LEARNING STORY

At primary school

Growing up in Lajes, a city in the middle region of Rio Grande do Norte, Watson's primary school was very poor and with all the rules which were a trait of the teaching. However, he liked English even before his entrance in the primary level.

Na quinta série passei a gostar mais + gostava + eu já gostava do Inglês + só de ouvir assim + mas na quinta série foi que veio as primeiras disciplinas + aí fui me interessando + mas aos poucos... mas... o ensino não era aquela grande coisa não ((risos)) não era grande coisa assim como hoje em dia + era + o professor passava todas as regras do Inglês para os alunos + os alunos mais decoravam ((risos)) aquilo tudo + e era isso.

Watson remembers that he was very interested in learning English, but at the same time he became sad: for he did not learn from his teachers; and for there was not any exposure to, and practice in, English.

Não aprendi muito porque não tinha o diálogo + só passava as regras + mas não... eu ficava um pouco empolgado para aprender + mas ao mesmo tempo triste porque não aprendia + não saía dali + era sempre aquele mesmo patamar + naquela mesma aprendizagem + e eu era participativo + porque eu procurava aprender + não na quinta série + na quinta serie eu tava um pouco tímido +

> mas depois + na sexta + na sétima + oitava + a
> gente ficou muito participativo.

At secondary school

He entered secondary school more willing to learn English, especially because his parallel experiences in an English course did seem to have significantly influenced him. Hence, his secondary education was much better than the primary level.

> No ensino médio já foi melhor + porque tinha os professores que eu conhecia também e eles faziam curso comigo + e eles passavam tudo aquilo que eles aprendiam eles passavam para os alunos + na escola mesmo eu via o empenho deles + e aí foi melhor + porque eu me empolguei bastante e utilizei aquilo que eu tinha aprendido + foi melhor no ensino médio + não era só as mesmas regras + *there are* + *there is* + eu progredi bastante.

However, Watson confesses that he improved his knowledge, but it was mainly due to the experiences he was gaining in the community English course he was attending.

> Mas eu progredi mais no ensino médio também porque + eu progredi mais por causa do curso + mas eu utilizava o curso e o ensino médio deu um empurrãozinho também + não era um curso profissional assim + cursos de renome + em que no final do curso da um certificado + não recebi certificado algum + mas eu fiz curso de Inglês + na cidade de Santa Maria + aqui no Rio Grande do Norte mesmo + e lá a gente fez um curso de Inglês básico numa associação comunitária + ainda lembro + foram apenas oito meses de curso + mas valeu muito a pena + a gente aprendeu muito Inglês + era como se tivesse feito três anos de Inglês + três anos naqueles cursos que duram três anos ou mais + mas durou apenas oito meses + eu aprendi muita coisa + até porque o professor a gente conhecia e era todo mundo unido e conversava direto + agente não podia se vê no meio da rua que a gente conversava só em Inglês + colocava em prática o que a gente aprendeu +

> então isso foi muito bom para minha aprendizagem de Inglês também.

Beginning college

Watson tells how his English classes at Curso de Letras/Inglês are and says how the teacher conducts the lessons:

> É bom + é bom + até porque assim + o primeiro período esta iniciando + mas é bom + eu gostei + não é como no ensino médio ((risos)) aquelas mesmas regras + quando ele chega na aula ele passa já aquele... a aula + de início assim + ele ainda não esta se comunicando em Inglês assim que chega + boa noite! + ainda não é em Inglês não + mas acredito que daqui pra frente tem... tem muitas aulas em que + por exemplo tem músicas e depois tem os testes na apostila + aí chamam os alunos para representar alguns figurantes da apostila... acredito que ele deve passar todos os conhecimentos que ele aprendeu + porque é o que nós esperamos também + para aprendermos também + só que aqui eu não estou sendo muito participativo não + tô não + eu espero que os professores me ajudem também a aprender a me soltar mais + até porque eu parei um pouco de praticar tudo aquilo que eu aprendi antes.

He explains the view which society in general demonstrate upon him and his newer experiences at college; he also states his view of himself as an EFL college student:

> Ah! + não vou dizer importante + mas me vêem como uma pessoa que se dedica aos estudos + interessado e esforçado + porque na vida a gente não vai vencer se não tiver luta + eu acredito que aprender Inglês e fazer faculdade é uma luta também + pra muitos é uma luta + pra mim + eu sou uma dessa pessoas + esta sendo uma luta muito grande + mas vamos conseguir... eu me vejo como uma pessoa que precisa realmente aprender + e eu me sinto capaz de fazer o que eu estou fazendo.

Besides his own efforts to learn English, Watson thinks that teachers also have to contribute to his own language learning:

> Eu quero aprender + tanto pelo meu esforço + eu tenho que me esforçar para aprender + e também como os professores + em relação aos professores + o professor tem que passar também o que eles conhecem + de uma forma bem + que agente possa compreender + de forma dinâmica também.

A.2 A JOB-ORIENTED APPROACH: BEN'S AND WILSON'S STORIES

BEN'S LEARNING STORY

At primary school

Ben grew up in a small village in the countryside of São Rafael. He comes from a family with limited economical conditions, and attended his primary education in a public school of the city. According to him, he had not good English teaching, for there was not any kind of interaction among students, and the teacher was very traditional. Thus, although he liked English, he says that the primary level was horrible.

> Foi ruim viu + não entendia nada + o ensino fundamental era um horror + comecei na quinta série + mas + não era lá essas coisas não + o professor chegava + passava no quadro aquilo + pronto!+ responda! + só isso + não tinha como falar + não + era só escrever + mas eu gostava de Inglês + sempre gostei + músicas em Inglês + quando passava no rádio eu tentava cantar + sempre gostei de Inglês.

He contends that in the primary level, his teachers were not prepared to teach English and he felt that they were perhaps afraid of students' lack of knowledge to comprehend English.

> Eles falavam pouco + acho que eles tinham medo ou + não sei por que + medo dos alunos não entenderem + eu acho + talvez não fossem preparados para ensinar.

At secondary school

He entered his secondary level in same school. However, he argues that the teaching was better than the previous level: teachers tried to elicit students' interaction and, according to him, it increased his vocabulary and he progressed in the learning of English.

> No ensino médio já foi mudando + o professor tentava interagir com agente + era assim + ele falava + aí + agora repita + aí era melhor + melhor do que no ensino fundamental + progredi muito + sim + muito + não conhecia muito as palavras não + poucas + *I love you* + *baby* + mas no ensino médio eu consegui aprender algumas palavras a mais.

Ben constantly compares his teachers of the secondary school to those of the primary; and remembers that one of them tried to teach oral skills to students.

> No ensino médio não + teve um que ele falava bastante em Inglês para nós + chegava na sala + se apresentava em Inglês + e tentava passar isso para nós + para nós dizer também + mas ainda era muito pouco.

Beginning college

Ben chose to take his tertiary level in Curso de Letras/Inglês because he thinks English will contribute to increase his material capital (Clemente & Higgins, 2008), and thus help his family:

> Eu gosto de Inglês + a principal razão é essa + e espero + ajudar minha família + minha meta é conseguir um emprego no ramo + pode ser até professor + mas não sou muito chegado a ser professor não + conseguir um emprego para melhorar a minha vida e a da minha família + e acho que o curso de Letras vai me qualificar para isso + com melhores ganhos + melhor moradia + saúde.

He tells what he expects for his future in terms of his own learning and how the English classes are developed at college:

> Pretendo ter uma boa aprendizagem aqui + pretendo aprender mais + poder falar com fluência + e as aulas aqui são boas + eu nunca esperei ter uma aula tão agradável + posso dizer + agradável + agente fala + interage com os amigos o professor explica as tarefas + explica + assim + ele diz que vai aplicar aquela matéria + mas vai começar desde o básico + pode se dizer + aí depois é que vai graduando + e quando posso eu também participo da aula + me perguntando + se eu puder responder e entender + sempre que eu posso + falo.

By stating his view of what learning a foreign language means for him, he also mentions the status which English is promoting in his life:

> Aprender Inglês pra mim significa ter boa qualificação + ter bom desempenho + ser mais dinâmico + e as pessoas já me vêem diferente + bem diferente viu + todo mundo antes dava nada não + aquele menino ali... aí quando eu passei + todo mundo me respeita agora + aí universitário + ta estudando agora em Açu + bem diferente... mas eu me vejo normal como os outros + carne e osso + só agora que eu estou aprendendo Inglês + a única coisa diferente é essa.

Ben explains what he thinks will change in his life when he graduates in English, and mentions his dream for the future:

> Acho que o que vai mudar na minha vida será só a qualificação + porque eu estarei em outro ramo + terei aprendido uma outra língua + posso usar ela para arranjar um emprego + e pretendo viajar + conhecer Estados Unidos ou Inglaterra + países assim que eu possa dialogar com as pessoas de lá + o meu sonho é esse.

WILSON'S LEARNING STORY

At primary school

Wilson grew up in Janduis, a city in the middle-west part of Rio Grande do Norte. He explains his experiences in the beginning of primary school:

> No começo foi uma experiência desastrosa + como por exemplo + o professor chegava na sala de aula e mandava você traduzir uma frase + já valia uma prova + certo! + o professor chegava em sala de aula + falava até amanhã + *see you tomorrow* /tomorrou/ + essas cosias aí + e quando você chega numa academia ou num lugar especializado que ensina a língua de forma correta + você sente um choque + quando você vê o antes e o atual + pra tentar tirar aquela experiência ruim que já esta inserida em você durante tanto tampo de aprendiz + de aprendizado + certo! + e isso aí renova + acaba sendo um choque na sua memória.

His words show some fragments of the then current grammar-translation method, in which the purpose was to lead students to translate single words and sentences into the target language and vice-verse. He states that he did not particularly like English in the beginning; and the reason was lack of teachers' knowledge in English.

> No ensino fundamental + na época era sétima serie + começou por aí... no princípio eu não gostava não + eu achava difícil + eu achava complicado + os professores não conseguiam explicar a aula de forma correta e quando iam cobrar às vezes botavam um texto + você chegava lá + jogava você e um dicionário junto e você que resolvesse lá + e ficava muito complicado de chegar a um consenso numa tradução nesse ponto aí.

As there were many difficulties in finding teachers at the time, especially teachers of English, the discipline was taught by the school employees, who were totally unprepared to teach.

> Como a escassez de professor de língua estrangeira + Inglês + era muito grande + o que acontecia? + alguém quebrava o galho + um professor que era diretor + que era vigia + que era bibliotecário + que era digitador + era quem quebrava esse galho + sujeito muito legal + mas que ele não tinha bagagem de nada + praticamente assassinou... e essa quebra de galho acontecia da seguinte forma + o professor dava uma aula + quando fosse daqui a um mês ele chegava lá com uma atividade avaliativa + que normalmente era um texto + você traduzia duas três fases + pronto! + já resolvia + a nota.

At secondary school

The teaching in Wilson's secondary school progressed compared to the previous level; mainly because he had a graduated teacher in the school. However, the teacher was sent out from the school because of his attempt to promote students' learning:

> No ensino médio + melhorou um pouco + nós tínhamos um professor recém formado por lá + mas como nós vínhamos nesse processo sofrido de aprendizagem da língua + houve uma má aceitação dele + ele queria realmente botar pra ensinar + agente não tinha bagagem pra isso e acabamos sofrendo + o que aconteceu foi um abaixo assinado e ele foi colocado pra fora da escola.

He comments on the conservative practices which were common in the classrooms at the time he attended his secondary education.

> Naquele tempo eu... to com trinta e seis anos de idade + então naquela época eu + praticar Inglês em sala de aula era você... só dizia uma coisa se o professor mandasse + se não mandasse + calado!

Beginning college

Wilson demonstrates self-will and effort to improve his knowledge of the language, but he explains that there are some hurdles

in the development of English classes which prevent him to participate effectively:

> O professor se esforça pra procurar ensinar o idioma + agora só que eu acho que a quantidade de alunos que tem é muito inacessível pra o professor poder atender a necessidade de cada um + mas ele explica tudo direitinho + explica + estamos com um professor agora que ele é um excelente educador + ele consegue passar as informações + como disse a você + o único empecilho são esses + a turma grande demais e ele não consegue atender a todos + acaba alguém saindo sem dizer nada + que é o meu caso de vez em quando + eu preciso mais de que tudo adquirir uma certa fluência + uma certa rapidez + mas eu... ele não passa por mim + ele passa por três ou quatro + já tem passado para o próximo objetivo e isso acaba atrapalhando a própria desenvoltura da aula e do aluno mesmo em si + um dos problemas é + é que eu tento participar por livre e espontânea pressão + eu preciso disso + dessa história de ter que participar + mas eu sinto que o professor às vezes não me da muita atenção não + eu não sei o que acontece basicamente comigo ((risos)) com relação a ele + eu quero aprimorar o Inglês + eu quero não + eu sou obrigado a ter que aprimorar o Inglês + por gosto e por necessidade + porque eu passei num concurso para professor da área e preciso da conta do recado + eu não vou chegar na sala de aula e marginalizar os alunos como eu fui marginalizado + de forma alguma + e dois que eu não pretendo ficar na sala de aula + eu pretendo + futuramente + quem sabe + trabalhar numa área que consiga + me da condições financeiras pra poder sustentar minha família usando o Inglês.

He mentions some of the problems which hinder students' development at college and what is necessary to solve these problems:

> Uma das coisas que eu acho falha aqui na universidade é a questão + por exemplo + nós temos alunos aqui que chega sem base nenhuma + então o aluno fica voando + perguntando + fulano

de tal o que isso? + fulano de tal o que é aquilo? +
e isso atrapalha o andamento do processo + espero
que quando as turmas forem divididas + melhore
isso + os professores precisam é... a aula em si de
Inglês + a parti do + acho que do terceiro período
+ elas devem ser ministradas todas em Inglês +
forçando o aluno mesmo já + a desenvolver as
habilidades + e ele deve ter mecanismos que
possam auxiliar numa boa aula + como por
exemplo + músicas + agora que a música deve ser
centralizada na gramática que ta sendo trabalhada
+ como por exemplo + agora nós estamos vendo
músicas no + que? + no presente perfeito +
passado perfeito + futuro perfeito + condicional +
são tempos que ainda não foram mostrados e isso
acaba atrapalhando a desenvoltura da aula +
porque você não viu ainda esse tempo +
entendeu? + e eu acho que a faculdade é um local
onde você consegue sistematizar o conhecimento
+ colocar tudo em seus devidos locais + melhorar
a condição da fluência + que isso que eu perdi +
to com dois anos parado + que terminei um curso
de idiomas + mas como na minha cidade eu não
tenho contato com pessoas que falam + eu acabei
esquecendo um monte de estrutura e inclusive até
a velocidade de falar o idioma com fluência + tô
falando já acadiciado de novo + mas aí eu espero
que na universidade eu encontre professores que
possam desenvolver normalmente essas
capacidades e aprimorar cada vez mais.

