

BELIEFS AS LENS TO UNDERSTAND TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES OVER ENGLISH TEACHING AND LEARNING

Adrielle Pinto dos Santos¹
Suzanny da Silva Lima²

Abstract

This article aims to investigate and analyze the beliefs of teachers of the four public high schools in Monte Alegre – PA (Francisco Nobre de Almeida, Escola de Educação Tecnológica do Estado do Pará, Fernando Henrique, and Carim Melém) about teaching and learning English in these schools. To conceptualize the word “belief”, it is used as reference the ideas of Almeida Filho (1993), Pajares (1992), Gardner (1998), Barcelos (2004), who contributed to this research with their definitions of teachers' beliefs; Paiva (1997), Félix (1999), Moita Lopes (1996) who also emphasize the study of beliefs. To achieve this goal, a questionnaire with 7 questions was used and an informal oral interview recorded with the four teachers who work in the schools of Monte Alegre – PA. Aiming to clarify the beliefs of these research participants who believe it is important for public school students to learn English, but most teachers believe it is not possible to learn all the four skills.

Keywords: English Language, beliefs, teaching, learning, public schools

Resumo

Este artigo tem como objetivo investigar e analisar as crenças dos professores das quatro escolas públicas do Ensino médio de Monte Alegre – PA (Francisco Nobre de Almeida, Escola de Educação Tecnológica do Estado do Pará, Fernando Henrique e Carim Melém) acerca do ensino e aprendizagem de Inglês nestas escolas. Para conceituar a palavra “crença”, utilizou-se como referência as ideias de Almeida Filho (1993), Pajares (1992), Gardner (1998), Barcelos (2004), que contribuíram para esta pesquisa com suas definições acerca das crenças dos professores; Paiva (1997), Félix (1999), Moita Lopes (1996) que também enfatizam o estudo das crenças. Para alcançar este objetivo, foi utilizado um questionário com 7 questões e uma entrevista oral informal gravada com os quatro professores que atuam nas escolas de Monte Alegre – PA, visando esclarecer as crenças destes participantes da pesquisa, aonde foi constatado que os referidos professores acreditam ser importante que alunos de escolas públicas aprendam Inglês, porém a maioria dos professores acredita não ser possível aprender as quatro habilidades.

Palavras-Chave: Língua Inglesa, crenças, ensino, aprendizagem, escolas públicas

¹ Undergraduate student of Letters and Arts at Universidade Federal do Pará – UFPA.

² Master in Languages and Knowledge in Amazonia. Letters and Arts Faculty Professor at Universidade Federal do Pará – UFPA.

INTRODUCTION

In the educational field, there are many challenges faced by teachers and students in the process of English teaching and learning. In regard of this, assuming that beliefs can interfere in the subject's actions and/or behavior, this research, which was conducted in the city of Monte Alegre, with 4 English teachers working in public high schools, aims at discussing and investigate what are the teachers' beliefs and how beliefs can interfere in this process. According to Barcelos (2004), beliefs are related to the understanding of actions or behavior of the subject.

The interest in “beliefs” arose during one of the disciplines of the graduation course that involved classroom observation at public regular schools. It was realized that both students and teachers were unmotivated and disbelieving about English language teaching in public schools, specifically in high school, where the internship was held. The need to thoroughly investigate the reasons why negative beliefs were so present in teachers' daily lives and how these beliefs interfered in the teaching and learning process.

To discuss these points more deeply, this article is divided into topics. The first section presents the challenges of teaching and learning the English Language in the context of public schools. Where is used research by some authors, M. Cox; Assis-Peterson (2007), and Paiva (2007); In the second topic, it is discussed about concepts of beliefs and language teaching/learning, and a brief historical background on how the study of beliefs emerged; The third topic describes the research context, the participants and how this research was conducted; and after that, results are discussed.

1. Challenges of English teaching and learning in the context of public schools

The teaching of English in public schools in the Amazon has been a challenge for both, students and teachers, because several factors hinder this process. Some factors are related to this deficiency in the teaching and learning process of the English Language in public schools, such as, the lack of motivation of some teachers and the student's lack of interest in learning English. And as a result, the schools become the place where student do not learn and teachers that do not know the language they teach, and teaching English is “store of make-believe staged by invisible teachers” (M. COX; ASSIS-PETERSON. 2007, p.10).

