VERBO DE MINAS
MULTIDISCIPLINAR
UniAcademia
Centro Universitário
EDUCAÇÃO - FILOSOFIA - LETRAS - TEOLOGIA
issn 1984-6959

ENGLISH TEACHING IN THE AMAZON REGION: BELIEFS TOWARD NATIVE AND NON-NATIVE ENGLISH-SPEAKING TEACHERS*

Gilberto Alves ARAÚJO√
Manoela Ferreira de CASTRO√√

ABSTRACT

This paper aims to identify and explore students' beliefs regarding native (U.S.) teachers and non-native (Brazilian) English teachers. In this sense, this work attempts to verify to what extent such beliefs are related to student's motivation for learning the English language. Data have been generated from questionnaires, interviews with, and observation of students at Centro de Desenvolvimento Regional, Altamira, Brazil. Our theoretical references include Cook's (2005), Nayar's (apud MOUSSU, 2006), and Medgyes (2001) definitions of nativeness, as well as Barcelos' (2001), Pajares' (1992) and Dörnyei's (2001) conceptions on beliefs and motivation, among others. Content analysis has been employed to scrutinize the data in accordance with Bardin's (2008) procedures. Results suggest that most students think native speakers are better at teaching oral English in general. On the other hand, non-native speakers are believed to teach grammar/writing more effectively or successfully since they would have a deeper/technical knowledge of such a dimension. Furthermore, we realize that beliefs have a relatively high degree of influence over students' motivation for learning a language. Therefore, we indicate that these beliefs positively and negatively affect students throughout the language learning process, especially in the way they represent and relate to both categories of teachers, Native and Non-native.

Keywords: Native teachers. Non-native teachers. Beliefs. Motivation.

* Artigo recebido em 01/03/2023 e aprovado em 16/05/2023.
√ PhD in Media Studies and Associate Researcher at The University of the Witwatersrand. Assistant Professor at Universidade Federal do Pará (UFPA). E-mail: <gilbertoa.araujo@yahoo.com.br>.
√√ Bachelor in English Language Teaching at the Universidade Federal do Pará (UFPA), Altamira, Brazil. Teacher at CDR (Centro de Desenvolvimento Regional), Altamira, Brazil. E-mail: ella_89rock@hotmail.com

1 INTRODUCTION

This research paper deals with students' beliefs concerning English language teaching/learning in the Amazon region of Altamira, relating to both native and non-native teachers. Concomitantly, this work examines if such beliefs have the potential to influence students' motivation to learn a language.

As Dörnyei (2001) argues, most students will certainly have some significant beliefs that remain active throughout the entire language-learning process. Based on that assumption, we have formulated the central question of our research: what are the students' beliefs toward native and non-native English-speaking teachers?

In this context, the main goal of this work is to identify the possible beliefs that students of two classes, one that has already studied with native and non-native teachers (advanced level) and another that has studied only with Brazilian teachers (beginner level), maintain in respect to the native and non-native teacher. To achieve such a goal, this paper also examines if these beliefs can or cannot influence students' motivation to learn the English language, as pointed out previously. In addition, this paper compares students' beliefs from the two levels and tries to understand how such beliefs differ from or resemble one another.

The selection of this research topic results from our experience as non-native English teachers. In this setting, we have often been able to sense or notice some of the beliefs that students use to project about NESTs (Native English-Speaking Teachers) and non-NESTs (Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers), as well as some informal understanding of how those beliefs affect students negatively and positively throughout the learning process – aspects we attempt to bring out and formalize in this paper so that we can promote a more proper discussion, in order to advance the debate on the topic in the field of Applied Linguistics and beyond.

As English language teachers, and after looking into the literature on this topic (cf. BARCELOS, 2007), we felt we need to make a more rigorous effort to reflect on beliefs that students bring into the classroom and in what ways such beliefs might interfere with how students see, relate, and respond to teachers. In this sense, therefore, the present study can contribute not only to an ultimate

broader comprehension of the role students' beliefs play in language acquisition but can equally help language instructors rethink their teaching approach and methodology. Put differently, since language learning/teaching beliefs are in part affected by students' previous experiences, it might also be possible to learn from those prior events so that one can manage the variables that negatively affect the continuous process of language acquisition, avoiding or mitigating their harmful effects on language education as a whole and on the construction of a more diverse, inclusive, effective, and just environment for learning/teaching.