Wilson explains what has changed and what has not changed in
his personal life because of the learning of English; for him, English
promoted transformations in his life:

Eu continuo a mesma... o que mudou foi o acesso
a + ao campo trabalhístico + eu sou muito
procurado pra trabalhar como professor de Inglês
+ em minha cidade + e em cidades circunvizinhas
e etc. + mas só que eu não me identifico como
professor não + não + não me identifico como
professor + porque você sabe que no mundo de
hoje + globalizado + um mundo muito material +
você precisa de recursos pra poder manter a sua

> família + e eu tenho filhos e pretendo futuramente
> botá-los numa escola melhor pra que eles não
> passem o que eu passei + pra isso precisa que
> você consiga recursos + e como professor aqui no
> Brasil + que é uma + uma área que não tem muito
> + digamos assim + pessoas que olhem com bons
> olhos + é difícil de você conseguir isso + então eu
> pretendo futuramente procurar uma área melhor...
> as outras coisas não + eu mudei só no
> conhecimento mesmo + como cidadão social eu
> sou o mesmo + agora a língua Inglesa ela
> transformou a minha vida + como eu disse a você
> + hoje eu sou muito requisitado pra trabalhar aqui
> + aqui e acolá + é nessa situação + sempre na área
> de ensino + tive uma oportunidade quando eu
> estava na escola de idiomas + de trabalhar com
> uma empresa + mas aí o diploma de terceiro grau
> foi um empecilho + não tinha + e era realmente
> a... como se diz + a oportunidade da vida + aquela
> oportunidade única que se tem + eu acho que não
> vou ter outra não + como essa...

Although society gives much value to social and material capital
(Clemente & Higgens, 2008), Wilson views himself as a normal student,
perhaps more prepared in terms of English knowledge.

> A sociedade antes + quando você ta lá + no seu
> local lá + fora da academia + eles vêem você de
> um jeito + depois que você passa a ser chamado
> de universitário a coisa muda muito + o pessoal
> começa a respeitar você mais + começa a falar
> com você + a dizer + olha fulano é universitário!
> aí o... ta na universidade! + ta na academia! +
> entendeu? + porque a sociedade + como é uma
> sociedade de valores + e valores materiais + é
> claro que eles visam o que isso vai me
> proporcionar no futuro + e quem sabe até a eles
> também... ((risos)) mas eu me vejo como um
> estudante comum mesmo + igual aos outros +
> talvez tenha um pouco mais de conhecimento que
> os demais que estão ali + um pouquinho mais +
> não quero explicitar isso pra ninguém + porque eu
> não quero passar a ser chamado a bola da vez ou o
> sabe tudo + não quero + eu quero que o meu

> aprendizado se dê igual como o de todo mundo +
> eu quero terminar o curso normal que nem eles +
> é tanto que + eles ficam o tempo todo me
> indagando + você é professor disso + daquilo + eu
> digo não + não + não + não sou professor de nada
> + só conheço um pouquinho do idioma + só + só
> isso + porque eu quero igualdade entre eles + não
> quero problema.

A.3 A SELF-RELIANT APPROACH: ANA CLAUDIA'S AND NAIANE'S STORIES

ANA CLAUDIA'S LEARNING STORY

At primary school

Ana Claudia grew up in Afonso Bezerra, a city about thirty-five kilometers from Açu. Her learning experiences started in the fifth term of the primary school and although English was not her primary interest, she argues that her teacher was very good and that he spoke English most of the time in class.

> Não + eu só tive aula normal no ensino médio e
> ensino fundamental + mas eu não ligava ((risos))
> + não me interessava + no ensino fundamental +
> na quinta série + mas o meu professor era muito
> bom + muito + muito + super ótimo sabe? + ele
> falava a aula quase toda em Inglês + também isso
> ajudava em algumas expressões + ajudava muito
> + muito + muito mesmo + apesar de eu não ter
> aprendido + mas ele era ótimo.

Her teacher, who was the same one from the fifth to the last year of primary education, taught the contents, which were basically grammatical aspects such as the verb to be, and assigned students with examinations.

> Meu professor foi um só de Inglês + foi um só
> desde a quinta série + agente estudou da quinta
> série até o nono ano + do sexto ano até o nono ano
> com ele + e no fundamental + tipo + ele dava o
> assunto + verbo "*to be*" + esse tipo de coisa +
> normal + fazia as provas + básico + falava
> português e tudo.

At secondary school

In secondary school, perhaps influenced by TV advertisements, she did seem to be aware of the importance of English and decided to commit herself with the learning of the language.

> Eu vim me interessar quando eu comecei o ensino médio + eu achei super interessante + e no médio + assim + eu via muitas propagandas de Inglês + sobre cursos de Inglês na televisão + aí tipo + filme também + alguns filmes que eu queria assistir que às vezes não tinha legenda + não tinha o idioma em português + aí ficava + aí! + não estou entendendo + que raiva! + algumas placas + várias coisas assim de Inglês + ah! + que saco! + eu tenho que aprender Inglês sabe?

She thinks she progressed in secondary school, mainly because the teaching changed; and the teacher, became more demanding with the students.

> No ensino médio mudou + ele exigia mais + ele tipo + pra gente ir beber água agente tinha que dizer + professor posso tomar água? + não + peça em Inglês + aí sabe? + tinha coisas que agente tinha que aprender mesmo + porque ele não queria + na aula de Inglês ele não queria que agente falasse algumas coisas em português + aí eu acho que eu progredi mais sabe?

Coincidently, because in the school she attend the primary level did not have secondary education, she moved to another school in which it was available and she had the same teacher, who was, according to her, very good and all students liked him.

> Pura coincidência + agente mudou para uma escola que tem o ensino médio + só tem uma lá em Afonso + aí ele foi contratado pra ensinar lá e foi o nosso professor de Inglês também lá até o terceiro ano + foi ótimo + porque ele era ótimo + todo mundo gostava dele sabe? + aí ele viajou + foi embora para outra cidade.

Beginning college

Ana Claudia talks about the reason which led her to apply for Curso de Letras/Inglês and complains that the program should have more English classes:

> Decidi fazer esse curso porque eu gosto muito de Inglês + e como eu achei que eu fazendo Letras Inglês + eu achava que ia ser só aula de Inglês sabe? + eu até fiquei + ah! + uma aula de Inglês na semana + que droga! + mas não + aí depois eu + eu achei estranho + eu acho que deveria ter mais aulas de Inglês + como meu curso eu escolhi Inglês + deveria ter mais aulas de Inglês também + eu estudo muito em casa + modesta parte eu estudo muito em casa Inglês + mas tipo + ajudaria muito se tivesse mais aulas de Inglês aqui.

She explains how her first English class in the program was and also states that sometimes she feels a complex of inferiority for not mastering English.

> No primeiro dia de aula eu fiquei morrendo de vergonha + eu tinha chegado e já estava todo mundo na classe + aí ele ((professor)) me perguntou coisas em Inglês + ainda bem que eu sabia algumas coisas + e eu respondi em português + com vergonha de falar o que eu sabia em Inglês + mas depois falei + comecei a falar normal + mas às vezes... não sei + não me sinto + sei lá + normal entendeu? + na sala eu me sinto inferior + me sinto inferior porque eu acho que tipo + só eu que não sei falar muito e tipo + outras pessoas sabem e eu não sei entendeu? + às vezes eu me sinto constrangida.

Ana Claudia tells how the classes are developed at college by saying that she did not particularly feel much difference compared to secondary school:

> As aulas aqui eu acho super divertida + é super divertida a aula de xxx + porque ele ((professor)) sempre + sei lá + eu acho ele tão espontâneo + eu

> acho que ele ajuda muito + acho que ele ajuda...
> só que eu acho que mudou pouca coisa comparado
> com o ensino médio + pouca coisa + sinceramente
> + pouca coisa + não sei se é porque esta no
> começo + por exemplo a prova que ele fez eu
> achei super parecida + o nível bem + assim + não
> fraco + mas tipo + com a que o professor da gente
> fazia.

The difference she felt was basically in her view of herself: she states that, perhaps because of the course, she became more active, and does not care about how society views her as a tertiary student.

> Acho que a sociedade me vê do mesmo jeito + eu
> não sei se é porque eu ainda estou no primeiro
> período + mas não + ainda não vi resultado
> nenhum + assim + eu também nunca fui de
> botar... ah! + o pessoal falando alguma coisa de
> mim + não + mas eu mesma + eu estou mais ativa
> + estou bem mais + como é que posso dizer? +
> estou bem mais solta + estou lendo mais livros +
> assim tipo + livros relacionados a Inglês + estou
> bem mais interessada + muito mais + estou mais...
> porque sei lá + aqui na verdade quando a pessoa
> entra na universidade + você conhece pessoas de
> vários tipos + de personalidades de vários tipos
> entendeu? + aí tipo + não é só aquilo que você via
> na sua cidade + na sua escola + aquela mesma
> coisa + as mesmas pessoas + não + aqui é muito
> diferente + na sala sabe? + são pessoas bem
> diferentes + é bem legal + eu gosto + estou
> gostando.

She summarizes what she understands by learning English in terms of socializing with, and knowing other cultures. For her, learning occurs when there is practice in the target language:

> Aprender Inglês é você conhecer + é você
> aprender também + é se socializar + conhecer
> outras culturas + enfim é conhecer + conhecer
> outras culturas + outras pessoas + Inglês você
> aprende pra falar com outras culturas + e é
> importante você saber sobre determinada
> sociedade + esse tipo de coisa + e é bom o

> professor sempre ta falando em Inglês + é sempre bom + porque tipo você vai querer saber o que ele esta falando + você vai aprender + você vai aprender o que ele estava falando + e a prática também + você tem que saber o que você vai falar também + tem que estudar o que você vai falar + você tem que saber + por exemplo + se você for fazer uma viagem para fora do país você vai ter que saber sobre a cultura daquela sociedade + você não pode chegar lá e tipo falar uma coisa e eles + hã! + sabe? + isso também é bem importante + então é isso.

Ana Claudia comments on the strong desire that her peers show regarding the acquisition of fluency in English and attributes to students, instead of teachers, the task of managing their own learning in order to succeed in learning English:

> O professor pode até ajudar + mas se você não quiser + você tipo se deixar levar também + se você não correr atrás também + você não aprende + você tem que também querer além dele ta ajudando + você tem que pesquisar + tem que estar estudando sempre.

NAIANE'S LEARNING STORY

At primary school

Naiane grew up São Rafael and attended her primary education in a public school of the city. She explains her initial phase of learning English, which was significantly influenced by her sisters:

> Eu tenho contato com Inglês desde pequena + porque minha irmã mais velha gosta de Inglês + a outra também gosta de Inglês + e desde pequena que eu escutava música em Inglês e fui gostando + então as poucas coisas que eu sabia era por causa das minhas irmãs + dos meus irmãos em geral + porque quase todo mundo sabe nem que seja um pouquinho + fui influenciada por meus irmãos + mesmo sem querer + mas fui.

She argues that her primary level was not good, especially because of some low level students in the class:

> Foi fraco + era essas coisinhas simples + nomezinho pequenininhos + por causa de pessoas preguiçosas + agente não podia avançar + por causa que tinha que a sala toda se adaptar + tinha uns três quatro alunos que poderia avançar no Inglês + mas por causa dos outros agente não podia + então foi fraco.

Naiane laughs when she mentions her English classes at the time of the primary school, which was basically the teaching of vocabulary. She also teases her teacher and states that some students were better in English than the teacher.

> Então + comecei a vê Inglês na quinta série + a professora não conhecia muito + eu sabia mais do que a professora + mas eu ficava quieta na minha + chegava em casa era que eu comentava ((risos)) a professora disse que era assim + assim e assim + mas minhas irmãs diziam + mas não é assim + é assim + assim e assim + e as aulas eram simples + ela passava os números + as frutas + algumas coisas + e fazia para completar + palavra cruzada + era basicamente isso o tempo todinho + não tinha para agente falar + você fala com você + pergunta pra você + não + era só escrito mesmo + decoreba e pronto + mas eu participava + eu acho que eu participava + não lembro muito bem não + eu gostava + eu chegava em casa + eu respondia tudo bem direitinho + e chegava no outro dia entregava.

At secondary school

She entered her secondary education and studied in the same school. Although she initially felt afraid of the higher level, for the teaching was more demanding, she says it ended up being the same of the primary level.

> No ensino médio já tinha música + mais coisas + pra traduzir textos e tudo mais + de pegar a música + o pedaço da música e tentar passar...

> Lembro que eu até tinha medo quando sai do fundamental para o médio + eita! + vou entrar para o ensino médio + como é que é? + não sei o que + mas é praticamente a mesma coisa... eu acho que progredi + porque por mais que fosse as mesmas coisas + mas era mais difícil + eu tinha que prestar mais atenção + eu tinha que pegar e estudar mesmo + mas não era muita diferença + porque basicamente os professores do ensino médio eram quase os mesmos do fundamental.

Naiane comments on her secondary teachers and says they ranged from good and funny teachers to angry and horrible ones.

> Tinha uns professores que iam pra sala com a cara do tamanho do mundo + com raiva + e outros que eram totalmente divertidos + chegavam lá e fazia você tomar gosto por assistir a aula + mas tinha uns que você + não! + essa aula não! + não dava nem vontade de entrar na sala não.

However, she mentions that, besides her sisters, she was strongly influenced by one of her secondary teachers in the decision to apply for *Curso de Letras/Inglês*:

> Acho que meu professor de Inglês do ensino médio também me ajudou muito + ele disse + faça ((Curso de Letras)) porque você vai se dá bem + ele que me incentivava + faça porque você entende e você vai gostar + não sei o que + tá bom + eu faço + não se preocupe + eu faço + e acho que o pessoal lá de casa + por eu já gostar de Inglês e por causa do meu professor + que na época que era meu professor ele ainda estudava na universidade + e eu perguntava + ficava perguntando como era e tudo mais + aí eu + será que eu faço? + faça que você vai se da bem + eu sei que você vai conseguir + você leva jeito + tá se você ta dizendo eu acredito mesmo.

Beginning college

Naiane entered tertiary level, but she thinks she is not a high-profile student. She hopes to lose her laziness and dedicate herself to the English studies:

> Bem + a única coisa que eu desejo é que eu pare de ser preguiçosa ((risos)) mas eu acredito que seja bom + conhecer pessoas novas + porque reúne gente de todas as cidades por aqui + e que eu realmente aprenda muita coisa porque eu estou me achando ainda muito fraquinha + no sentido do intelecto + ainda me acho fraquinha + que isso me dê vontade de crescer mais ainda + que eu realmente crie vontade e vergonha na cara de querer aprender + não só aqui mas tipo + em casa também e aprenda realmente a falar Inglês.