Foreign Language (FL) teachers feel discouraged and see themselves as limited to the conditions they find in the classroom, such as the large number of students per class, the reduced number of hours per week and lack of didactic resources. According to Paiva (1997), some of these arguments can constitute the belief that it is not possible to learn English in public school. This belief reinforces and is related to other beliefs, such as identified by the following authors:

1. "The language course is the place to learn FL" (PAIVA 1997: 13)
2. "Without audiovisual equipment it is impossible to develop a good course." (PAIVA, 1997, p.14)
3. "They do not even learn Portuguese. How will they learn English?" (MOITA LOPES, 1996, p 63).
4. "It is not possible to teach in the public school because the students are not able to learn." (FELIX, 1999, p. 93)

These beliefs are prejudicial to the effective democratization of FL teaching and can act as barriers to the development of English language teaching in public schools.

About the language learning in the school context, we could question ourselves, what structure that public schools offer that make teachers believe that students do not learn English in public schools? What does the English language subject currently offer in public schools that causes students to become unmotivated in trying to learn it? According to PCNs (National Curricular Parameters³) (1998, p.24):

[...] Most of the proposals are in the communicative approach of language teaching, but the proposed exercises, in general, explore points or grammatical structures decontextualized. The conception of evaluation, however, contemplates formative aspects that seem adequate. All proposals point to the difficult circumstances of foreign language teaching and learning: lack of adequate materials, excessively large classes, reduced number of lessons per week, insufficient time devoted to the subject in the curriculum, and lack of continuous teacher training. (PCN, 1998, p.24)⁴

This is the situation of most public schools, unable to provide teacher and students a favorable learning environment. And it seems to affect English language teaching and learning more intensively if compared to other subjects in the school curriculum.

³ The National Curriculum Parameters, also known as PCN, is a collection of documents that make up the curriculum of an educational institution.

⁴ All translations are under the responsibility of the authors.

[...] foreign language teaching, particularly English is totally adrift, with teachers, parents and students often wondering the same thing: What are we doing here? What will be the frustrated attempt to teach/ learn another language? (CELANI, 2002, p.20)

Consequently, this unfavorable scenario of teaching and learning English in public schools has contributed to teachers' beliefs to be formed, influenced and consolidated, because according to Barcelos (2006), beliefs are born in the context of interaction and relationship with social groups can be experiential as a result of the individual's interaction with the environment. These negative beliefs may increase and become more resistant to change, depending on their position they occupy, because according to Rokeach (1968, apud PAJARES, 2006, p 117), beliefs are grouped into more central and more peripheral beliefs.⁵ In the following section, we are going to discuss about concepts of beliefs and language teaching/learning.

2. Teacher´s beliefs and language teaching/learning

According to Barcelos (2004, p. 127), interest in belief studies arose in the 1970s, with Hosenfeld (1978), who used the term “students´ mini language learning theories”, to refer to the "tacit knowledge of the students, even without calling them beliefs". However, it was not until the mid-1980s that the term beliefs about language learning emerged in the area of Applied Linguistics (AL). It is also important to remember that studies about beliefs in language teaching and learning in AL, in Brazil, emerged in the 1990s (BARCELOS, 2004, p.124) with the following theoretical frameworks: Leffa (1991), Almeida Filho (1993) and Barcelos (1995). Leffa (1991) investigated the conceptions of students about to start 5th grade and shows that even before starting the study of an FL they already bring conceptions about language and language learning.

Almeida Filho (1993, p.13) defined approach or culture of learning as “ways of studying and preparing for the use of the target language considered as 'normal' by the student and typical of his / her region, ethnicity, social class and family group, restricted in some cases, transmitted as tradition, through time, in a naturalized, subconscious, and implicit way.” Barcelos (1995) used the concept of learning culture

⁵ Dewey (1933, apud BARCELOS, 2006, p.117) called the central beliefs as “pet beliefs,” beliefs that we cling to and we do not easily undo. These “pet beliefs” are more tied to our identity and our emotions and are more resistant to change. The peripheral beliefs, according to Pajares (1992), may refer to beliefs about likes and dislikes that are arbitrary, less central, have fewer connections, and are less resistant to change.

of (Almeida Filho, 1993) to investigate the beliefs of students graduating from Letters, and made possible an expansion of the term previously defined by Almeida Filho (1993). In this sense, we realize that the term “beliefs” is old and can also be found in other areas of knowledge, such as philosophy, anthropology, sociology, psychology and education (BARCELOS, 2004, p. 129), not being a proper term of AL.