To conclude these introductory remarks, we point out that this paper is organized as follows. Right below, section 2 deals with the definitions of native and non-native, beliefs in language learning, and motivation. Section 3, in its turn, approaches the methodological procedures employed in this work and the instruments implemented for data collection, the research context, and its participants. Finally, section 4 introduces some results and discusses data from questionnaires and interviews.

2 THEORETICAL CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS

2.1 NATIVE AND NON-NATIVE ENGLISH SPEAKERS

Nayar (1994 *apud* MOUSSU, 2006, p. 8) argues that a native speaker should be conceived as someone who not only has a "primacy in the order of acquisition, manner, and the environment of acquisition" but is also engaged in "acculturation by growing up in the speech community," by exhibiting the highest levels of "phonological, linguistic, and communicative competence, dominance […] and comfort", not to mention a deep sense of "linguistic membership and eligibility."

Peter Medgyes (2001), on the other hand, turns his attention to non-nativeness. Being himself a non-native English speaker, he was one of the first scholars to argue in favor of a definition for such a category. For him, a non-native teacher is a speaker "for whom English is a second language or foreign language; who works in an EFL environment; whose students are monolingual groups of learners; who speaks the same native language as his or her students (MEDGYES, 2001, p. 433).

According to the Hungarian professor, there should be some elementary differences between NESTs and Non-NESTs. Precisely like Nayar (*apud* MOUSSU, 2006), Medgyes (2001) defends that language proficiency is the aspect in which the two terms differ the most. From his viewpoint, differences in teaching approach or methodology should equally be considered when it comes to conceiving limits between the two notions. In any case, the eastern-European researcher is adamant in pointing out that both NESTs and Non-NESTs can be successful teachers, regardless of the singularities that set them apart.

Alongside many other commenters, and despite considering the definitions above as operational concepts instead of fixed constatations, Medgyes (2001) admits that birth or childhood does not determine someone as a native speaker of a language. More than a decade before, another linguist, Paikeday, dared to posit the concept of (English-speaking) nativeness as an illusion. The Indian scholar argues that the term native speaker "exists only as a figment of linguistics imagination" (PAIKEDAY *apud* Moussu, 2006, p. 12). Medgyes (2001, p. 431) agrees, postulating his own version of terms, such as "expert, novice speakers, and bilingual speakers to include both natives fluent in other languages and non-natives fluent in English".

Davis (2003 *apud* SHAKOURI, 2014) adds to the deconstruction of nativeness by arguing that such a condition does not ensure communicative competence. Due to the state of English as a lingua franca, among other reasons, non-native speakers are potentially more competent in communication than native speakers that, for example, only master local/non-standard varieties of a language.

Canarajah (2007), on the other hand, takes a different approach to the issue. According to the Indian professor, both NESTs and non-NESTs have competence in their own varieties of English. In a comparable sense, Cook (2005), employing the term L2 users to refer to non-NESTs, claims that L2 users cannot be evaluated for not speaking as a "native" speaker because the main objective when acquiring a second language is not to become a "native" speaker or to pass for one. The major goal is to be a proficient user, with their own identity, not an imitation of a "native" speaker.

Thus, despite fully agreeing with Canajarah's (2007) and Paikeday's (*apud* MOUSSU, 2006) position, this work opts to resort to NEST and non-NEST

acronyms exclusively for an instrumental reason. Besides being a widespread pair of terms among teachers, students, and Applied Linguists, such naming is the only one that properly identifies the figment Paikeday alludes to. For the logistic purpose of our discussion, therefore, NEST refers to a teacher who acquired English in their childhood and has grown up in an English-speaking country, while non-NEST relates to the one who learned a language other than English as a first or a second language (cf. NAYAR *apud* MOUSSU, 2006).

2.2 BELIEFS CONCERNING LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING

For Pajares (1992, p. 309) belief in the field of Applied Linguistics may refer to a myriad of concepts quite diverse in nature and implications, such as "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, repertories of understanding, and social strategy".