She explains the development of English classes at college and is aware that, to learn English, she will have to lose her shyness:

> Eu acho bom + questão de passar as músicas e botar você para conversar + nem que seja aquelas coisinhas simples + com outra pessoa pra você aprender realmente como se fala + como se pronuncia + porque você só escutar você não vai aprender + você tem que falar + por mais que eu tenha vergonha + mas eu sei que isso é preciso + um dia a vergonha sai + eu acho + mas eu acho que sou participativa + ele me pergunta e eu respondo + mesmo às vezes eu não sabendo + mas eu respondo.

At college, she thinks there are considerable changes in comparison to the previous levels with regard to the English classes, especially because students are required to learn the language:

> Mudou porque como eu falei + tinha a questão das músicas e tudo mais + mas era só música e tradução + música e compreensão de texto + não tinha pra falar realmente + eu quando tinha alguma dúvida de como se pronunciava alguma coisa + eu esperava a aula terminar e ia falar com

> o professor + aí ele vinha + sentava e dizia como
> era + mas na aula mesmo não + porque se ele
> fosse dizer + o pessoal + ta bom! + ta bom! +
> vamos embora! + não sei o que + aqui não + na
> faculdade não + totalmente diferente + é mais
> rigorosa + porque lá tanto fazia se o aluno ia
> aprender e aqui não + vocês tem que fazer isso
> porque... tem uma cobrança + realmente é uma
> cobrança maior + não só pelos professores mas eu
> acho que até os pais dos alunos + ah! no ensino
> fundamental e médio os pais dos alunos de escola
> pública não estão nem aí + mas já na faculdade +
> minha mãe principalmente + como é que ta? +
> você precisa disso? + precisa daquilo? + quanto é
> a apostila? + não sei o que + coisa que na época
> do ensino médio ela não estava nem aí + se desse
> + deu + se não desse eu dava meus pulos e pronto
> + passava de ano e acabou + era mais a questão de
> passar de ano + não você tem que passar de ano +
> aqui você tem que aprender + eu acho que essa é a
> diferença principal + porque no fundamental e no
> médio era aquele negócio + você tem que passar
> de ano + você aprendendo ou não você tem que
> passar de ano + aqui não + você tem que aprender
> + não adianta + você tem que aprender + ou
> aprende ou não aprende + fique em casa que é
> melhor + e aqui professor encoraja mais + pelo
> menos pra mim ele encoraja + eu não sei para os
> outros + porque cada um tem + digamos assim +
> seus pensamentos + cada um enxerga o que ele
> faz e o que ele fala de uma maneira diferente +
> mas pra mim ele me encoraja.

Naiane attributes to herself the responsibility with her own learning; according to her, she is the one in charge of her own development; the teachers will contribute, but she has to take her own paths to succeed:

> Eu acho que isso ((aprender Inglês)) não depende
> do professor não + acho que isso depende de mim
> + acho que tem que buscar + porque mesmo que +
> digamos que eu não tenha condições de pagar um
> curso + de vir e tudo mais + mas meios de
> aprender se tem + principalmente hoje com a

> internet você encontra pessoas até... você pode se
> comunicar com outras pessoas que falam o Inglês
> e que eu acho que podem ajudar + eu acho que
> isso requer de mim + eu querer e buscar aprender
> + ele ((professor)) até influencia + mas aí vai
> depender de quê? + de mim + se ele ficar tentando
> mas se eu não quiser não adianta + quem tem que
> partir com o interesse sou eu + mas só em ir lá
> conversar com o professor agente fica + eu quero
> aprende também + dá mais vontade de querer
> aprender + eu não tenho o que reclamar do
> professor + eu estou gostando das aulas dele do
> jeito que é + como eu falei + mesmo eu sendo
> tímida e não gostando de falar como ele pede para
> cada um + de um em um falar + mas eu sei + eu
> sei que é necessário + mesmo que a vergonha
> venha em primeiro lugar + mas eu sei que é
> necessário + eu só vou aprender se eu realmente
> tentar.

She thinks that English promotes changes in the person; and she will change in terms of her own behavior, and will help people with translation.

> Vou ficar mais besta ((risos)) acho que vou + eu
> não sei + porque eu acho que eu vou aprender
> tanta coisa + vou poder fazer tanta coisa depois
> que eu aprender + traduzir + e ajudar gente que
> não sabe Inglês + eu vejo na internet + eu quero
> ajudar a traduzir um monte de coisa + ai eu quero
> saber Inglês! + eu quero saber Inglês! + eu quero!
> + eu quero! + coisa que eu não vou + digamos +
> eu não vou ter retorno no final + com dinheiro
> nem nada + é por prazer mesmo que eu quero +
> porque eu quero fazer do mesmo jeito que eu
> gostaria que tivesse pra mim em português + que
> os outros traduzissem pra mim + eu gostaria de
> traduzir para os outros.

For her, learning English means the interest in knowing the language, and the consequent search for ways of learning this language. This learning, thus, should take place through a different and funny way.

> Aprender é conhecer + é você gostar e buscar + por exemplo + aquilo que você gosta + se eu gosto do Inglês + eu gosto do japonês + eu gosto do coreano + de qualquer forma eu vou buscar + e assim eu vou buscando outras coisas que não + também não tenha nada a vê + mas que esta ali + porque eu tava pesquisando + tava aprendendo + acho que é isso + acho também que quanto mais diferente e mais divertido você aprende melhor + eu acho + do que aquela coisa intediosa e acaba criando é raiva sabe? + eu acho que quando é divertido você acaba gostando de aprender mais.

Naiane argues that, once she passed *Vestibular*, people in general began to look differently at her, especially because of the status which tertiary level (and English) can promote in one's life:

> Não me chamam mais de vagabunda + antes diziam que eu não queria nada + não sei o que + eu tiro isso pelo povo de casa mesmo + aí é tanto que eu brinco dizendo + é... agora eu sou gente + faço faculdade + sou gente + daqui a pouco esquece + eu acho que em qualquer pessoa é como se você não tivesse o ensino superior as pessoas também não te enxergasse + basta você ter aí o pessoal começa a te enxergar + olha! + não seio que + isso pra qualquer coisa + seja pra emprego ou até mesmo pra te respeitar + isso também depende... não é tudo mundo + não vou generalizar + mas que acontece isso acontece + eu também me sinto importante + passei no vestibular + eu me sinto importante + poderia ser qualquer curso + mas Letras porque eu queria e tudo + me sinto importante + já me disseram que eu aproveitasse porque é um curso muito bom + então eu estou me sentindo muito bem ((risos))

However, she seems to be aware of the fact the university itself will not lead her to learn English; and this awareness is contingent on her recognition that she herself has to organize her own learning in order to achieve her goals:

> Metade do pessoal de Inglês vieram achando que ia aprender inglês aqui + eu já sabia que não + eu já entrei sabendo que não ia aprender Inglês aqui + meu professor falou + quando eu perguntava a ele do curso ele dizia que eu não ia aprender Inglês + aí eu... então porque você esta mandando eu fazer? + porque você já sabe + mas eu não sei Inglês + você sabe sim + tá bom! você diz que eu sei eu vou confiar em você + eu sei + é tanto que na prova eu não coloquei espanhol + coloquei Inglês + acho que a metade ((dos alunos)) ali colocou espanhol + mas eu coloquei Inglês + ele ((professor)) disse que aqui não ia ensinar igual a um curso só de Inglês entendeu? + você vai + mas você não vai aprender só Inglês + tem matéria de Inglês + mas você não vai necessariamente aprender o Inglês lá + é como todo mundo diz + você vai aprender a dá aula + tá bom + então por que você esta mandando eu fazer? + porque você vai se dá bem + eu... tá bom + você ta dizendo + eu vou confiar em você ((risos))

Furthermore, Naiane thinks she will succeed; albeit with difficulties, she seems to be confident that she will learn English. She also mentions her desire to attend an English course, but her economical limitations prevent her:

> Ter vontade eu tenho ((attend na English course)) + mas os custos não me é permitido ainda + mas eu vou fazer de tudo pra aprender Inglês nem que seja na marra + e acho que o curso é importante + eu sempre quis fazer cursinho + nunca me botaram + mas eu sempre quis.

With respect to her English peers, she seems to disregard from the teachers the responsibility for their own learning, and emphasize the role of the students in becoming responsible for their own learning:

> Se eles os alunos realmente desejarem sair do curso fluentes + eu acho que é possível + eu acho que isso não depende só do professor + depende de as pessoas terem realmente a vontade de aprender + se você tiver vontade de aprender você aprende qualquer coisa.

A.4 AN ENGLISH-COURSE APPROACH: JEFFERSON'S AND JESSICA'S STORIES

JEFFERSON'S LEARNING STORY

At primary school

Jefferson grew up in Açu and had a difficult process of learning English. He attended his primary education in a public school of the city, but he did not particularly like English. His classes were basically centered on the teaching of the verb to be.

> Ah! + foi muito difícil + eu não gostava + não + porque não conseguia assimilar as coisas + é diferente + é bastante diferente porque o método é difícil + daí + da quinta a oitava série + ao terceiro ano na verdade + eu vi só aquele verbo "*to be*" + que é o ser e estar + porque na verdade a questão é do método mesmo + do método de ensino + do método e da carência pedagógica que tem no mercado hoje na escola pública.

Besides the focus on the verb to be, he strongly asserts that he did not learn even the English numbers, for his teacher lacked experience in, and knowledge of, English.

> No ensino fundamental a professora só falava sobre o verbo "*to be*" + só ser e estar + era só o que ela falava e pouquíssimas palavras + era tanto que eu saí e não consegui nem aprender a contar de um a dez ou de um a vinte + porque eu acho que na verdade faltava para ela um pouco de experiência e um pouco de aprendizado + de uma forma que ela conseguisse passar o pouco que ela sabia + a verdade é essa + se ela sabia pouco + mas ela deveria fazer com que as pessoas conseguissem assimilar um pouco daquilo + os alunos + porque agente não tinha nenhum conhecimento.

At secondary school

His secondary education was also attended in a public school, which specifically focused on the preparation for the Vestibular, with the teachers concerned with text interpretation. In his view, it was better than the primary level.

> No ensino médio foi um pouco melhor + porque aí já veio a questão de algo mais técnico dentro das palavras + já veio um pouco mais de interpretação de texto e esse tipo de interpretação de texto foi voltado já para a preparação do vestibular + então foi isso + foi melhor no ensino médio + um pouco mais avançado do que o ensino fundamental + eu progredi um pouco mais.

Although Jefferson says he improved his knowledge in secondary school, he claims that teachers are unprepared to teach English and they did not expose students to dialogues in English; he thinks it was due to the lack of technological resources to help teachers at the time, which reduced the classes into the mere teaching of single words.

> No ensino médio eles ((professores)) ensinam agente palavras assim bem simples + não tem o diálogo + eles não falam com agente em Inglês + o que eu me recordo deles é a falta de capacidade para ensinar + a verdade é essa + a falta de capacidade para ensinar + eu não sei se é porque eles + eu acho que talvez assim + recursos também + porque na época não tinha os recursos que hoje tem + *data show* + tem computador + você tem como pesquisar + então + tem palavras diferentes que às vezes eles sabiam a palavra + sabiam o significado + mas eles não sabiam pronunciar + ta entendendo? + então é bastante variado isso.

Beginning college

Jefferson tells the main reason which led him to enter Curso de Letras/Inglês and explains his interest in learning English.

> A principal razão foi de conhecer pelo menos as músicas que eu gosto + porque eu gosto mais de músicas em Inglês + então eu ouço bastante Michael Jackson + Lady Gaga + Madona + aí a pessoa tem essa vontade de conhecer + normalmente a maioria das pessoa que fazem Inglês é pra isso + pra decifrar essas coisas que agente ouve mas não sabe o significado.

He states that, perhaps because of his difficulties to learn English in primary and secondary school, his English learning at university is a self-struggle:

> Esta sendo complicado + pra mim ta sendo complicado + é tanto que eu penso em passar para português + porque é o tipo da coisa + eu vim de um ensino fundamental e médio muito degradado + eu to engatinhando o Inglês + é tanto que eu acertei + passei no vestibular com três questões certas de Inglês + pra vê como eu não tenho noção nenhuma de Inglês + então quando eu cheguei aqui + o pensamento meu e do resto da classe é que agente ia chegar aqui para aprender o Inglês + só que na verdade não é assim + agente estamos aqui pra agente aprender a ENSINAR o inglês + aí é difícil + é diferente + então quando eu cheguei aqui + que o professor foi da aula toda em Inglês + a turma todinha disse + professor + por favor + dê em português porque agente não esta entendendo em Inglês + ta entendendo? + então a questão é essa ((risos)) aí eu to fazendo um cursinho de Inglês + mas eu to querendo passar para português + se tiver uma vaga para português + eu já falei e quero passar justamente por isso + porque não adianta eu me formar e ser o profissional igual ao que em ensinaram no ensino fundamental e médio + eu quero ser um profissional com um currículo assim + vasto + então pra isso + eu acho melhor pra mim eu aprender nesse momento português + porque eu estou aprendendo o Inglês batendo assim ((estalos)) na parede mesmo + forçado mesmo + e isso esta acabando comigo + porque eu estou estudando Inglês para assimilar as palavras e eu

> estou esquecendo o lado do português + e agente
> no primeiro período estamos vendo os dois + e eu
> estou batendo muito de frente + e quando agente
> bate muito de frente o aprendizado fica assim
> muito + muito complicado porque você faz aquilo
> com pressão + insistindo + batendo pra você... não
> é algo relaxado + que você vai aprendendo com
> calma + aquilo vai influenciando você a aprender
> + a questão é essa + então eu acho que + to com
> vontade de mudar para português com relação a
> isso + mas não deixar de fazer um cursinho de
> Inglês pra mim aprender o Inglês + porque eu
> quero aprender Inglês + mas eu quero entrar em
> português pra isso + pra mim ter o conhecimento
> vasto de tudo.