Barcelos (2004, p. 131-132), in his study about the concept of beliefs in language learning within AL, highlights different terms and definitions created by researchers to refer to beliefs in language learning. In this way, Pajares (1992, p. 309) states that beliefs have a complex concept, due to the various terms used to refer to beliefs. However, according to Breen (1985 Apud Barcelos 2004, p.125), no Human relationship can be properly understood, unless we consider their expectations, values and beliefs, because according to Barcelos (2004) the interest in the study of beliefs arose from the change of a view of languages with a focus on language, in the product for a process focus. That is why the importance of studying beliefs in the context of language teaching and learning. Thus, Pajares (1992) also presents in his study some terms that were used to refer to beliefs:

[...] attitudes, values, judgments, axioms, opinions, ideology, perceptions, conceptions, conceptual systems, preconceptions, dispositions, implicit theories, explicit theories, personal theories, internal mental processes, action strategies, rules of practice, practical principles, perspectives, repertoires of understanding, and social strategy (PAJARES, 1992, p. 309).

Regarding the emergence of beliefs, Barcelos (2006) mentions seven characteristics, which are: (1) dynamic (may change from one period to the next. This does not mean that beliefs are generated immediately. They are always supported by something: incidents from the past, people who were significant, subjects we read or heard in the media or the opinions of our teachers at school). (2) Emerging socially constructed and contextually situated (as we interact and modify our experiences, we are at the same time modified by them, because beliefs are born in the context of interaction and in relationship with social groups). (3) Experiential (result between individual's interaction with environment). (4) Mediated (used to regulate learning and problem solving). (5) Paradoxical and contradictory (social, but also individual). (6) Not so easily distinguished from knowledge (not easily separated from other aspects such as knowledge, motivation and learning strategies). (7) And related to the action in an indirect or complex manner (do not necessarily influence the actions).

However, according to Barcelos (2004), there is no just one definition for this concept in AL. There are many terms and definitions, and that is one of the reasons, that make this a difficult concept to investigate. However, we need to understand some concepts related to the teachers' beliefs about English Language teaching/learning present in the literature of the area, and for this, we summarize the concepts of several authors about beliefs for a later discussion. For a better visualization of the similarities and differences of these concepts, they will be presented it in the following table:

AUTHOR	CONCEPT
Almeida Filho (1993, P.75):	Set of dispositions, knowledge, beliefs, assumptions and, possibly, principles about what is human language, FL and what is learning and teaching a target language. In addition to comprise all the concepts of human person, classroom, and the roles represented by teacher and learner of a new language.
Rokeach (1968, p.113, apud Pajares, 1992, p.314)	Any simple proposition, conscious or unconscious, inferred from what the person says to do or do, capable of to be preceded by the phrase, "I believe that..."
Gardner (1988, P.110)	Expectations in the teacher's minds, parents and students regarding all tasks of acquisition of the second language.

Clark (1988, apud Pajares, 1992, p.314)	Generalizations originated from personal experience, beliefs, values, and prejudice.
Clandinin & Connelly (1987, apud Pajares, 1992, p.309)	Experimental Knowledge incorporated and reconstructed from the narrative of the life of a teacher.
Tabachnick & Zeichner (1984, apud Pajares, 1992, p.315)	A little more than opinions, a reflective and socially defined interpretation of the experience that underlies subsequent actions... a combination of beliefs, intentions, interpretations, and behavior that interact continuously.
Sigel (1985, apud Pajares, 1992, p.313)	Mental constructs of experience are usually condensed and integrated into concepts that are considered true and guiding behaviors.
Feiman - Nemser & Floden (1986, p.505, 508)	Subjective world of teachers in terms of what seems to be salient, their way of perceiving themselves and perceiving their work by giving them meaning. It is also the knowledge shared by teachers, constituted of their beliefs about appropriate ways of working and about compensating aspects of the profession.

<p>Barcelos (1995, apud BARCELOS, 2004, p.131)</p>	<p>Knowledge compatible with the subject's own age and socioeconomic level, based on previous educational experience, previous readings, and contact with influent people.</p>
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It is also perceived that some concepts present some points in common, or that they are interrelated, which means to say that there is a certain agreement of their authors about the subject. The first point in common refers to the influence of the teachers' previous experience in the formation of their beliefs, pointed out in the concepts of Sigel (1985), Tabachnick & Zeichner (1984) and Clark (1988) (see table above). Sigel and Tabachnick & Zeichner also agree that behavior is influenced by beliefs, that is, student's behavior is influenced by teacher's. In the concepts of Nemser & Floder and Almeida Filho, it is perceived the amplitude of the meaning of "beliefs". Then, the understanding of beliefs as knowledge, in the concepts of Feiman Nemser & Floden and Clandinin & Connelly.

When defining beliefs, Barcelos also takes into consideration the social context in which the individual is inserted and formed from contact with influent people, previous educational experience and previous readings of the teachers in relation to the teaching /learning processes.