For being connected to numerous processes in learning and teaching a second language; also for being concomitantly collective and individual (SILVA, 2005); Pegamo (*apud* SILVA, 2005) adds that beliefs are ever-changing elements, modifiable as per the learner experiences or due to the intervention of an agent, such as a teacher, a friend, among others. In conclusion, though, and for the sake of a synoptic definition, one could assume beliefs "[...] as opinions and ideas that students and teachers have about teaching and learning processes" (BARCELOS, 2001, p. 72, our translation).

Such aspects of the learning process (or beliefs) are actually part of a wider system, which Barcelos (1995) and others refers to as "culture to learn languages". This collective organization encompasses beliefs and any other kind of implicit knowledge, previous practices, assumptions, and expectations about language learning brought into the classroom context. Among the most common beliefs that students uphold, according to Barcelos (2007, p. 112), are the need to go abroad to learn English, the idea that this language cannot be learned at a public school but in (private) language institutions, and the notion that the imitation of a "native" speaker is a sine-qua-non condition to master English or

prove linguistic proficiency. Associated with the *mongrel complex* in the Brazilian context (RODRIGUES, 1993, p. 161) or, more precisely, in the Amazon setting, such beliefs may greatly distort peoples' relations with the target language and cultures, leading to the adoration of or subservience to everything foreign; that is, every variety from a white, wealthy, and privileged Global North may get a status of superiority and, consequently, the symbolic favors of being classified as "native".

As the instances above suggest, beliefs can, in fact, play a critical role in language learning processes, affecting, therefore, learners' behavior toward the target language, among other effects (BARCELOS, 2001). In this sense, beliefs can influence the selection of learning strategies or even determine how individuals organize and define learning tasks, for example (PAJARES, 1992, p. 311). On the other hand, beliefs are not all-powerful since they are highly susceptible to other factors, such as learning experiences, teaching approaches, proficiency, motivation, and context (BARCELOS, 2001, p. 74).

2.3 MOTIVATION IN SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

As implied above, beliefs and motivation truly maintain a close relationship when it comes to language learning. Dörnyei (2001) argues that both teachers and researchers agree that motivation is crucial in any learning situation, especially in second language acquisition. Depending on the scenario, motivation can ultimately determine the success or failure in language mastering.

Taking this belief-motivation link to a further level, and based on the expectation-value theory, Bandura (*apud* LIMA, 2005, p. 42) assumes that motivation is, in an ultimate degree, the fusion between beliefs in the fact that specific actions will produce particular results, and the very values attributed to such results. This way, motivation – that is, beliefs plus those corresponding values – ends up intrinsically connected to the behavior of an individual in relation to certain learning practices. Likewise, Mantle and Bromlee (*apud* LIMA 2005, p. 64) associate beliefs and the importance of motivation in the acquisition of a second language, as well as in students' learning achievements. For them, the connections between attitudes, beliefs and, behaviors are self-evident.

For the purpose of this research work, therefore, Bandura's (*apud* LIMA, 2005) and Dörnyei's (2001) views on motivation are the ones we have adopted. Accordingly, motivation becomes a complex stimulus system, deriving from beliefs and values and serving as an initial force to sustain learners (and their behaviors) in the language acquisition process.

3 METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS

To better understand students' beliefs, we have opted for exploratory research, following the steps of content analysis as conceived by Laurence Bardin (2008, p. 42). According to her, content analysis is a set of communication analysis techniques aimed at obtaining systematic and objective procedures for describing the content of messages, whether quantitative or not. In the following sub-sections, we provide further details on how and under what circumstances this study has been carried out.

3.1 CONTEXT AND PARTICIPANTS

The present study took place at Centro de Desenvolvimento Regional (CDR), which has been operating in Altamira-PA since 2000. It is a civil, nonprofit, charitable, social, educational, and cultural organization whose central goal is to promote the development of the communities it works with, favoring especially low-income groups. For over 20 years, CDR has provided services and promoted social actions in Altamira and the region. Such services or activities include computer lessons, citizenship courses, music and dance lessons, sports and sex education initiatives, health services, and, evidently, English courses (from beginning to advanced levels). These language lessons may be taught by both NESTs and non-NESTs, serving children, adolescents, young people, and adults. Nevertheless, only advanced level students can count on NESTs as instructors; and that is why the subjects of this research project come from opposite language learning levels so that we can compare the beliefs of students who learn from NESTs with those of students who do not yet do it.