Jefferson explains how English classes are developed at *Curso de Letras/Inglês* by saying that the teachers speak English most of the time in class, which is the main difference from the previous levels of education:

> Na aula de Inglês o professor tava falando muito
> em Inglês + só que o pessoal devido a essa
> questão de não saber muito o Inglês aí ele já esta
> dando em português e algumas palavras ta dando
> em Inglês + e o caminhar das palavras são mais
> assim + sobre diálogo + não tem interpretação de
> texto + não tem nada disso ainda + eu acho que
> nós vamos vê mais no segundo período + terceiro
> + agente vamos vê isso + agora + e é difícil
> porque o resto da classe não sabe de nada +
> então... essa é a diferença do fundamental e médio
> + porque lá eles ensinam agente palavras assim
> bem simples + não tem o diálogo + eles não falam
> com agente em Inglês e aqui os professores já
> falam com agente em Inglês + já quer que agente
> se entrose em Inglês + já quer que agente tenha
> um diálogo com um amigo em Inglês + então há
> essa diferença + que faz com que a pessoa
> aprenda.

Although his knowledge of the language is very limited, Jefferson thinks his teacher encourages students to develop oral abilities:

> Ele ((professor)) quer que agente estude + ele quer que agente troque palavras que agente fala em português que agente fale em Inglês + comece a se comunicar mais em Inglês + quer que agente assista filme em Inglês e não fique naquela legendazinha em português + músicas mais em Inglês + então já pra ajudar agente a ter uma noção mais de como pronunciar a palavra + ele encoraja os alunos a falar + ele encoraja muito e agente é quem trata ele de outra forma + porque agente esta engatinhando o Inglês e ele quer que agente desenvolva + mas eu não... não sou participativo por causa que eu não tenho noção de Inglês de nada + eu tenho assim + pouco conhecimento aí eu só falo o mínimo possível que ele pede + eu não tenho um acompanhamento mais vasto.

However, he thinks that the teachers are the ones in charge of developing students' abilities in the target language, especially through exposure to famous readings:

> Eu acho que tem que trabalhar mais o aluno + tem que desenvolver ele de forma que ele não venha sofrer nenhuma conseqüência quando chegar lá na frente + como não querer dar aula em Inglês por falta de uma capacidade maior + acho que é isso + ele ((o professor)) tem que desenvolver muito mais o aluno com textos + ler livros + como os últimos que estão agora na mídia + Harry Poter + em Inglês + Crepúsculo + todos livros em Inglês + conta a história + narra a história + sem assistir o filme + porque o filme é uma coisa e o livro é outra + agente tem que ter mais produção de texto.

He talks about what learning English means for him and states the changes which the language will possibly promote in his life:

> Aprender Inglês significa aprender outras... outros limites da vida da pessoa + porque você entra já em outros universos + em outra cultura + em outro aprendizado + em outras relações com outras pessoas + diálogo mesmo com estrangeiros + então você já aprende coisas diferentes + você

> já tem uma noção diferente + e acho que o que vai mudar vai ser o pensamento de sempre querer algo melhor + ta fazendo algo que mude as coisas na vida da pessoa + para não ficar só naquele padrão de vida.

For him, English is also associated with status for those who study the language, and he states that people have a different view upon the English student:

> Ah! + já vê diferente porque antes quando agente faz só o ensino médio a pessoa sabe que você esta naquele patamar de padrão normal do dia a dia de toda pessoa que conclui + mas quando você esta fazendo uma faculdade aí você já vê assim diferente + não te vê como se você fosse superior + mas te vê como se você quisesse algo diferente + não ficar só naquele patamar.

However, he holds the view that most of the students in his class, including himself, will not attain a good level of proficiency in English when they graduate, unless they attend an English course to "open their mind":

> Eu acho que não + acho que não porque tem muitos alunos + tem uns alunos que até participaram de um seminário com agente + eles estão no quinto período e eles não estavam entendendo nada do que o professor estava falando + e isso eu comentei até na classe + como é que eles estão no quinto período + dois anos e meio e não aprenderam nada? + e agente no primeiro período agente tava VOANDO mesmo + então agente ficou na dúvida + será que essas pessoas que terminaram vão realmente conversar em Inglês + falar Inglês? + o que esta acontecendo? + é porque elas não estão aprendendo mesmo? + falta força de vontade? + ou é porque elas não estão fazendo um cursinho ou algo que faça com que abra a mente delas? + aí fica essa indagação na classe.

Jefferson summarizes his view of tertiary level and states his desire to conclude an undergraduate course by emphasizing the importance of socialization:

> Eu acho que eu tenho assim o desejo de concluir uma faculdade + sempre eu tinha assim uma vontade de fazer faculdade + aí quando eu entrei + eu percebi que não era tudo quanto agente pensa + só é a vontade no ensino médio da gente entrar + na verdade é a besteira que agente tem de querer entrar + de ser superior as pessoas + isso ficou lá no ensino fundamental e ensino médio + quando agente ta aqui dentro agente tem que ter a visão de que agente estamos aprendendo a lidar com as pessoas + a se socializar com as pessoas + mas tem pessoas que elas não pensam dessa forma + elas acham que com a faculdade elas são superiores em conhecimento em tudo + das outras pessoas + e na verdade não é + agente tem que saber se socializar com as pessoas + saber tratar + conversar + dialogar + fazer parte da sociedade + não querer ser superior a sociedade.

JESSICA'S LEARNING STORY

At primary school

Growing up in Itajá, Jessica always liked English and explains her first contact with the language in the primary years:

> Agente tem que ter muita vontade + é uma coisa diferente + é novo e você tem muita curiosidade e vontade de aprender + só que não tem um aprofundamento + você termina o segundo grau e sabe pouco + praticamente nada + mas eu já gostava na época + gostava + eu gostava bastante + embora + assim + música + você começa um pouquinho você quer entender + você vê uma palavrinha ali + coisinha pouca + mas eu sempre gostei + sempre tive interesse pela língua.

She claims that, in her classes, she did not have interactional activities. Instead, she only had classes which focused on grammatical

aspects, mainly the verb "to be", and that they were strongly concerned with students' writing.

> Inglês na escola pública praticamente não existe + e no ensino fundamental a prática oral é pouca + agente vê bem mais a parte escrita e com o "*to be*" + era mais ou menos assim + agente pra perguntar você invertia ((risos)) você coloca o *is* ou o *are* na frente do pronome + e quando você esta afirmando você faz o contrário + você coloca o pronome na frente do verbo + e era mais ou menos assim que agente... não tinha essa coisa de oralidade.

At secondary technical school

She attended her secondary technical education in Curso de Magistério; but Jessica believes that Magistério did not provide much exposure to the language, for most of its disciplines were methodological and English was left aside. In addition, there were many difficulties in finding available teachers, for most of them were from other cities.

> No médio + há dificuldade bastante de professor + então eram professores de fora + faltavam muito + eu fiz magistério e no magistério também agente + nos últimos anos agente só vê metodologias e Inglês já era ((risos)) se eu fosse fazer + acho que eu não teria feito magistério de novo + porque matérias como Inglês + matérias que prepara para o vestibular agente acabou não vendo.

Jessica remembers that there was one teacher who tried to introduce oral skills by speaking only English in the classes, but he failed: students were not prepared to have classes in English, especially because English was a mandatory discipline only in the first year of this level.

> No primeiro ano + porque eu só vi Inglês no primeiro ano + eu lembro de uma boa oralidade de um professor + ele era um professor de cursinho + ele entrou na sala + falando Inglês + falando Inglês e todo mundo ficou apavorado ((risos))

> então ele teve que modificar + porque todo mundo ficava perguntando o que é isso? + o que é isso? + ninguém entendia nada + aí ele teve que + na verdade ele que se adequou a situação + aí ficou basicamente na mesma coisa + que agente via muito a parte escrita + a oral quase nada + e estudava para fazer a prova + que era escrita + não tinha prova oral + então só isso.

Beginning college

She argues that, among the reasons which led her to take Curso de Letras/Inglês as her tertiary level, interest in learning English was the primary one:

> ((risos)) o próprio Inglês + exatamente + querer mesmo aprender a língua + foi a principal + porque por exemplo + ter curso superior é essencial + mas Letras sempre foi o curso que eu sempre quis fazer + eu já comecei outras + eu comecei Letras + só que era espanhol + aí eu + não é ainda o que eu gosto ((risos)) porque no mesmo período que eu fazia cursinho de Inglês + eu fazia Letras espanhol + ai não + tem que ser Inglês + comecei aí tranquei + comecei pedagogia + não + tem que ser Inglês ((risos)) e nesse período que eu estou aqui + nesse período + porque a faculdade começou a mais de um mês + a cada aula de Inglês eu vejo que eu escolhi o curso certo + que é realmente isso que eu quero + é com Inglês que eu me identifico.

As Jessica had already attended a private English course, she did not demonstrate difficulties in this initial phase, as she explains:

> Na medida que começou + como eu já tinha estudado um período de Inglês + ele ((professor)) começou assim com coisas bem básicas ((risos)) eu até estranhei um pouquinho + porque eu pensei que já ia começar de algo um pouco mais pra frente + mas eu compreendo também porque tem muita gente na sala que eu percebo que não tem muito contato com Inglês + talvez tenha tido o mesmo contato que eu tive na escola fundamental e ensino médio + pronto + creio que tem muita

> gente assim + que não teve a oportunidade de fazer um cursinho de Inglês + então o conhecimento na área é pouco + e precisa dessas aulas iniciais realmente + e é bom que eu pratico também + o meu tempo de estudo vou relembrar.

She comments on the English class development by saying that it has more conversational activities, which is similar to the classes she attended in the private course.

> O professor ele trouxe um material que eu já conhecia e ele ta + por exemplo + trabalhando bastante essa... da aula com *slide* + mostrando as imagens + e com bastante prática oral + ele esta trabalhando mais oralidade e escrita menos + mais parte oral + porque também são as aulas iniciais e a parte de apresentação + acho que é isso... aqui na universidade o início das aulas esta mais parecido com o início de aula dos cursinhos de Inglês + é uma coisa que é bem mais divertido de aprender + porque o diálogo fica uma coisa mais natural + fica parecido mais com situações que você poderia se deparar no dia a dia + é uma forma bem mais divertida

Although she is enjoying her English classes at college, she complains that they are not enough and would like the teacher to demand extra material to study at home, as some of her teachers did at her English course.

> Pelo que ele ((professor)) falou + até o final do curso vai ser assim + eu acho pouco + acho pouco + porque o tempo que agente tem na sala + não sei depois que dividir pra o terceiro período que agente for vê matérias mais específicas + mude alguma coisa + eu ainda não sei + mas assim + eu acredito que também + tipo + indicação de leituras pra fazer também em um horário que não esteja em sala de aula + eu acho que seria uma coisa que ajudaria bastante + como livros como alguns professores já fizeram no cursinho + passar pra casa + de repente você vem e conta a história do livro oralmente + você escreve vamos dizer + faz um resumo do livro + é uma coisa que eu acho

> bem interessante + ele usa muito música + é outra coisa boa na sala + é uma coisa muito boa que ele usa.

In her view, learning English involves individual abilities to communicate, be with native or non-native speakers of the target language:

> Aprender Inglês + olha + aprender Inglês + a princípio é compreender + é se comunicar mesmo + é você conseguir conversar com alguém que seja nativo ou não nativo + mas que esteja falando Inglês + ouvir + compreender + falar e ser compreendido + ler e compreender + escrever corretamente + para que também os outros lendo + compreendam + pra mim aprender é isso ((risos)) é tudo isso.

However, Jessica explains the difficulties in terms of oral practice which students face when learning English as a foreign language, albeit it is possible:

> Eu acho que aqui agente tem toda essa capacidade de aprender e se tornar fluente + é a prática + é a prática + tem que praticar toda essa parte + e aí onde encontra uma dificuldade é dessa prática + porque você não encontra muitas pessoas com quem você possa estar praticando + muita parte você tem que estudar sozinho + ou então você tem que realmente assistir alguma coisa + ler alguma coisa + ouvir música + porque não tem muito com quem você estar conversando + há uma dificuldade de encontrar pessoas que tenham esse mesmo interesse + espero que aqui na faculdade + como eu já tô tendo a oportunidade + ainda bem + eu já encontrei assim + pessoas que estão buscando a mesma coisa + então creio que essa parte vai melhorar também.

Furthermore, she thinks that university itself does not guarantee that students will achieve an acceptable level of fluency in English when they graduate. Hence, she warns that students must look for extra ways to learn and practice English:

> Sinceramente + fluência + fluência + se for só aqui na universidade + eu creio que não + não tem como não + mesmo por causa + eu digo do tempo + porque se + assim + nós víssemos apenas matérias de Inglês ou duas vezes por semana + duas vezes estaria bom + duas vezes por semana eu acredito que ao termino desses quatro anos até poderia + mas como não é + agente tem várias outras disciplinas + então fluência mesmo + em todos esses sentidos que eu falei para você + aprender + ter o domínio + eu creio que não ((risos)) eu espero que não seja da forma que + assim + que eu to vendo + espero que eu seja contrariada.

With regard to her own process of learning, she talks about the images of herself as a college student, and the status which people associate with studying English in a public university can promote in one's life.

> Umm! Tem diferença + tem bastante diferenças + dizem assim + ah! você faz universidade + e uma diferença também + que é universidade pública + que tem uma grande diferença + você diz que você faz universidade particular e você faz universidade pública + eu mesma confesso que tenho esse pouco de preconceito ((risos)) porque as outras faculdade que eu comecei eram particular + mas eu não queria + eu queria fazer universidade pública + eu queria fazer Letras Inglês + mas eu queria fazer numa universidade pública + porque eu acho que tem um prestígio bem maior + e a imagem que eu tenho desde que eu entrei no curso é que eu vou ter um caminho bem longo pela frente e que eu vou ter que estudar bastante e aprender MUITO + porque o que eu sei é bem pouquinho ((risos)).

Jessica makes some predictions about what she thinks will change in her personal life when she graduate in English, and mentions some of her future expectations, which includes postgraduate program:

> Eu creio que principalmente o que vai mudar mesmo + muda várias questões na vida pessoal da

gente mesmo + acabam que mudando durante o período que agente esta estudando + muda muita coisa + mas + mais a parte profissional + eu creio que vai mudar + porque eu trabalho numa área que eu... eu gosto + só que é uma área que eu sei que + não me sinto realizada totalmente + então eu creio que quando eu terminar o curso eu vou poder entrar numa área que eu realmente me identifico + que eu tenho certeza que vai me realizar como profissional e conseqüentemente como pessoa + porque é isso que estou buscando + então na medida que eu sei que vou progredindo + eu vou também me realizando profissionalmente e pessoalmente + e eu quero concluir + claro! o curso ((risos)) tô no primeiro ano e já estou pensando no mestrado + alguma coisa assim + eu já penso + e os primeiros anos + logo que terminar eu quero fazer mestrado e depois disso eu... ou + não sei se simultâneo com isso + entrar mesmo numa sala de aula + para entrar em contato mesmo + prática diária com a língua + porque isso é um caminho que eu quero até chegar a parte de tradução + que eu não pretendo ficar na sala muito tempo não.