Considering these concepts, it is perceived the importance of the study of teachers' beliefs and the importance of these concepts to understand it's influence in the English language teaching and learning process and in the teacher's perception of the student regarding learning styles. Félix (1998), in his research detected that some teachers believe that to speak the foreign language well, the student needs to learn elements related to the culture of the country where the language is spoken. Some participants also consider exposing the learner so much new vocabulary, and also learning a lot of grammar rule as essential aspects of language learning. On the other hand, most participants believe that the teacher should place more emphasis on activities that encourage the student to speak and listen in FL classes. It can be seen that each teacher has different beliefs, based on their experiences, regarding strategies that they consider ideal for student learning.

Thus, we emphasize that the experiences lived by language teachers, in this case, the English Language, can, in a sense, influence their position as teachers. Therefore, the importance of investigating the beliefs from the experiences of teachers who work in the context of public education in Monte Alegre – Pará is going to be shared and analyzed in the next section.

3. Teachers' beliefs concerning English teaching and learning in public schools in Monte Alegre

The aim of this research is to investigate and discuss teachers' beliefs from their experiences with English language teaching and the challenges faced by teachers in the context of public education in Monte Alegre, a city located in the countryside of Pará, region of the Lower Amazon, with 57,900 inhabitants. In this city and region, there are one hundred and ninety-nine municipal schools, two private schools and four state schools. For this research, only state schools where English is taught were taken into account.

The state schools in Monte Alegre are: Francisco Nobre de Almeida, founded on April 16th, 1980; Escola de Educação Tecnológica do Estado do Pará, founded on July 07th, 2008; President Fernando Henrique founded on January 20th, 2002, and Carim Melém, founded on July 05th, 1999. Currently, these state schools in Monte Alegre have six teachers of English, being three permanent and three temporary teachers (teachers hired by the SEDUC – Secretaria de Educação do Estado do Pará for two years). This research was directed to all high school teachers: permanent and temporary, however, we were managed to apply the questionnaire and talk to four of these teachers, because the other teachers said they did not have time to answer the questionnaire.

All participants received written information (Annex 1) about the nature and purpose of the research and were informed that they could withdraw from the research at any time. It is important to mention that participants were also asked to be very truthful, since their answers would not be criticized and judged as right or wrong. In a way, it was observed that this information made the participants calmer and confident in what they were going to say.

The participants of this research are professionals who already have more than five years of experience specifically with the English teaching, with postgraduate in their area, not being able to teach other subjects. However, two permanent teachers

(Participant 1 and Participant 3) who have larger workloads than the other ones (temporary), because they also teach in elementary school; one with 270h and another with 300h. The two temporary teachers (Participant 2 and Participant 4) have only the employment bond with SEDUC, with a smaller workload, both with 115h.

In order to provide teachers with a chance for reflection and sharing concerning their own beliefs over their practice in the classroom, a questionnaire (Annex 2) was personally delivered to the 6 high school English teachers working in the city of Monte Alegre in the beginning of June, 2019. The questionnaire was given to teachers at the schools where they work, to be returned in 3 days (time teachers were asked to respond it). But only four teachers returned the questionnaire. The others claimed they did not have time to answer it. We returned the following week and the questionnaire had not been answered yet, so it was decided to use only the data already collected from the other four teachers.

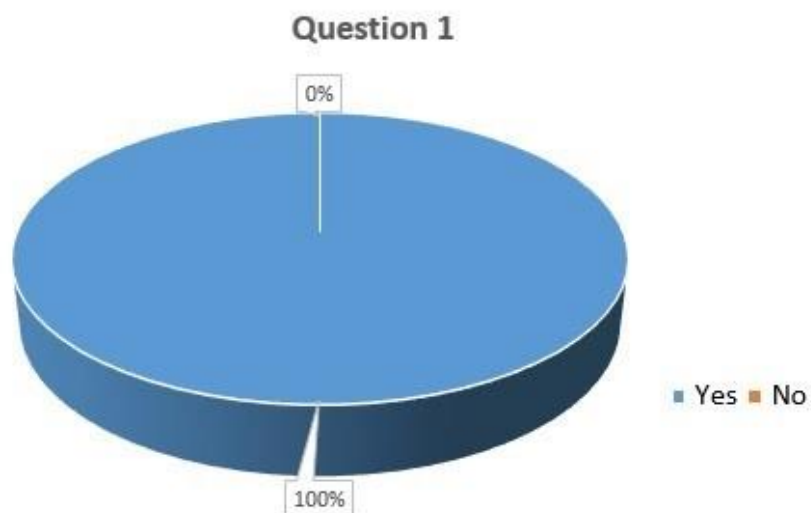
The questionnaire was composed by five closed questions and two open questions. The participants were asked to provide information about challenges teachers face in teaching a FL (Foreign Language) and their beliefs about the teaching and learning process. To facilitate the analysis of the data obtained, the questionnaire in two parts: first the closed questions and then the open questions. The participants will be identified as the P1, P2, P3, and P4 (Participant 1, Participant 2, Participant 3, and Participant 4). An informal oral interview was done with the participants, in their respective homes, on October 12, 2019, to clarify some of the closed questions of the questionnaire and give participants the opportunity to speak more freely and spontaneously about their beliefs and the fact that participants were more relaxed may have contributed positively to participants providing more information. This research was recorded in audio for better information handling.