The research participants come from two different English classes, one in the advanced and another in the beginning level. Although such classes usually have more than ten students, on the days of data collection[1], only nine were present in each class. Consequently, we have been able to count on 18 participants in total, whose ages range from 14 to over 38 years old.

3.2 INSTRUMENTS

Besides using an open-ended questionnaire to better identify and profile participants (AMARO *et al*., 2004), we also employed a semi-structured interview to obtain a more precise picture of students' major beliefs. Questionnaires and interviews were conducted in Portuguese to avoid much interference in students' responses, considering the learning level disparities between the two classes selected.

The questionnaire was divided into two parts: the first is about personal data, such as age, sex, marital status, and the second one relates more directly with student's beliefs and motivation toward NESTs and Non-NESTs. After the application of the questionnaires, four participants were chosen from sampling, two of each level. These students were selected in order to guarantee a fair representation in terms of age, gender, and background once these factors can somehow contribute to the formation of learners' beliefs (SILVA, 2005).

Following the abovementioned sampling, a semi-structured oral interview was carried out, contemplating questions almost entirely related to language learning beliefs – as will be evident in the discussion section. All interviews have been recorded and transcribed individually in accordance with Fossa and Silva (2015, p. 6).

3.3 ANALYTICAL PROCEDURES

The following stages have been implemented as means to properly support the analysis of the data generated. First, we carried out a pre-analysis, which refers to the exploration of the material and the processing of possible

[1] Data have been collected between February and August 2017.

results with interpretations or inferences, (re)formulating a program for the actual or full examination of the verbal data. Such stage also considered floating reading, representativeness, homogeneity, relevance, hypotheses construction, and the elaboration of indicators.

The subsequent stage was preparing the material, which consists of its overall (re)organization and (re)edition. Questionnaires were read as accurately as possible and annotated according to necessary categorizations. The interviews were entirely transcribed, considering linguistic and non-linguistic aspects, such as pauses and other features (BARDIN, 2008).

The analysis at this stage was also guided by frequency or quantitative parameters, not to mention scrutiny of the multiple semantic fields and meaning effects deriving from the textual data. We equally employed thematic approach coding and data classification. Frequency analysis has encompassed recognizing the presence or absence of a certain index, that is, the number of (relative) times a particular word or a semantic component is mentioned.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Expectations is one of the essential components of motivation for language learning (DÖRNYEI, 2001). In this sense, responses from students at the beginning level provide us with a glimpse of how such expectations work in practice. Around 67% of the beginning interviewees (2/3) report believing NESTs can do, overall, a better job as English teachers. For them, NESTs would be more effective in helping them reach higher levels of fluency. Concomitantly, they point out that learning with a NEST would mean faster and more accurate language acquisition.

Furthermore, beginning learners seem convinced they can engage in cultural exchanges more successfully and experience multiple aspects of the target language's speech community or social relations (22%).

That sentiment seems so deeply enrooted in the learning culture or the collective consciousness that in a particular instance, one of the students states: “May I be able to go deeper into the cultures and things that Americans use to

do"[2] [our translation]. One of the inferences we can make from that statement is that the beginning-level student wants to be just like an American. In other words, the learner manifests the very aspect of a major belief, which Cook (2005) reflects upon: students' desire to become exactly like a "native." For Latino students, therefore, people of color, this also means wanting to access the privileges symbolically associated with those considered as (imagined) standard NESTs, that is, white, wealthy, straight individuals from the Global North (cf. LAN, 2022).

Evidently, this wish is likewise molded by the influence the U.S. media industry has on the nation, even in this remote part of the Amazon. Besides, that Northern country's influence power over its Southern neighbor's economy and politics only adds to the pervasiveness of that desire of wanting to be like "them."

When it comes to the students at the advanced level, however, only 45% (less than half) believe NESTs can do an overall job in language teaching in comparison with non-NESTs. Even so, this percentage of students tends to stress that speaking abilities are the elements that truly set apart both categories of teachers. For such participants, NESTs are inherently better instructors of oral English, a given reality that would assist them in learning the "teacher's accent" therefore, the "correct way of speaking it." Consequently, learners would become some type of superior or privileged speaker for having acquired language straightly from the source, a "native."