APPENDIX B - Graduates' learning biographies

B.1 A BOOK-CENTERED APPROACH: FATIMA'S AND RAELE'S STORIES

FATIMA'S LEARNING STORY

At primary school

Fatima grew up in Açu. She attended her primary education in a private school in Açu and did not particularly like English in the first years of primary school. However, in the last year of this level, she became more interested in learning English and decided to attend an English course, with the primary goal of speaking the language. She thought her willingness to learn and a certain command over the language could lead her to be successful.

> Na época que eu comecei a estudar Inglês foi na quinta série + que hoje é o sexto ano + hoje é que é a educação... as séries iniciais é que esta estudando Inglês + mas na minha época a partir da quinta série e agente... escola privada + que eu comecei a ter o contato com a Língua Inglesa + quando + mais ou menos no... quando eu fazia a oitava série eu comecei a me interessar e procurei fazer um cursinho + cursinho de Inglês + fiz esse cursinho acho que uns dois + três anos + porque eu tinha o interesse de tentar aprender ((risos)) a falar e eu gostava assim das aulas + gostava porque eu entendia quando eu voltava pra sala de aula eu já era + já conhecia mais do que o pessoal que estava em sala de aula.

She explains the development of her primary English classes and says that the teachers were very much concerned with the contents of the book, for she studied in a private school and the requirement was to study the whole book in the year. In addition, she argues that there were a high amount of students per class, which was a great difficulty for her and for the teachers.

> Durante o ensino fundamental + fundamental dois + o professor explicava o conteúdo + agente tinha o livro didático + acompanhava + era tal e qual o livro didático + ele falava aquele assunto + aquele

capítulo daquele dia + depois nós realizávamos a
atividade + e assim era feito os capítulos que tinha
pro decorrer do bimestre + eram trabalhados
assim e depois vinha a avaliação + que às vezes
acontecia muito da gente querer decorar + como
era o... agente só tinha acesso ao livro + agente
queria decorar pra fazer no dia da prova,
entendeu? + e como eu estudei com o mesmo
professor desde a quinta até a oitava série + era o
mesmo professor agente se identificava + era um
professor assim interativo com a turma + só que o
sistema da escola privada ele já é diferente da
escola pública + ele exige que você bata a capa do
livro + então o professor seguia muito aquilo e às
vezes o pessoal num entende que... ou não
conhece + não sei + que as atividades extra livro
didático elas também trazem um bom
conhecimento + e também tem outro ponto + o
professor também as vezes é um pouco privado de
trabalhar porque as turmas são cheias + então se
ele for trabalhar uma atividade sem ser assim....
extra livro didático + o que que vai acontecer? + é
numerosa e pode ser que cause uma desordem
dentro da sala de aula + é n fatores que podem
ocorrer dentro de sala de aula.

At secondary school

She attended her secondary school in a public federal school in
Mossoró, a city about seventy kilometers from Açu in the west. She was
still in the English course when she entered secondary school, and this
level of education was, according to her, much better than the primary
school, for the teachers were concerned with students' oral abilities and
they had more material resources available to help the teaching.

Na época do ensino médio eu já fiz em escola...
no CEFET + que é uma escola da rede pública e
tinha o mesmo contato + professores bons +
passei um tempo ainda + peguei o ensino médio
ainda fazendo o cursinho + e como eu estudava
em escola pública + eu não tinha o livro didático
em si + mas o professor passava as apostilas por
bimestre + agente tirava a xerox + só que lá já
explorava mais questão de... do *listening* + lá já

> explorava + agente... eles levavam pra agente escutar + agente escutava e já conseguia responder algumas cosias + levavam música + já tinha mais essa interatividade com relação ao ensino fundamental + então acho que houve mudança + porque na educação... foi progresso porque agente começou a trabalhar com outros recursos que agente não tinha + porque antes agente era... na educação básica agente era focado só no livro didático e lá agente já começou a ter contato com outros recursos materiais + didáticos.

Fatima often compares her secondary education, which was much more enjoyed, to that of the primary level. She says that students in her secondary school were really interested in learning and were more organized in terms of plans for the future.

> A turma do ensino médio + a minha + já era menor e como já eram pessoas mais adultas + assim adolescentes + pessoas que já tinham interesse em fazer uma faculdade + procurar um melhor... então já ficava mais fácil pra ele ((professor)) trabalhar + porque até pra agente entrar no CEFET + foi onde eu fiz o médio + agente passa por uma seleção + então + subentende-se que as pessoas que estão ali já estão com interesse assim + mais organizado + mais... sabe? + Já tem um objetivo + então as pessoas tinham mais interesse pra estudar.

At college

Influenced by the local labor market, she decided to attend Curso de Letras/Inglês, with the purpose of becoming a teacher. However, she was disappointed when she entered the program, for her low knowledge of the language did not allow her to progress in the course. She also says that perhaps her job consumed much of her time, and thereby she did not have available time to study at home.

> E depois do ensino médio veio o quê? + eu fui fazer vestibular + como na nossa região só... agente visa muito a questão de + de professor + o mercado de trabalho que se tem em Açu é... ser

> professor + então + visando isso aí eu resolvi fazer o vestibular pra Letras com habilitação em Língua Inglesa + já que eu tinha feito cursinho + tal + entrei pra faculdade pensando que era uma coisa + mas era outra diferente + porque o que eu sabia não + mesmo eu tendo feito cursinho eu não conseguia acompanhar só com o que eu via na faculdade + tinha que estudar em casa e às vezes eu não tinha tempo de estudar ((risos)) ou... sei lá... trabalho + uma coisa + agente vai se acomodando + mas só o que eu estudei na faculdade + estudava a noite não era suficiente + eu tinha que fazer um acompanhamento em casa.

She felt that she was gradually missing her stimulus to study English; as she says, she does not know whether it was because of the entrance in the university or because of her job, which consumed much of her time and thereby she did not have available time to devote to the study of English.

> Até o ensino médio eu gostava ((de Inglês)) + me interessava + achava que eu ia ser capaz de aprender + não sei se foi depois que eu entrei na faculdade ou se foi porque eu comecei a trabalhar que eu comecei a perder mais assim o estimulo + acho que o trabalho também foi pegando um pouco do + do tempo aí agente ia se acomodando + eu achava que só ali de noite eu ia conseguir realizar... aprender e realizar + mas num + num + não tinha como não + mas...

In *Curso de Letras/Inglês*, Fatima claims that the program demanded students to study at home, which was difficult for her because of her job; she also emphasizes that when she was in class she had to study with people of different levels of knowledge in English, and it was a great difficult for her and for the teachers. She seems to be frustrated for not having attained a good level of command in English and says she could have demanded more of herself to study English.

> Na faculdade agente começa vendo o que eles chamam de básico + mas pra agente que não tem um bom... num tinha já um bom nível + porque na realidade quando agente entra agente se depara

com pessoas de diversos níveis + então + o que acontece? + às vezes o professor tenta ir num nível maior + mas tem que esperar por aqueles que não sabem + então é uma coisa muito irregular + talvez se existisse até um teste antes de você entrar pra esse curso + sei lá... um teste de proficiência que chamam + alguma coisa desse tipo + talvez nivelasse mais dentro de sala de aula + agora o que acontece? + o professor já tem dificuldade de trabalhar porque alguns têm o nível maior e outros têm um nível menor + mas na faculdade acontecia da mesma forma + agente tinha acesso + o professor passava as apostilas + agente xerocava e tinha também trabalhos com músicas... e quando começou a trabalhar metodologia agente já trabalhava é... praticava assim teatro + essas coisas que faziam com que agente... essas atividades extra + tipo escuta + tipo teatro já... na minha concepção já trazia um maior aprendizado de que quando agente focava só no livro + porque na hora que agente ia... se engajava pra fazer alguma apresentação + então + todo mundo se interessava pra apresentar as falas e tal + e quando era só no livro agente era... acontecia a mesma coisa + agente queria só decorar pra fazer uma prova + mas... foi... houve mudança sim + eu já tinha visto + no caso no ensino médio + agente já utilizava esses recursos audiovisuais + esses trabalhos agente + na faculdade agente continuou a utilizar + só que como eu mencionei + eu acho pela minha parte faltou um pouco de interesse de procurar estudar mais + mas que o nível também é bom + o que atrapalha dentro de sala de aula é a questão das diferenças de conhecimento de cada um.

RAELE'S LEARNING STORY

At primary school

Raele grew up in Açu, where she took her primary school. It was in a private school and, according to her, it was in this level of education that she had the motivational experience to learning English: a teacher who worked with international songs, especially Rock and Pop songs:

> Durante o ensino fundamental + havia um professor de Língua Inglesa que trabalhava conosco usando música + isso me marcou muito + porque eram músicas internacionais e outras disciplinas não + os professores não usavam músicas + então + isso motivava cada um dos alunos a querer se divertir e aprender dentro da escola + que era algo raro + e daí minha curiosidade por Língua Inglesa começou porque eu gostava dos artistas internacionais de Rock e Pop Rock.

She argues that teachers at that time were particularly concerned with tasks of the book, especially translation tasks:

> Bom + no fundamental + basicamente o professor utilizava um livro didático para começar um capítulo + explicava assim no quadro e também utilizando o texto-livro + a noção era que agente soubesse traduzir palavras pra tentar traduzir o texto e em seguida responder algumas questões do livro didático e vez por outra se utilizava o recurso + ou material extra + ou um clipe de uma música + ou uma música e vez por outra + dificilmente um professor de Língua Inglesa trazia algo diferente como + por exemplo + confecção de cartão postal em Língua Inglesa + era a única atividade diferenciada que eu me lembro.

At secondary school

Her secondary education was also attended in a private school. However, she says it was strictly focused on the translation of texts, as it was almost an obligation for secondary students of private institutions. Although she argues that this focus on translation of texts hinders students' creativity, she progressed.

> No ensino médio focou-se muito a tradução de texto pra o vestibular + então eu adquiri muito vocabulário + mas em compensação + como se tivesse atrofiando a criatividade do aluno + foi isso que aconteceu + mas houve progresso no

> ensino médio + porque como eu fui instigada a ler muito + eu queria ler um texto em voz alta + então eu fui lendo em Inglês + certo e errado + mas fui lendo e o professor orientando agente a pronunciar correto.

Raele seems to have been influenced by the book translations, which increased in the last year of secondary school:

> O meu processo de aprendizagem de Língua Inglesa + que foi pegando letras de músicas e traduzindo + se intensificou mais... na verdade se aguçou muito no terceiro ano + porque eu tinha que traduzir textos pra o vestibular e isso me preocupou muito + então eu adquiri muito vocabulário no terceiro ano do ensino médio.

According to Raele, English classes were not enough, only one meeting per week, and they were a portrait of the grammar-translation method. Besides that, most of the students did not like English. However, she had good teachers, who were prepared to teach, as she says:

> Bom + meus professores + eram professores que eu + que eu saiba + na época eram todos formados em Letras mesmo + também porque eu fui aluna de escola particular e é uma exigência + e os professores é... basicamente eu tive dois professores + três professores de Língua Inglesa e eles eram formados e todos trabalhavam com o livro determinado pela escola e fazia-se muito o método de + o método de gramática e tradução em sala de aula e... eu não tenho muita coisa pra contar porque realmente a Língua Inglesa agente só tinha uma aula na semana que era dois horários em uma semana e era uma aula por vez + muito corrida + era uma aula que os alunos atrapalhavam muito + porque infelizmente eles não gostavam de Inglês e os professores muitas vezes eles acabavam oprimidos pelos alunos.

At college

She took her undergraduate course in Curso de Letras/Inglês. At university, she often compares her learning experiences in tertiary education to that of the secondary. She argues that, different from the previous level, students seem to invest more in the learning of English, they are willing to speak the language, to communicate through English.

> Já na faculdade + porque na faculdade agente vê que os alunos estão mais interessados a aprender e então eles se sentem mais motivados + eles têm mais curiosidade + eles têm vontade de falar mais + de se comunicar + eles têm vontade de perguntar mais ao professor + de interagir com o seu colega de sala em Inglês.

Raele seems to be highly concerned with the development of oral skills and acknowledges the contributions of university teachers in systematizing them.

> Na faculdade a prática da oralidade foi que começou a aparecer + porque até então não era cobrado e muita coisa que eu aprendi na minha formação eu devo aos meus professores de faculdade + porque eles foram as pessoas que nos instigaram a desenvolver as quatro habilidades como elas devem ocorrer no processo de aprendizagem.

B.2 A SELF-EFFORT APPROACH: CLAUDIO'S AND EDSON'S STORIES

CLAUDIO'S LEARNING STORY

At primary school

Claudio grew up in Açu. His trajectories as a learner of English began early in childhood, even before he entered primary school. He used to listen to and try to sing international songs through an old *Radiola* which his father kept in the house. His favorite song (a landmark in his story, according to him) was *Ben* by Michael Jackson, which he used to sing for parents and some friends, and it made him feel

different. Although his mother thought he was crazy, Claudio thinks of that early sounds contributed significantly to his latter learning of English.

> Como aprendiz de Inglês + meu processo começa um pouco cedo + começa ainda na fase de infância + até pra um despertamento pra questão da língua + mesmo sem entender coisa alguma e há um fato de certa forma inusitado + porque ainda criança papai tinha uma radiola antiga e que pegava emissoras em ondas curtas e todas as noites eu ia pra frente do radio e ficava ouvindo aquilo ali + ouvindo piadinhas da minha mãe que costumava dizer + esse menino ta ficando doido + vou interná-lo porque ele fica ouvindo esse budejado que ninguém entende + eu gostava + não entendia nada + mas posteriormente quando comecei realmente a estudar Inglês aquela audição já contribuiu pra essa aprendizagem + pra o desenvolvimento + quer dizer + já havia um acúmulo de conhecimentos + pelo menos auditivos + se não de compreensão + mas pelo menos auditivos + a parte de compreensão tornou-se mais fácil.

He attended his primary education in a public school in Açu and was exposed to a very traditional teaching, in which the focus of attention was on the structural aspects of the language, without any conversation and rules out of context.

> No fundamental + no ensino fundamental infelizmente agente teve assim + uma aprendizagem sempre norteada pra estrutura da língua + nunca se vê o contexto + nunca é pra se vê a conversação + pra vê a língua em uso + nós nunca tivemos a oportunidade de vê essa língua em uso + então + agente via as regras gramaticais + a construção vocabular + mas assim + acho que foi importante sim + mas deixou muito a desejar nesse sentido da interação e da aplicabilidade cotidiana da língua.