The analysis of the questions and answers are presented in the same sequence as appearing in the questionnaire that was given to the participants because it is composed of some questions that complement each other and guide the participant to reveal their beliefs and expectations about teaching. All questions in the questionnaire were formulated and answered in English by the participants, however, the recorded interview was done in Portuguese.

In the first question of the questionnaire, it was asked the participants if they think it is important for public school students to learn English, since its purpose is to

investigate its importance from teachers' perception, because this perception is directly linked to their beliefs.

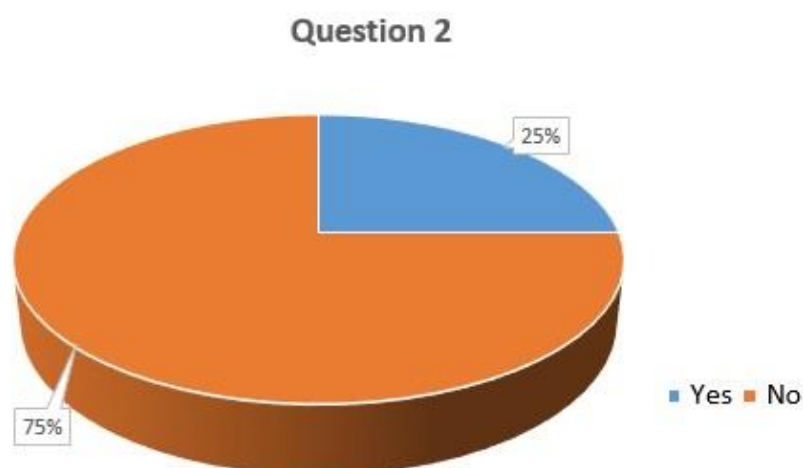
Question: Is it important the public school's student to learn English?



From the answers to question 1, the belief is inferred that all participants believe that it is important for the public school student to learn English. What can consider a good result, because according to previous studies we know that beliefs may or may not interfere in the actions of the subject. And assuming that beliefs can interfered with the subject's actions, notwithstanding the teaching and learning process does not depend only on the teacher, he/she can look for ways for the student to actually learn English.

In question 2, the participants were asked about the possibility of developing the four English language skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) in public schools, as it is known the importance of these skills in teaching and the factors already mentioned in this article, and mentioned by participants in question 7 that may make this process difficult.

Question: Do you think it is possible to develop the four skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) of the English Language in public schools?



We can see from this graph that most teachers (75%) believe that it is not possible to develop all four skills, according to them due to lack of time and the fact that schools do not offer audiovisual resources (such as TV, projector, speaker), as mentioned by P1:

Here in the school there is a projector, television and a speaker, but sometimes I need the speaker, the other teacher is using it, sometimes I need the projector, it's not working, neither the TV ... and if I want to use this equipment, I have to bring it from home, it is difficult... (Fragments of the informal conversation recorded held with P1⁶ on October 12, 2019) Our translation

It is clear that several factors can influence teachers' beliefs, such as those mentioned by P1, since he believes that for a student to learn the four English Language skills, it is necessary to use audiovisual resources, which according to him is practically impossible, due to lack of maintenance and even lack of planning among teachers. Which, consequently, affects teaching practice and student performance. Therefore, the use of audiovisual resources is a strategy that P1 considers important for the development of the four skills.

Some participants also mentioned that the priority in high school is to prepare students for ENEM⁷ (Exame Nacional do Ensino Médio). However, a minority (25%) believes it is possible to develop these four skills in the classroom.