Instead of more all-encompassing beliefs, learners at this level choose to associate NESTs with the mastering of specific skills. Around 22% of them state that native teachers can be more effective in regard to oral skills. For that proportion of learners, although NESTs and Non-NESTs can teach English speaking abilities, the first would be more effective and complete since the latter would be unable to reach an ultimate performance level. A belief that openly confronts Canajarah's (2007) stand on the topic. For the Indian scholar, both fluent NESTs and non-NESTs have competence in their own variety of English, which is more than enough to be successful teachers.

In the same vein of compartmentalizing the overestimation of NESTs, around 1/10 of learners from the advanced level believe these teachers are more capable of making language learning fun, engaging, special or singular. Again,

[2] "Que eu possa me aprofundar mais nas culturas e das coisas que os americanos costumam fazer".

this does not seem to be about arguing against non-NESTs' ability to teach culture but about highlighting NESTs' aptitude or fitness to go further, which is, once more, a significant difference between participants' beliefs from this level and the beginning level.

Around 22% (1/5) of these advanced-level students also compartmentalize NESTs' teaching skills toward linguistic diversity and/or curious metalinguistic aspects of English. For these respondents, only NESTs can widely provide knowledge about local "accents", slang, and other different features/realities pertaining to the target language, since they might be sources/informants for such.

When asked to compare the expectation they had before and the perception they acquired after having experienced lessons with NESTs, around 67% (nearly 2/3) of the students from the advanced level reported that "native" teachers had exceeded their expectations. The number seems quite high in relation to the sum of learners who anticipated an overall better performance by NESTs (45%), which could suggest a 50% improvement in terms of positive views/beliefs about such teachers.

However, when we consider the total number of advanced-level students who have had highly positive expectations regarding NESTs (nearly 100%), either concerning overall performance or in a particular skill/dimension of language learning/teaching, then the reality becomes another. Accordingly, the extremely positive beliefs decrease from nearly an absolute percentage to less than 2/3 (67%). In this context, instead of pointing out a satisfying or uneventful encounter between learners and their initial hopes, the constatation actually suggests the opposite. It seems that advanced-level students end up facing a reality that does not meet their expectations (cf. ARVIZU, 2014). That is, they may realize that their projection was too unrealistic to become part of the practice and that learning a language is a rather multifactorial process, which requires way more than the "omnipotent" presence of a "precious" source/informant, like a NEST is initially believed to be (cf. LEVIS *et al.*, 2017).

For about 11% of the advanced-level learners, after their experience with a NEST, lessons have no "dynamic", which ends up hindering the quality of classes themselves, making them monotonous or unexciting. In the words of a student:

"I've faced some difficulties in our classes"[3] [our translation], precisely because of the absence of creative and engaging activities.

Around 22% of advanced-level learners seem to go in the same direction when reflecting upon this dissonance between expectation and actual classroom practice with NESTs and non-NESTs. For them, differently from non-NESTs, usually educated at federal or state universities, exclusively for the purpose of language teaching, NESTs did not exhibit knowledge of teaching practices/experiences, nor do they evinced abilities to employ any productive resources in their classes. For these respondents, NESTs have had no previous experience in the classroom. According to them, NESTs they interacted with, as instructors, were actually not teaching professionals but just native speakers of a language; and that, for them, makes a lot of difference in the acquisition process.

For most advanced-level learners (67%), however, used to being intensely challenged with difficult tasks, lessons with NESTs demanded exactly what they had anticipated, perhaps even more. For them, although almost all NESTs at CDR had little to no educational background in formal language teaching, these instructors would "demand a lot from students, then, expectations have really overcome the limits of what [one] had hoped for"[4] (sic) [our translation]. In this case, students suppose that NESTs' unpredictability and seemingly more spontaneous flow of oral speech force them to adopt more creative attitudes and strategies when responding to verbal inputs. NESTs would stimulate them to step further from the more comfortable progression of a rigorous and, somehow, more organized/predictable learning progression.