Claudio remembers his most significant teachers and some experiences provided by them. He constantly compares his learning in

this initial phase to that of the subsequent phases, highlighting some mispronounced words which he was taught at the time.

> Olha! eu lembro no ensino fundamental como eu disse o meu primeiro professor foi xxxx + na quinta serie + entre cascudos e gritos agente acabou aprendendo pelo menos vocabulário + lembro do professor xxx + também da professora xxxx + que... em me marcou + quer dizer na realidade não me marcou pela época em que foi minha professora + mas o depois quando eu comecei a realmente aprender determinadas pronúncias + determinadas não + pronúncias mesmo da palavra e ai percebi assim + fazia o contraponto + marcou a posteriori porque assim + quando eu vim descobrir que o verbo era + por exemplo + *to go to* /tu gou tu/ e a professora costumava pronunciar /to go to/ eu acostumei a ouvir dizer que a palavra era *anything* /enithing/ e eu ouvia com a professora /aniting/ + ou coisas dessa forma + então assim + na posterioridade marcou por isso + porque assim + um fato no mínimo pitoresco + lembro do professor xxxx, acho que eu poderia classificar que meu grande momento de aprendizagem em ralação a língua Inglesa dessa fase inicial foi realmente professor xxxx + então + assim + com relação a memórias assim + foram...

At secondary school

He attended two of the three years of secondary school in a public school in Açu. These two years were catastrophic for him. He was supposed to attend eighty teaching hours per year, but, according to him, he only had about twenty hours, which he considers worse than the primary level. In addition, the teaching in the secondary level was a repetition of the structural rules of the primary level and the verb to be.

> A minha aprendizagem no ensino médio eu lhe diria que foi catastrófica + foi + porque assim + se nós tínhamos que ter oitenta aulas em um ano + se nós tivéssemos vinte era muita coisa e assim mesmo essas vinte eram uma repetição do estruturalismo que agente viu no ensino

fundamental + não foi + eu não diria... contribuiu de alguma forma pela questão do estímulo que eu busquei fora da sala de aula meios de aprendizagem + porque se dependesse apenas da sala de aula realmente ai eu teria ficado estagnado + a aula era basicamente de é... *What's this*? *This is a book* + *What's that*? *That is a window* + basicamente isto + e o nosso famoso velho e conhecido verbo *to be* + quer dizer + sem aplicabilidade + como usar o verbo *to be*? + quer dizer + agente via lá + *I am* + *you are* + *he is* + *she is* + mas não tinha elementos pra usar isso no dia-a-dia + não havia essa preocupação com a conversação em si + apenas com o estruturalismo + por isso eu digo que nesse sentido o ensino médio foi bem pior do que o ensino fundamental.

In the early 1980s, Claudio moved to Rio de Janeiro, where he worked and used to go to the beaches to listen to *gringos* speaking English. In 2004, he returned to Açu and finished the last year of his secondary education. In this final year of secondary school, he mentions a teacher who was significant for his English learning.

Quando eu fui embora do Nordeste pra o Rio de Janeiro + o meu programa de final de semana era ir para as praias pra encontrar gringos e ficar ouvindo eles falarem + quer dizer tem um... há um despertamento meu com relação a aprendizagem nesse sentido + muito do gostar + do querer + ai construi espaço dessa aprendizagem mesmo + mas em função de toda essa deficiência + coisa e tal + agente estudou + eu estudei em escola publica + na escola do estado e ai a coisa realmente não + não funcionou como deveria ser + ah! + e poderia até destacar que na minha vida estudantil eu terminei + fiz até o ensino... o segundo ano do ensino médio nos anos ai de... oitenta, oitenta e um mais ou menos e depois parei e somente em dois mil e quatro é que eu retornei pra fazer o terceiro ano do ensino médio e há um professor nessa época que foi muito interessante + foi muito bom + há um professor que foi muito bom que foi o professor xxxx + que dentro das limitações que lhe era imposta pelo próprio sistema + mas pelo

> menos foi... eu + um ponto que marcou pra mim +
> foi + foi onde eu vim aprender o presente
> continuo + foi + foi onde eu realmente aprendi
> como utilizar o presente continuo que até então
> pra mim era algo muito solto + muito tênue e o
> professor xxxx foi muito importante nessa fase +
> professor que posteriormente eu iria encontrar na
> faculdade.

At college

In 2005, he started his tertiary level, Curso de Letras/Inglês. Claudio argues that there were two crucial points in this phase of his learning life: first, the university itself, which contributed significantly to his systematization of English; and second, his contact with foreign students of an interchange agency in Açu, which led him to host one of them, who was coming from New Zealand.

> Ah! + eu diria que... dois... na minha questão de
> aprendizagem de Inglês + dois pontos foram
> fundamentais + o primeiro deles foi a própria
> universidade + que foi onde eu vim realmente
> conseguir sistematizar o meu Inglês + até então
> ele era algo meio solto + era construído de frases
> isoladas + mas na universidade eu consegui
> realmente + sistematizar o uso dessa língua + Na
> faculdade ai eu diria que foi realmente + foi uma
> transformação da água pro vinho + porque na
> faculdade + apesar de questionar bastante de que
> pelo menos setenta por cento do curso era dado
> em língua portuguesa + em língua materna + mas
> o que era dado em língua Inglesa foi de...
> extremamente valoroso + professores como xxx +
> xxx + xxx + xxx + xxx e outros + xxx + foram
> professores que nos deram uma nova perspectiva
> e aquilo que eu sempre buscava + sair do
> estruturalismo pra a língua em uso + e a
> universidade me permitiu isso + me permitiu
> também a abertura de espaços de discussão +
> espaços de conversação + de usar realmente a
> língua + porque assim + eu procurava sempre ta
> conversando com os colegas e botando em uso a
> língua + se não havia espaços exteriores + mas
> pelo menos na universidade foi muito importante
> + e um segundo ponto também foi o meu contato

> com + com estudantes de intercambio + através de uma agencia chamada + chamada *American Field Service* + a AFS + e a possibilidade da interação cotidiana com a língua + ou seja + a necessidade de usar o Inglês cotidianamente + até pra... dentro dessa + dessa perspectiva agente teve a oportunidade de hospedar um estudante da Nova Zelandia e isso contribuiu enormemente pra o meu processo de aprendizagem.

EDSON'S LEARNING STORY

At primary school

Edson is from Açu and attended his primary education in a public institution in Açu. His learning experiences were, undoubtedly, influenced by his great pleasure for video games. Since childhood, he likes playing electronic games and it made him feel interested in learning English, as most of the games were in English. He started to realize that there were stories being told in the games and he became very much interested to know the plot of the games and thereby he used to take a dictionary when he went out to play the games.

> Bem + meu primeiro contato com Inglês foi numa locadora de vídeo game + porque assim + eu sempre gostei de jogos eletrônicos + aquela coisa toda + inclusive convivo com eles até hoje + mas ai o meu primeiro contato exatamente foi nessa locadora + eu fui jogar + eu era garoto + devia ter uns dez anos e eu queria saber o que acontecia na historia do jogo + eu percebi que tinha um enredo e uma história estava sendo contada + então eu queria saber o que se passava + e ai como todos esse jogos eram contados em Inglês + então eu imaginei que se eu levasse um dicionário pra locadora eu podia entender um pouco mais da coisa + ai como esse hábito me acompanhou + o hábito de jogar esses jogos me acompanhou durante a minha infância e pré-adolescência inteira + então eu acho que eu comecei a aprender Inglês dai.

He was always interested in passing the phases of the games and facing the challenges which could appear in the subsequent phases. Edson uses a metaphor to explain his attraction for both video games and languages: as with the games, he conceives of language learning as a code, which people have to "decipher" in order to succeed.

> Na verdade + eu acho que foi desde cedo que eu tive essa predileção pelas línguas porque eu fazia duas atividades que eu gostava muito que era o jogo + o jogo ele sempre impunha aquela coisa de você conseguir passar de fase + passar de nível + conseguir decifrar o código + decifrar aquela coisa + então + eu gosto muito de códigos e a língua no nível da aprendizagem ela é um código + então era isso que eu tava fazendo + tava decifrando os códigos do jogo e decifrando os códigos da língua pra poder decifrar os códigos do jogo + ai isso pra mim era demais + eu tenho um prazer enorme em jogar.

Although Edson always got good grades in primary education, he was not aware he liked English at that time, because it was not used for pragmatic reasons; and he knew that he was discovering several things by himself and through his own effort, thus using for his own advantages, that is, play games. He did not like English classes at primary school, for it was boring and repetitive.

> No fundamental cara + eu nem sabia que gostava de Inglês pra falar a verdade + não o Inglês da escola + eu gostava muito de Inglês + gostava muito mesmo + só que eu tava aprendendo coisas por mim mesmo e na escola eu ia aprender outras coisas e eu praticamente não usava aquilo que aprendia na escola + então pra mim era estranho + assim eu sempre fui bom em língua Inglesa + tirava notas boas e tudo + nunca tive nenhuma dificuldade com o aprendizado da língua no ensino fundamental não + mas eu não gostava + não tinha prazer em aprender no ensino fundamental não + a aula era chata pra caramba + era muito chata + era aquela coisa + o professor chegava dava três quatro palavrinhas + um texto de três linhas quatro linhas e passava a aula inteira com aquilo ali + era horrível + dava o mesmo

> conteúdo todos os anos + repetidamente + números + cores + animais e profissões durante todo o tempo do ensino fundamental.

At secondary school

He attended his secondary education in a private school in Açu and although he says his secondary level was not good, he stated two episodes which seem to be significant for his learning experiences. The first episode was a good teacher he had in the first year of secondary school, who also taught at university and contributed very much to his English improvement. Unfortunately, the teacher did not stay the whole year with him, which, according to him, turned his learning more difficult.

> No médio já foi diferente + porque assim que eu... no primeiro ano + no primeiro ano de ensino médio eu... meu primeiro professor de Inglês foi xxxx + então ele já era professor de universidade na época + então ele já tinha uma visão diferente de como ensinar + já tinha uma metodologia + uma didática totalmente diferente e eu lembro que a primeira coisa que ele ensinou cara + o primeiro dia de aula do ensino médio foi estratégia de leitura + e eu fazia já aquilo instintivamente + mas ele me deu o método pra fazer + então ele sistematizou aquele meu conhecimento que eu já tinha e isso foi muito valioso + a partir dai eu já comecei vê as coisa de uma forma diferente + o xxxx ele não passou muito tempo lá + passou uns três quatro meses só + porque depois ele teve que fazer outras coisas + eu não lembro o que foi + ele deixou a escola + ai assim + depois voltei pra o feijão com arroz + tive um outro professor que não era tão bom assim + nesse primeiro ano + ai assim + mas esse primeiro bimestre + bimestre e meio que eu tive com xxxx foi muito valioso + porque ele passava os conteúdos de uma outra forma + a forma que até então eu não tinha visto ainda + ai por isso foi muito bom + ai o segundo ano eu passei por uma metodologia de um professor meio arcaica + mas por incrível que pareça + como eu costumo dizer + por incrível que pareça o cara só chegava e dava tradução +

> ele chegava na sala de aula e dizia + tradução e interpretação de texto + tradução e interpretação de texto + só que assim + como eu já tinha bastante vocabulário + já tinha bastante vocabulário ativo + já conhecia muitas palavras + aquela coisa da tradução foi só + foi só melhorando + pra falar a verdade + eu não tinha conhecimento oral nenhum + até então não tinha conhecimento oral de nada + o que eu tinha era um pouco de música e as falas do vídeo game que eu ouvia + de tanto jogar eu ficava repetindo + mas conhecimento oral + produção oral era nada + era nula praticamente + mas assim + questões de texto + desenvolvimento da escrita e da leitura foi um salto assim incrível sabe? + apesar dessa metodologia arcaica + a repetição me levou a um domínio muito bom da leitura + domínio muito bom mesmo + porque assim + eu li muitos textos + ele passava toda aula + duas três traduções pra agente fazer + textos de uma página + duas paginas + então tava sempre exercitando + e isso foi o ano inteiro

The second episode he mentions as an improvement of his English knowledge was an interactive experience with a foreign engineer in the last year of secondary school. It was in this exchange with the engineer that Edson received his first dollar, which for him was a significant point in his journey of learning English.

> Já no terceiro ano foi quando eu comecei a realmente me dedicar + comecei a realmente descobrir que eu gostava de Inglês + no segundo ano + como eu desenvolvi bastante essa habilidade + então no terceiro ano eu já tava pronto pra + já tava pronto pro resto + no terceiro ano + o salto qualitativo não se deu por causa da escola + mas se deu por causa de uma experiência que eu tive durante o terceiro ano + que foi trabalhando como garçom num bar aqui da cidade + no xxxx + e eu conheci lá um senhor de Israel + um engenheiro que tava aqui pra fazer uma consultoria + alguma coisa do tipo e ele tava precisando lavar as roupas + comer e se hospedar + só que ela não falava nenhuma palavra em

> português + nada + nada + nada + e a única língua que ele tinha pra se comunicar era o Inglês + é claro + fora a língua nativa dele + tinha o Inglês pra se comunicar + e o Inglês dele... na época eu não sabia + mas hoje eu sei ((risos)) era muito difícil de se entender + era bem complicado mesmo + só que... eu não sei + acho que por vê as palavras + por saber como se pronunciava algumas delas + eu tentei me comunicar com ele + com o vocabulário básico que eu tinha + foi uma conversa muito + muito básica + sem preposições + conversa toda truncada + toda baseada em frases já formuladas + pré-formuladas + mas assim + agente conseguiu estabelecer comunicação + eu consegui que as roupas dele fossem lavadas + ele conseguiu comer + comeu o que queria e se hospedou + nesse dia eu ganhei uma nota de um dólar + ele me deu de gorjeta a nota de um dólar + ai por aquela coisa de... cultura de filme + ah! + meu primeiro dólar + aquela coisa toda + ai eu tomei gosto pela coisa e disse + poxa eu posso fazer isso + ai então eu comecei a estudar bastante mesmo + comecei a me dedicar pela coisa.

He argues if favor of some of his primary teachers by stating that not all of them were bad, and he further explain his particular view of the verb to be:

> Não eram professores que eram cem por cento ruins + mas que tinham... não sei + acho que + muito por causa do sistema eles foram empurrados a ministrar aulas daquela forma + você tem salas super lotadas + você tem alunos que realmente não prestam atenção + e dizem também + ah! + não + o professor só ensina o verbo to be + mas isso tem uma resposta bem simples + uma resposta não + uma razão pra esse problema + é porque assim + se os alunos não aprendem esse conteúdo básico + esse conhecimento básico da estrutura da língua Inglesa + como da continuidade? + como da continuidade? + como passar para as outras partes?