⁶ "Aqui na escola tem projetor, televisão e um som, mas às vezes eu preciso do som, o outro professor tá usando, às vezes preciso do projetor, não está funcionando, nem a TV... e se eu quiser usar esses equipamentos, tenho que trazer de casa, aí fica difícil..." P1

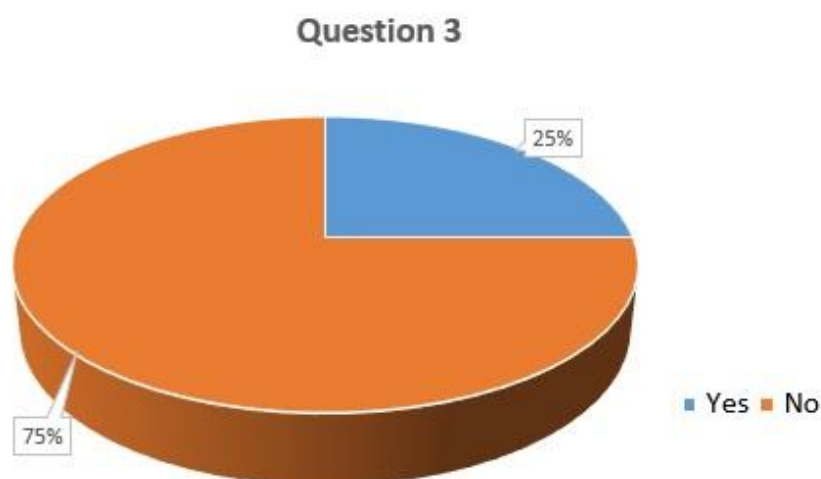
⁷ The Exame Nacional do Ensino Médio (ENEM) is a test that was created in 1998 with the objective of evaluating the performance of students from public and private high schools. But in 2009, Enem added another function to its curriculum: it also became an assessment that selects students from all over Brazil for federal higher education institutions and for Federal Government programs such as Sisu, Pruni and Fies.

It is difficult, but it is possible. Of course this will require more of us, teachers and students. But it is possible... (Fragments of the informal conversation recorded held with P2⁸ on October 12, 2019) Our translation

The participant states that it is possible to develop the four English language skills in public education, but it requires more [effort] of the teachers and students. Which most of the time does not happen, because they need many classes to complete the workload.

The participants were also asked if they believe their students are motivated to learn English, since motivation is intrinsically linked to beliefs, and may also be paradoxical or social, assuming that the beliefs of a group of individuals can influence another group.

Question: Do you think your students are motivated to learn English?



75% of the participants stated that most of their students are not motivated to learn English:

Most students go to school without motivation to learn English and all the other subjects ... Unfortunately this is our reality. (Fragments of the informal conversation recorded held with P4⁹ on October 12, 2019) Our translation

It seems that students are forced to be there (at school) and we (teachers) don't meet expectations as well. (Fragments of the informal conversation recorded held with P3¹⁰ on October 12, 2019) Our translation

⁸ É difícil, mas é possível. É claro que isso vai exigir mais de nós, professores e alunos. Mas é possível sim...

⁹ "A maioria dos alunos vão pra escola sem motivação para aprender Inglês e todas as outras disciplinas... Infelizmente essa é a nossa realidade." P4

¹⁰ "Parece que os alunos estão ali (na escola) obrigados e a gente acaba deixando a desejar também."

Students do not see English as part of their reality, no matter how hard we try to show the importance of language. There are some of them that say they will never leave the country, they will not need English to work... and these phrases that we always hear, don't we? ... I don't even know Portuguese, how will I know English? ... (Fragments of the informal conversation recorded held with P1¹¹ on October 12, 2019) Our translation

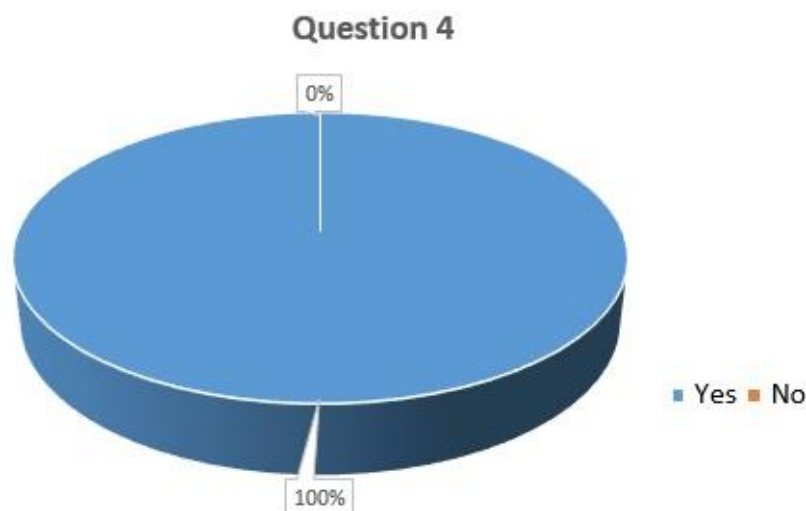
From these fragments, it is perceived some dissatisfaction with the current reality that most teachers face. But one participant stated the opposite:

Whenever I prepare a playful activity, I see them very motivated and interested in participating and learning. (Fragments of the informal conversation recorded held with P2¹² on October 12, 2019) Our translation

P2 considers playful activities an ideal strategy to motivate students to participate and learn, and also shows us that motivation varies a lot from one individual to another, even from the same city or region.