Despite the belief in the superiority of NESTs as speaking fluency masters appearing to have become fixed, therefore, stable and enrooted in learner's imaginary way before they initiated English lessons at CDR, our next question suggests this might not be precisely the case. Advanced-level students' answers imply that the "culture to learn languages" (BARCELOS, 1995) may have played some role in such a belief appropriation. The following chart indicates the responses learners provided when asked if, before starting their English course

[3] "Senti uma certa dificuldade em nossas aulas".
[4] "porque eles exigem muito dos alunos, então, as expectativas realmente ultrapassaram os limites do que esperava" (sic).

at CDRA, they believed it would be possible to develop fluency with an American/NEST teacher:

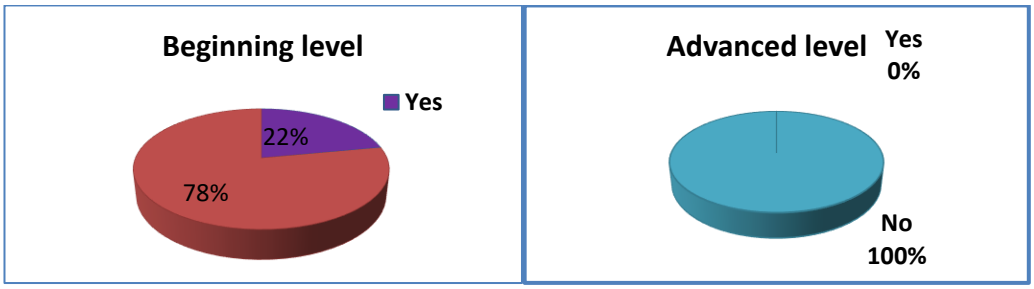

Chart 1 – Students' beliefs about NESTs' oral skills teaching *before entering CDR*.

In the chart above, we can notice that only students from the beginning level (1/5) previously believed they could advance fluency in oral English by having classes with a native teacher. For the rest, mastering oral skills with a NEST was nearly impossible – a result that is unanimous among advanced-level learners.

There are a few hypotheses that could help us understand this picture. First, there is a possible hindrance referring to data accuracy. Beliefs are self-reported elements, making their precision rates less reliable than other direct indicators. In this sense, as beginning-level students spend time at CDR and progress in language acquisition, they seem to obliterate some of their previous language attitudes (cf. TANAKA, 2004), mitigating or denying them, so they can contrast them with a presumed "new" behavior and awareness they would not have had before a full classroom contact with NESTs.

This would assumedly illustrate how far they have come in their *self-made man* narrative (DOUGLASS, 2004) toward self-improvement and individual achievement, evincing an alleged power the interaction with NESTs has concerning speaking abilities acquisition or the extremely positive views on such skills taught by "native" instructors. This reality may also help explain why no advanced-level students are reporting their previous belief in NESTs as the best alternative for oral fluency, despite stating now that they are the best teachers for this component.

In the case of some beginning-level learners (1/5), the diminished contact with NESTs, the disparity of linguistic knowledge in the face of a native speaker, as well as their insecurities relating to linguistic performance, appear to make them shy away from trusting their oral fluency to NESTs. Native teachers would be at such a high level that learning from them would seem

either extenuating or nearly unfeasible. Although for most of them, this belief in NESTs' power to teach oral fluency has been positively modified in retrospect, as pointed out regarding advanced-level students, a significant percentage does not seem yet convinced this could be the case.

There are still two hypotheses that could assist in explaining this proportion of learners who do not believe in such a "native" teachers' omnipotence. One proves to be quite self-evident, which is the lack of any previous contact with NESTs. This absence would make learners afraid or powerless in the face of "native" instructors as the "highest authorities" in English speaking.

Another possible explanation would be related to previous unsuccessful encounters with native speakers – "[It was hard to talk/learn from them] because they have already been speaking English [since childhood]"[5] (our translation). The trauma deriving from cultural barriers faced and difficulties in efficiently communicating with a native would eventually affect the collective belief according to which NESTs are "better/superior" language instructors.

The following sub-sections break down students' responses regarding current beliefs, that is, language attitudes and views they still maintain after entering CDR. Questions were organized per the four skills and the overall grammatical dimension. Accordingly, learners were asked to report which teacher category would be the best to instruct about each linguistic ability and provide reasons to justify such answers. We will start with the speaking ability, as shown below.