At college

Edson was not sure which course he would choose for tertiary level. However, he took into account his interest in learning languages and decided to attend Curso de Letras/Inglês for his undergraduate course. He highlights the experience of his first class at college, in which English was the medium of communication, and thus it was very impressive for him. At university, even though he thinks he was not a good learner, he also had two important experiences in his English learning, which was his friendship with Rob, another "foreigner" visiting Açu, and his first experience as a teacher of English in a private institution in Açu. He explains:

> Eu decidi entrar na faculdade foi uma coisa meio complicada + porque foi meio de uma hora pra outra + eu ia pra uma outra área + mas acabei decidindo entrar pra Inglês + porque eu disse + não + eu vou fazer isso + eu gosto disso + eu vou tentar + eu entrei meio as cegas + eu assumo + mas a partir que eu entrei na faculdade eu passei a gostar realmente da coisa + uma das primeiras experiências foi a primeira aula na faculdade + quando eu entrei na faculdade eu não tinha tido uma aula completamente em Inglês + e foi a primeira coisa que eu me deparei + segunda feira + primeira aula era de Inglês + eu fiquei meio perdido + o negócio tava todo em Inglês + eu tinha que seguir todas aquelas instruções + tinha que me concentrar ao ponto de ouvir o professor + entender + sei lá... se eu conversasse eu ia ter que ouvir ele também + então eu tentava não conversar + tentava ficar olhando de frente o tempo inteiro pra não perder o foco + e isso assim + foi difícil pra mim porque assim + você não tem nenhuma preparação + você não tem nenhuma base pra isso + a não ser que você tenha feito um cursinho + eu até tentei fazer curso de Inglês + curso de idioma + mas não fui muito bem sucedido no curso de idioma não + por quê? + eu não sei + eu acho que durante a minha adolescência eu tava meio de saco cheio de estudar + então quando eu ia pra o curso de idioma eu já tava meio bitolado daquela coisa toda

e + não sei... acho que também a metodologia que os professores no curso de idioma aplicaram não foi a ideal + não me convenceu + então eu tentei a primeira vez no básico um + tinha treze anos eu acho + e não deu certo + passei três semanas e desisti + depois tentei a outra vez no básico quatro e passei duas semanas e desisti + depois eu tentei outra vez no intermediário dois + alguma coisa assim e desisti também + mas o engraçado da faculdade é que assim + eu entrei + entrei e passei um certo tempo como aluno de médio pra fraco + porque os professores pediam atividades + principalmente na língua Inglesa + não falo nem tanto nas outras disciplinas que são voltadas pra língua portuguesa + mas no campo da língua Inglesa + eu era um aluno assim de médio pra fraco + não sabia muita coisa não + isso não em comparação com ninguém + em comparação de mim pra mim mesmo + mas duas experiências que me fizeram realmente mudar + foi o segundo salto qualitativo que eu realmente considero bastante foi quando eu encontrei pela segunda vez um estrangeiro aqui na cidade + se chamava Rob + era de *Idaho* nos Estados Unidos + e ele tava aqui + também tava na mesma situação + não falava português e veio pra cá pra passar algum tempo + passou aqui + se eu não me engano dois meses + e eu conheci esse cara + ligaram pra mim do hotel + ligaram pra mim + o pessoal já me conhecia porque eu já tinha trabalhado em alguns lugares aqui + ligaram pra mim do hotel e eu passei a ser amigo dele + nós passamos a conversar todos os dias + ele em Inglês e eu tentando ((risos)) acompanhar + tentado responder + aquela coisa toda + então esses dois meses de conversação meio forçada + porque tava todo dia + todo dia conversando mesmo + ia lá e conversava com ele durante o dia + ele ia pra o trabalho + ajeitava algumas coisas pra ele + e a noite saímos todos os dias + pra restaurantes + bares + coisas assim + e eu aprendi como... eu não posso chamar de imersão total + mas como uma semi-imersão e isso foi um salto qualitativo muito grande + e o segundo salto foi quando eu fui chamado pra trabalhar como professor no xxxx (school of

> languages) + e lá + na experiência como profissional + como professor + eu nem podia ta ensinado + mas já tava + fui ter as minhas primeiras experiências + eu aprendi dando aula muito mais de que como estudante + porque eu precisava entender aquele conteúdo não só pra mim + mas eu precisava entender aquele conteúdo pra mim e ainda ter discernimento e entendimento suficiente pra passar para meus alunos + então isso ai foi um ponto crucial.

He shows a strong desire to change the difficult situation which public schools face today regarding the teaching of foreign languages. Perhaps the experience which the university provided him with has led Edson to reflect on the issue of English (or other foreign languages) as being the medium communication in primary and secondary school education.

> As aulas na faculdade são ministradas em Inglês + são ministradas em Inglês o conteúdo + o conteúdo é totalmente diferente + eu vejo + pelo fato de ser uma especialização + você tá ali pra estudar unicamente aquilo ali + realmente deveria se ter essa mudança + ter essa transferência + mas eu acredito o seguinte +++ não que as aulas devam deixar de ser ministradas em Inglês na faculdade + mas que os professores comecem a pensar nisso + que se mude o sistema no ensino fundamental e médio pra que quando o aluno decida optar pelas línguas + não só o Inglês + o espanhol e qualquer outra língua que se estude no ensino fundamental e ensino médio pra se entrar futuramente numa faculdade + o professor passe a ter mais... que se possa mudar o sistema educacional pra que o professor possa ter uma oportunidade + eu não digo ministrar uma aula toda em Inglês + mas por exemplo + da uma experiência pra os alunos até que eventualmente se possa acontecer + não sei + não sei se isso é uma realidade próxima + se da pra se fazer isso + mas que eventualmente os professores do ensino médio também possam ministrar as aulas em Inglês + na língua-alvo.

B.3 A TEACHER-RELIANT APPROACH: ANGELINA'S AND JOEL'S STORIES

ANGELINA'S LEARNING STORY

At primary school

Angelina grew up in Açu and comes from a low class family. She attended her primary education in a public school in Açu and always enjoyed learning English. However, her experiences learning this language were not satisfactory for her, as she explain:

> Inicialmente a minha experiência como aprendiz não foi boa + porque eu vivenciei um período em que a estrutura de ensino aqui na região era muito limitada e os professores de línguas eles geralmente... é na verdade tinham outra formação + então eu via desde cedo + tinha vontade de aprender + mas via que o sistema não me oferecia um ensino de qualidade com relação à línguas + hoje + eu vejo que já houve um avanço + muito embora tenha muito mais pra melhorar + mas percebo que os profissionais de hoje + já encontramos mais profissionais formados realmente em línguas trabalhando nas escolas do que no período em que eu estava cursando.

As teachers formal education was an essential aspect for her own development, she claims that most of her teachers were unprepared to teach English. Thus, she started to realize that well prepared and good teachers make substantial difference in one's learning trajectory.

> Enquanto eu fazia o ensino fundamental I + não existia língua Inglesa no ensino fundamental I + já no fundamental II + os professores que eu tive alguns não tinham formação + outros tinham + então + o que me despertou foi observar a diferença entre ter um professor que realmente tivesse tido a formação pra ensinar línguas e um que realmente estivesse só tapando buraco + um professor formado + um professor com a graduação faz total diferença.

At secondary technical school

Angelina attended her secondary education in a public school. She took a technical course (Curso de Magistério) and English was not a mandatory discipline. She argues that her secondary level was pretty much the same as in the primary level: she did not have contact with reading and text interpretation and the content of teaching was basically the verb "to be".

> No ensino médio não... assim + eu tenho pouca lembrança de língua Inglesa no ensino médio + eu fiz magistério e não era + não era uma disciplina que fosse muito explorada + hoje é mais pela exigência no vestibular + mas não houve muita diferença do fundamental + não + eu não senti muita alteração não + era realmente aquele Inglês o básico do básico + bem limitado + não se trabalhava leitura e interpretação de texto + não tinha muito contato com texto em língua Inglesa + a aula era muito resumida ao verbo *to be* e realmente a estrutura da língua + sem trabalhar muito a leitura e a oralidade + a compreensão do que se estava falando.

According to her, the teaching at that time was very traditional, and teachers were very much concerned with structural and grammatical aspects of the language, not providing students with interaction or conversation in the target language.

> Eu lembro de professores que + estavam na sala e faziam muito copiar + e nós não sabíamos o que estávamos copiando + mas aquele professor ele não tinha dinâmica em sala de aula pra nos fazer participar + para nos envolver na aula e nos fazer desenvolver as habilidades necessárias pra realmente poder falar Inglês.

At college

Angelina attended Curso de Letras/Inglês as her undergraduate course, and the reason was her interest to learn and become a teacher of English. Her curiosity to learn English seems to have influenced her decision to study and consequently become a teacher of this language. At the university, she thinks that she improved her knowledge of the language, but she is frustrated for not having attained a good level of command in English. In her point of view, fluency in English is the basic concern of the program in an attempt to stimulate students to be in the course.

> Eu acredito que o curso pode não ser um dos melhores cursos + mas ajudou muito + mudou a perspectiva do que... se você for comparar como você entra na faculdade e como você sai + você avança + eu acredito que existe um direcionamento muito pra escrita ainda + na época em que eu estava na faculdade eu sentia isso ainda + muito voltado pra escrita e pouco pra fala + hoje já percebo... visitando o curso + observo que as aulas já tem mais uma outra postura de trabalhar também a oralidade e a fluência + percebo esse melhoramento e que eu sentia falta na época em que eu estava na graduação + percebo que a graduação de hoje ela tem essa perspectiva que torna o aluno + dar ao aluno uma certa... desperta mais a vontade de estar no curso pelo fato de que a principal conquista seja a fluência + se o aluno termina o curso e não conquista a fluência talvez ele saia frustrado + então + pra mim a faculdade ela foi um norte + porque hoje eu consigo analisar quando eu entrei eu não conseguia ler e entender um texto quando eu estivesse pegando a parte escrita e quando eu sai eu conseguia + mas eu não sai com fluência + e isso foi uma frustração pra mim + eu considero importante que hoje tem acontecido mudanças.

She comments on a significant fact during her learning experience at university, which was a teacher whose activities led students to be involved in, and willing to, speak English. She does seem

to mirror herself in the memories of the teacher she had at college by exposing her students to oral activities in her classes.

> Eu sinto que + na graduação eu tive um professor que ele trabalhava muito com lúdico e isso fazia com que o aluno se envolvesse bastante + o aluno se empolgasse + se sentisse estimulado pra falar + pra vencer o bloqueio que é natural de cada um + porque quando você entra numa sala que todo mundo esta falando em outra língua + você às vezes até sabe o que deveria falar + mas a sua mente bloqueia + então + isso é um trabalho que não é mais a questão de ensinar o que dizer + mas de deixar o aluno à vontade pra que ele possa transmitir suas opiniões na outra língua + na segunda língua + então + eu considero importante o trabalho com o lúdico + é tanto que eu + no meu projeto eu estou abordando o lúdico + porque hoje trabalhando em sala de aula eu trabalho o lúdico e mesmo com o lúdico eu percebo que o aluno bloqueia na hora que você faz uma pergunta + imagine se você trabalhar uma coisa sistemática só de perguntas e respostas mecanizadas.

JOEL'S LEARNING STORY

At primary school

Joel grew up in Lajes, a city in the middle region of Rio Grande do Norte and about one hundred kilometers distant from Açu, in the east. He attended his primary school in a public school in Lajes and did not particularly like English during his primary years. He says it was difficult for him. In addition, the teaching at that time was very poor and teachers were unprepared to teach English.

> No ensino fundamental + eu tive minha vida escolar + mas eu não dava tanta ênfase a disciplina língua Inglesa + por quê? + porque eu achava difícil + e... ao meu vê + foi uma... foi um pouco defasado + um pouco não + foi bastante defasado + por quê? + é tanto que hoje em dia ainda se há a cultura + em escolas públicas + que professor só passa o verbo *to be* + porque já vem de muito + de muito tempo atrás isso + esse + essa

cultura + e que graças a Deus felizmente essa cultura ta + nós estamos vencendo ela aos poucos e realmente as aulas de Inglês no tempo que eu estudava eram bastante precárias + por quê? + porque primeiro que não tinha professores formados na área + hoje já tem bastante e ainda se há uma + uma carência muito grande + mas hoje já tem bastante professores formados em língua Inglesa + em letras/língua Inglesa + mas no tempo que eu + que eu estudei + que eu fiz meu ensino fundamental + a minha professora ela não era formada em letras + nem muito menos tinha especialização em língua Inglesa + acontecia o quê? + aquilo que se acontece ainda hoje infelizmente + que o professor ele passa pra o... pra pedagogo + polivalente + então ele passa pra trabalhar na prefeitura + no estado e tem que pegar disciplinas que não são do + da área desse professor + então o que acontece? + ele vai apenas tapar o buraco e ai o ensino se torna cada vez mais precário.

He tells, with details, how his learning life was while attending primary school, and says that he always got good grades in the exams through his trucks. He confesses that these trucks did not contribute to his learning.

Eu sentia que no ensino fundamental + como eu morava no interior + no ensino fundamental acontecia de tal modo + eu freqüentava a escola + então eu ia pra escola + chegava da escola jogava meu material lá e ia brincar + entendeu? + então + essa era a realidade do meu ensino fundamental + por que é que eu tirava notas boas? + porque eu peguei um macete com minha mãe de fazer questionários e eu já tinha também pego esse macete a partir das avaliações que eu fazia de como os professores elaboravam a prova + então eu já sabia mais ou menos como era que eles elaboravam a prova + e já ia em cima no foco + por isso eu tirava notas boas + mas se você me perguntar xxxx se você estudasse dez assuntos de história você internalizaria pelo menos cinco? + se eu respondesse que sim eu estaria mentindo + no

> máximo + no máximo um assunto de história eu
> internalizava + entendeu?

Joel contends about the lack preparation for the teaching of his primary teacher, and says she was not graduated in the teaching of English.

> A minha professora de ensino fundamental ela
> não era nem formada na língua Inglesa + em
> letras/especialização me língua Inglesa + ou seja +
> ela já no máximo tinha feito um cursinho de seis
> meses pra ter noções e não ir pra uma sala de aula
> apenas pra é... falar coisas ou lecionar de forma
> é... errada + porque + até porque se ela não se
> formou na + na área com certeza ela ia cometer
> alguns deslizes.

At secondary school

He attended his secondary level in a public school in Natal, the capital of Rio Grande do Norte. As teachers' stimulus was crucial to him, it was much better than the previous level, for the teacher was prepared and assigned students with activities which involved the four skills. However, He thinks that learning English in public schools is difficult, mainly because of the high number of students per class and the lack of resources available to help teachers.