According to the research of Cox and Peterson. (2007, p.10), many public school teachers are not proficient in the language they teach. In order to investigate if this reality also extends to the teachers of Monte Alegre, we asked the participants if they consider their metalinguistic knowledge satisfactory.

Question: Do you consider your metalinguistic knowledge satisfactory?



¹¹ “Os alunos não veem o Inglês como parte da realidade deles, por mais que a gente tente mostrar a importância da língua. Tem alguns que falam que nunca vai sair do país, que não vai precisar do Inglês pra trabalhar... e essas frases que a gente sempre ouve né... sei nem português, como vou saber inglês...” P1

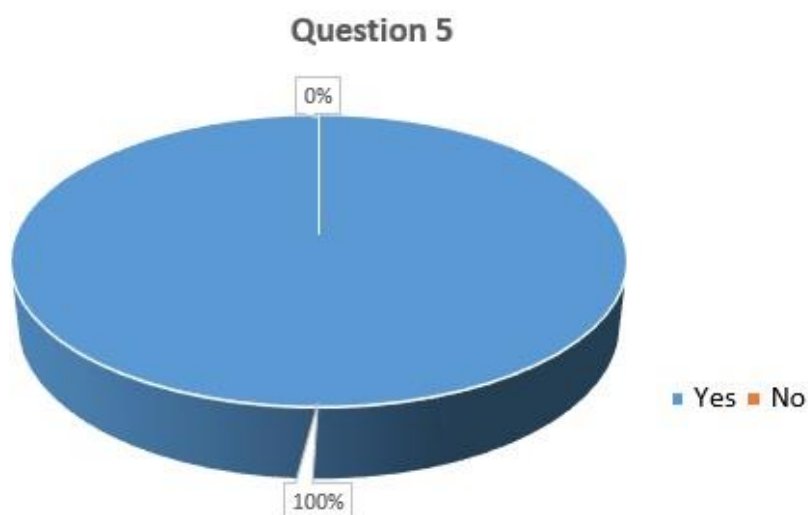
¹² “Sempre que preparo uma atividade lúdica, vejo eles bastante motivados e interessados em participar e aprender.” P2

100% of the teachers consider their metalinguistic knowledge satisfactory, it can be assumed that the teachers of Monte Alegre, according to their own perception, they consider themselves able to perform the function of English language teachers.

I consider my knowledge satisfactory. But we never know everything, right? (Fragments of the informal conversation recorded held with P3¹³ on October 12, 2019) Our translation

In order to reinforce the previous question, we asked the participants if they face situations in which they feel that would be more prepared if they had more courses in the area.

Question: Do you face situations in which you feel that you would be more prepared if you had more course in the area?



All participants stated that even considering their satisfactory metalinguistic knowledge, they would like to have the opportunity to take more courses in the area:

I feel prepared to teach English, but we always have to be recycling to not accommodate us, right? I would love to have more opportunities and course options in my area. P3¹⁴

Regarding the opened questions, teachers when asked if they have felt frustrated in their teaching context and why, all the teachers answered yes:

Yes, I have. Sometimes, even when I pass a lot of time planning a different work to motivate them, some students simply don't want to do. (P1)

Yes, I have. Especially when I work in schools that don't offer enough tools and resources to develop a good work. (P2)

¹³ Eu considero meus conhecimentos satisfatórios. Mas a gente nunca sabe tudo, né?

¹⁴ "Me sinto preparado pra ensinar inglês, mas a gente precisa estar sempre se reciclando pra não se acomodar né? Eu gostaria muito de ter mais oportunidades e opções de cursos na minha área." P3

Yes. Because I often come across certain unpleasant situations (few lessons per week, disrespect and disinterest on the part of students.) (P3)

Yes, I have. I feel frustrated when I arrive in the classroom and the students begin to speak that they don't need to learn English. (P4)

It is perceived from the above reports that all participants have been frustrated in their teaching context by several factors. The first of these is student demotivation, as mentioned by P1, lack of resources mentioned by P2, few classes, disrespect and disinterest of students mentioned by P3, and disinterest of students mentioned by P4. Although question 7 will complement this, from these answers, it can be said that these are some of the challenges faced by FL teachers.

It is perceived also that most of the teachers interviewed show some dissatisfaction with the students', disinterest which makes it difficult for teaching and learning process, since according to Cotterall (1995), the attitudes of learners have a profound influence in this process.