> Bem + no ensino médio já foi melhor + pois eu fiz
> meu ensino médio na capital e a minha professora
> do ensino médio ela era formada em letras com
> especialização em língua Inglesa + e foi bem legal
> + no ensino médio eu passei realmente a ter um
> contato com a língua + pois ela fazia é... ela fazia
> tarefas que usava as quatro habilidades + nós é...
> tínhamos que escrever + tínhamos que falar +
> tínhamos que ler e tínhamos também que adquirir
> vocabulário + então ela + essa minha professora +
> ela era bem dinâmica + a professora do ensino
> médio ela era bem dinâmica e de uma certa forma
> ela estimulava os alunos a fazer também + a
> procurar um curso de Inglês + pois agente sabe
> que infelizmente no nosso sistema de ensino atual
> é... isso é inviável (aprender Inglês na escola

> pública) + pelo número de alunos por turma + e falta de recursos também para os professores poderem explorar a língua.

Different from the primary school, he became aware of the importance associated to English and opened his mind, for his entrance at the university would be very much dependent on his efforts.

> No ensino médio + é... a coisa foi afunilando + por quê? + porque havia uma concorrência maior + eu abri minha mente no sentido de que eu ia concorrer com outras pessoas uma vaga numa universidade + e ai eu teria que abrir meus olhos pra esse sistema que eu estava erroneamente seguindo + entendeu? + então houve realmente uma diferença do ensino fundamental pra o ensino médio.

At college

He chose to take tertiary education in Curso de Letras/Inglês, for he had already had the experience of the English course. He argues that when he entered the program, he had a basic command over the language, which contributed to his entrance in the course.

> Quando eu procurei o cursinho de Inglês eu passei a gostar da disciplina + então eu fiz vestibular pra letras e uni um coisa com a outra + é tanto que quando eu entrei no curso de letras eu já tinha uma base da língua Inglesa + o Inglês fundamental + o Inglês básico + os fundamentos que nós pagamos no primeiro e segundo período da faculdade eu já tinha esses fundamentos já + que eu havia + que havia já feito cursinho + já tinha pego essa experiência no cursinho de Inglês.

Joel analyzes his experiences in the program and reached the conclusion that, to a certain extent, it was difficult for him and it could have been more enjoyed; for he thought his basic knowledge of the language would improve, and this did not happen. He later recognized that the two first years of *Curso de Letras* were essential for his own improvement.

> Olha + na faculdade é... foi um pouco + no inicio foi um pouco complicado + por quê? + porque como eu já disse aqui a você antes + é... eu já cheguei na faculdade já sabendo um pouquinho de Inglês + então eu achava que sabia Inglês + eu poderia ter produzido bem mais na faculdade se por acaso eu tivesse ingressado na faculdade sem nenhuma noção de Inglês + porque eu iria ter mais vontade de procurar + de aprender aquilo + então + o que era que acontecia na faculdade? + eu como já tinha noções básicas e os outros colegas eles não tinham + ora + o professor ele tinha que lecionar pra todos + então ele ia pegar desde o inicio + *good morning* + *hello* + *hi* + usar as saudações + tal + que eu já tinha visto no cursinho + então isso se tornava chato pra mim + por quê? + porque eu já sabia disso ai e acontecia de eu gazear + pedia até permissão aos professores pra não assistir aquela aula porque eu achava chato + mas isso de certa forma foi ruim pra mim + por quê? + depois foi que eu fui vê + que a língua Inglesa + por ser uma língua diferente da nossa + uma língua estrangeira ela requer prática e quanto mais você pratica + mais fluente você fica + então + eu não tinha essa noção + eu não tinha essa visão ainda logo no primeiro e segundo período de faculdade + daí eu perdi um pouco + nesses dois períodos eu perdi um pouco assim + poderia ter aproveitado mais.

He often compares his tertiary teachers to those of the primary level by saying that, at college, teachers are committed with students' learning and were open-minded.

> Na faculdade ((risos)) foi um outro mundo + até porque nós tínhamos mestres + professores + em relação... é... que já tinham a mente aberta pra... voltada pra o ensino + lógico que na faculdade foi totalmente diferente + graças a Deus nós tivemos na faculdade professores compromissados + de uma certa forma professores atualizados + professores que realmente estavam lecionando porque realmente sabiam do que estavam falando

> + então na faculdade foi totalmente diferente que no ensino fundamental.

B.4 A RETICENT APPROACH: CARLOS' AND JAMES' STORIES

CARLOS' LEARNING STORY

At primary school

Carlos is from Açu. He is 27 years old and studied his primary school in a public institution in Açu. He did not particularly like English in the beginning of his studies. However, his interest to learn the language came some years later, when he finished secondary education. He contends that his primary school was not good.

> O meu primeiro contato com Inglês... como + como aprendiz mesmo foi na escola + na quinta serie + acho que tinha uns onze anos + mas foi um contato muito fraco mesmo + eu também não gostava ((risos)) gostava não + eu passei a gostar depois que terminei o ensino médio + que... conclui o ensino médio e não sabia nada de Inglês.

He argues that he did not learn English in his primary education and that his experience in this level was basically centered on the teaching of grammar aspects, especially the teaching of verbs, which teachers asked students to repeat them several times.

> No fundamental o que eu me recordo é que... do verbo *to be* ((risos)) todo mundo recorda do verbo *to be* + que termina o ensino médio sem saber conjugá-lo + o verbo *to have* +o verbo *to can* + mas nunca aprendi + na escola nunca aprendi + o professor passava no quadro o verbo pra gente conjugar + agente conjugava repetindo + escrevendo a conjugação dos verbos e... era basicamente isso + o professor passava... lia + verbo a verbo + a sala repetia e era dessa maneira + o que eu me recordo até hoje + o que eu me recordo mais ou menos é isso.

At secondary school

Carlos also attended his secondary education in a public institution in Açu. Although with a little difference in the class development, his secondary level was basically the same as the primary one. He argues that his teachers assigned students to read a text aloud in order to evaluate their pronunciation.

> O médio foi a mesma coisa do ensino fundamental + não mudou quase nada + mesma coisa + pra mim não teve diferença nenhuma + só um pouco do desenvolvimento da aula + era um pouco diferente + no ensino médio + alguns professores que eu me recordo + já passavam um texto pra fazer tipo... uma avaliação oral + colocava um texto e a avaliação oral agente ia lá de frente pro professor e agente ia ler o texto pra ele corrigir + não corrigir + avaliar nossa pronúncia + somente + somente isso + e sem falar também do + da questão dos verbos + a mesma coisa do ensino fundamental + não houve muito progresso + não + pelo menos de minha parte não + eu continuo afirmando que da mesma forma que eu terminei o fundamental + eu terminei o médio + sem saber de praticamente nada de Inglês + uma palavrinha aqui e acolá.

He claims that he had not a good primary and secondary education, and for this reason he thinks he did not achieve a good level of knowledge in English. However, when he finished secondary education, he became aware of the importance of the English language for his intellectual and professional improvement, and started an English course in a private institution in Açu.

> Eu não fiz... na minha... eu fiz sempre em escola pública e não... assim + eu não fiz um bom ensino médio + eu não fiz um bom ensino fundamental + eu acredito que eu não tenho uma + base muito boa + por isso que... talvez tenha sido isso um dos problemas + por eu não ter me inspirado em ninguém e não ter + não ter procurado sempre melhorar na educação básica e médio + ai depois

que eu terminei o ensino médio foi que realmente eu busquei mesmo + procurei inspiração + procurei + procurei muita coisa pra poder seguir em frente com os estudos.

At college

His undergraduate course did not effectively contribute to his improvement in English; and, according to him, the program prepares students to be teachers, not to speak English. He does not like teaching and, as he says, his experiences as a teacher were not very good.

Na faculdade + na faculdade o aprendizado na língua Inglesa foi... o progresso foi muito pouco também + porque... porque assim + na universidade nós estudamos para ser professor + aprendemos a ensinar + não aprendemos a língua-alvo + então... então assim + a prática era muito pouca também + apesar das aulas de Inglês na universidade serem boas + mas com relação ao que eu já sabia antes de entrar na universidade já era o mesmo nível que a universidade me oferecia + então assim + progresso na universidade em Inglês foi pouco + porque + pelo fato de já ter buscado antes + mas o desenvolvimento das aulas na faculdade era bom + os professores sempre interagindo com os alunos + era a metodologia totalmente diferente das que eu + que vi no ensino médio e no ensino fundamental + realmente tem + o aluno que realmente se interessar em aprender Inglês teria como aprender na universidade.

For Carlos, his teachers have not been too significant throughout his three levels of education. Maybe they could be at the time he was effectively studying. However, he says he saw some of them as a source of inspiration to continue his studies and actually there were a university teacher from whom he mirrored himself.

Acho que nenhum dos meus + dos meus cursos num... com relação a fundamental + médio e universidade + no ensino de língua Inglesa + não + nenhum deles (professores) marcaram não + até porque como eu disse + o meu aprendizado na faculdade foi muito pouco + porque eu já sabia já

> de praticamente todo conteúdo que o professor dava em sala de aula + não foi uma coisa tão marcante no... talvez poderia ser quando eu tava realmente estudando + antes de entrar na universidade + mas eu via alguns deles como fonte de inspiração + com certeza + eu via + porque se... pra que agente possa seguir em frente + de estudar o que você... pra você conseguir alguma coisa realmente você tem que se espelhar em alguém + e se espelhar em alguém bom que você realmente considere + considere bom + porque você vai fazer alguma coisa sem + sem objetivo nenhum se você num se inspirar em alguém ou em alguma coisa + o professor que eu me inspirei ele é da faculdade + nenhum da educação básica nem médio não + da faculdade mesmo.

JAMES'S LEARNING STORY

At primary school

James grew up in Açu and attended his primary education in a private school of the city. During his primary level, he did not like English very much, but became interested in the learning of the language and started an English course. His experiences with the learning of English started early in the third term of the primary level and always took good grades in the discipline.

> Minha experiência como aprendiz de Inglês iniciou-se quando eu tava numa aula normal + acho que era quarta série + no caso o atual terceiro ano do ensino fundamental + eu tava numa aula de Inglês e por coincidência um grupo passou divulgando uma escola de idiomas + e fizeram um teste rápido e as três melhores notas ganhariam uma bolsa pra estudar no curso + eu consegui e resolvi começar a estudar + ai fui me identificando + fui gostando e até hoje to envolvido com esse Inglês + mas na época eu não gostava + não exatamente + mas me saia bem + mas depois disso... é minha vida.

He states that the development of English classes at that time was not good, with the teacher writing on the board and students paying attention and writing on their notebooks. He also emphasizes the difference in teaching between the public and private schools.

> A aula no ensino fundamental + naquele tempo eu considerava razoável + mas hoje em dia eu vejo que era bem precária + tem pouca coisa que agente conseguia realmente tirar dali + mas... era uma escola particular + então já era bem melhor do que na escola pública + a aula basicamente era o professor indo à lousa e agente + os alunos + na carteira acompanhando com o livro e escrevendo + só.

At secondary school

His secondary level was also attended in a private school in Açu. However, he changed the school. His new context of learning English had also changed. The new school provided students with teaching classes as if they were in language course, with teachers prepared to teach English in a communicative perspective. However, according to James, the high amount of student per class was a linguistic hurdle.

> No ensino médio foi algo um pouco diferente porque eu fui estudar em outra escola + e lá eles tinham um método mais específico + na verdade eles tentaram um método parecido com cursos de idiomas + então meu material era direcionado a isso e os professores já eram habilitados pra trabalhar como se fosse um curso + mas infelizmente a quantidade de alunos atrapalhava um pouco.

His teachers also taught at the English course he was still attending and, according to James, they were very demanding.

> No ensino médio + tive alguns professores que por coincidência também foram meus professores no cursinho + então + agente já se conhecia + já tinha um... algo mais específico e justamente por eles me conhecerem já do cursinho eles me

> cobravam mais + então ((risos)) era algo bem pesado + mas... contribuiu.

At college

James decided to attend his tertiary level in Curso de Letras/Inglês. However, his English learning at the university was not particularly significant for him, and he says he did not improve his knowledge of the language while he was taking the undergraduate course.

> Na verdade a faculdade foi horrível + não houve um aprendizado específico em língua Inglesa + eu acredito que não me engrandeceu quase nada + agora as outras disciplinas sim + literatura e tudo mais + mas o ensino de língua Inglesa exatamente não me mudou muita coisa não + na verdade eu acho que no meu ensino médio teve um pouquinho melhor do que na faculdade + com o método que eu aprendi no ensino médio + o método que eles usaram foi melhor do que o que teve na faculdade.

James' words seem to carry a certain degree of frustration with the teaching in the region, especially the teaching of foreign languages. He thought to find stimulus trough practicing English at *Curso de Letras*, but according to him, it did not happen.

> Devido ao descaso com o professor + em especial o professor de língua estrangeira + o desestimulo é muito grande + entrei no Curso de Letras + habilitação em língua Inglesa com a idéia de que seriamos estimulados através da prática + mas essa não é a realidade + infelizmente a aprendizagem é muito falha.

APPENDIX C - Transcript conventions of the interviews

The following transcript conventions were adapted from Carazzai (2002)

(( ))	Analyst's comments
+	Pause
++	Long pause
(xxx)	Proper names
CAPITAL	Stressed word
?	Questioning intonation
!	Exclamatory intonation
(...)	Parts of the speech have been omitted

APPENDIX D - Questions of the interviews

1. Você poderia dividir comigo suas experiências passadas com a aprendizagem de Inglês?

2. Quando foi que você começou a aprender Inglês?

3. Você gostava naquela época?

4. Como era uma aula no Ensino Fundamental?

5. Como foi sua aprendizagem de Inglês no Ensino Médio? Você acha que mudou alguma coisa em comparação com o Ensino Fundamental?

6. Quais são as memórias que você tem acerca dos professores do Fundamental e do Médio?

7. Como é que você espera que seja sua aprendizagem na faculdade?

8. Qual foi a principal razão que levou você a fazer Letras?

9. Como é uma aula de Inglês aqui na faculdade?

10. O professor encoraja os alunos a falar em Inglês em sala de aula?

11. Houve mudança em comparação com o Ensino Fundamental e o Médio?

12. Você acha que quando você aprender Inglês fluentemente você vai se tornar outra pessoa?

13. Em sua opinião, o que significa aprender Inglês?

14. Como é que você acha que a sociedade vê você agora enquanto estudante de Letras?

15. Qual a imagem que você tem de si próprio enquanto estudante de Letras?

16. Você tem algum complexo de superioridade ou inferioridade por causa da Língua Inglsa?

17. O que você acha que vai mudar em sua vida após o curso de Letras?