As for the next question about what are the main challenges faced by teachers in the teaching context, the answers are similar to those of the previous question, because the students' disinterest is a relevant factor that can influence the teaching and learning process:

The lack of resources in the schools and low level of students' interest. (P1)

Some of them are: lack of school materials, enough time for the classes and more courses in my area. (P2)

To develop my work by trying to overcome the obstacles the system has and the student's lack of interest and responsibility. (P3)

Dealing with student's disinterest. (P4)

In addition to students' lack of interest, the teachers cited other factors that were already predicted in PCNs (1998, p. 24), such as: "lack of adequate materials, excessively large classes, reduced number of lessons per week, insufficient time devoted to the subject in the curriculum, and lack of continuous teacher training". extending to the present day in Monte Alegre public schools.

From the data collected, it is perceived greater dissatisfaction, low expectations and pessimism regarding the teaching of English in public schools by teachers who work longer time, compared to those who work less time.

FINAL REMARKS

It can be seen that there are many challenges in teaching and learning English in the context of public schools in Monte Alegre, and the difficulties teachers face every day, such as the large number of students per class, the reduced number of hours per week, lack of didactic resources and student's demotivation. And these challenges and difficulties may constitute the belief that it is not possible to learn English in public school.

Taking into consideration these challenges and difficulties, it is perceived the need for research that clarifies the teacher's beliefs because this element (belief) is an important factor in the composition of the teacher's most basic competence, which often conducts his or her teaching in their own experiences, knowledge and Background knowledge, with strategies that they consider ideal for learning. Thus, because they are associated with the behavior of individuals, they can positively or negatively interfere with the teaching / learning process and the construction of knowledge.

This article brought teachers' beliefs and perceptions about teaching and learning English in public schools in Monte Alegre. where it is clear that the practice does not differ much from the theory and studies as reference, for example, when Paiva (1997), in his research identifies the following belief: "without audiovisual equipment it is impossible to develop a good course", belief that can also be identified in the speech of P1.

On the other hand, it can be seen that, over time, teachers tend to be more unmotivated in relation to teaching compared to those who work less time, although this comparison is not the objective of this research, it is a fact that we can not ignore.

It can be considered that the main objective of this article was achieved, since it was discussed and investigated teachers' beliefs and perceptions about teaching. It was found that all participants believe it is important for public school students to learn English, but most believe it is not possible because of the factors mentioned by them such as lack of time and the fact that schools do not offer audiovisual resources.

In conclusion, this research aims to have contributed for the process of teaching of the English language, in order to bring to the scientific community and the teachers who work in public high schools a view of the reality of teaching English in Monte Alegre. And some explicit examples in one of the participants' fragment that teachers play an important role to motivate students, based on his/her belief that even

with few resources it is possible to engage and teach English and this may be huger than all existing barriers.

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(Annex 1)¹⁵



UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO PARÁ

CONSENT FOR RESEARCH STUDY

Dear teacher,

The following questionnaire aims to obtain data for the TCC. Therefore, I expect your important collaboration, answering the questionnaire and your answers will serve as a fundamental basis for important conclusions. Your answers will be confidential and used only in this study. Your identity will also remain confidential.

Participation in the study is completely voluntary. If you decide to take part in the study, you have the right to cancel your participation at any time, without any consequences. You also have the right not to answer any questions you do not want to answer, and still continue participating in the study.

By giving my consent I confirm my voluntary participation in this research. I have read and understood the research description above and confirm that I have received sufficient information on the study.

Name

Signature

Date: ____/____/____

¹⁵ Adapted from Carina Fragozo's article. FRAGOZO, carina. **English Teaching and Learning in Brazilian Regular Schools and Language Schools: A Study on Teachers' Beliefs.** Rio Grande do Sul, Volume 1, pag.93, August 27, 2012.

(Annex 2)¹⁶**Questionnaire**

1) Is it important the public school's student to learn English?

() Yes

() No

2) Do you think it is possible to develop the four skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) of the English language in public schools?

() Yes

() No

3) Do you think your students are motivated to learn English?

() Yes

() No

4) Do you consider your metalinguistic knowledge satisfactory?

() Yes

() No

5) Do you face situations in which you feel that you would be more prepared if you had more courses in the area?

() Yes

() No

6) Have you ever felt frustrated in your teaching context? Why?

7) What are the main challenges that you face in this context?

¹⁶ Adapted from Carina Fragozo's article. FRAGOZO, carina. **English Teaching and Learning in Brazilian Regular Schools and Language Schools: A Study on Teachers' Beliefs.** Rio Grande do Sul, Volume 1, pag.93, August 27, 2012.