4.1 BELIEFS ABOUT TEACHING/LEARNING SPEAKING SKILLS

As suggested throughout the discussion of students' general answers to an open question regarding NESTs and non-NESTs, most learners from both levels believe that "native" teachers are more capable of teaching speaking abilities in English, which, in its turn, they can learn more effectively.

Among advanced-level students, nonetheless, belief in NESTs' speaking superiority is far from unanimous (56%). Even so, this is a significant number of

[5] "[É difícil falar/aprender com eles] porque já falam o inglês [desde criança]".

learners, indicating that only “native” teachers can do a more accurate job at teaching pronunciation. Surprisingly, however, the other half (44%) believe both NESTs and non-NESTs are equally capable of doing satisfactory work at teaching English oral skills: “Because a non-native teacher also provides the appropriate teaching for the student to develop fluency”[6] [our translation].

After acquiring a deeper awareness of the language and learning strategies efficiency rates; after having experienced so many language learning levels and having been taught on multiples occasions by both teacher categories, advanced-level students might be more able to realize that “nativeness” does not determine, on itself, the true learning outcomes. In this sense, they may be more prone to acknowledge the most fruitful aspects of the two worlds, Brazilian and U.S. speakers’ forms/approaches to teaching English.

For beginning-level learners, though, the picture appears a complete opposite. According to what nearly 2/3 of them believe (67%), NESTs are definitely and inherently “superior” or “better” when it comes to pronunciation:

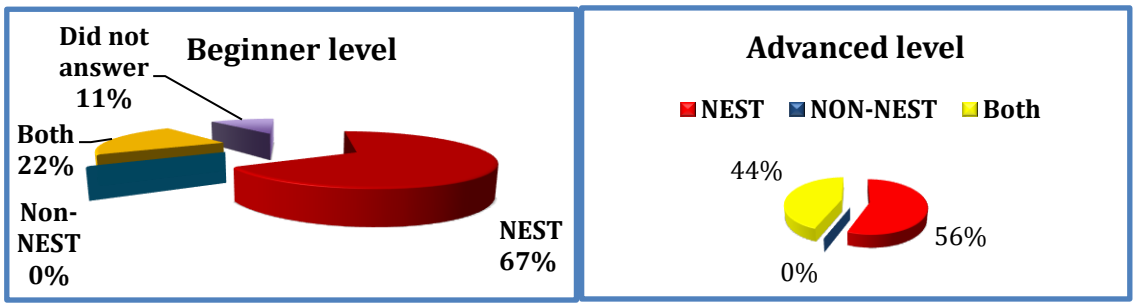

Chart 2 – Students’ beliefs about NESTs’/non-NESTs’ abilities to teach spoken English.

For beginning-level students, “native” teacher will always produce the exact phonemes for the right graphemes, therefore, making them look as if they were almost infallible: “Learning to speak with a native is better because pronunciation will [always] be correct”[7] [our translation]. This leads us to conclude that, from their perspective, mastering a language is, above all, imitating a “native” speaker; a common belief pointed out more than a decade before by one of the leading scholars on the topic, Barcelos (2007). She adds that this belief is also reflected

[6] “Pois, o professor não-nativo também fornece o ensino adquado para que o aluno desenvolva fluencia”.

[7] “Aprender falar com o nativo é melhor, pois a pronúncia será certa”.

in other collective attitudes or views, such as the idea that learning English with a non-NEST at a public school would be impossible.

Learners from the abovementioned level evince that, at that point, neither CDR nor learning experiences have affected much of their collective belief in NESTs' powerful "nativeness". Even among half of the advanced-level students, the belief in NESTs' prominence toward oral skills is still quite noticeable, as one learner points out: "Usually a non-native teacher sometimes carries with them a Brazilian accent, and this can hinder [pronunciation]"[8] (our translation). Somehow, this view of such a teaching dimension implies that for one to master English, it would be necessary to get rid of their own accent, removing, therefore, part of their linguistic and sociocultural identity, so one can fully acquire oral skills at a target language (cf. KALAJA *et al.*, 2016).

Perhaps, we can hypothesize that such an explicit preference for NESTs within the oral dimension of language learning is related to students' negative experiences in the region's public schools, mostly due to unqualified teachers and underfunded institutions. Namely, the last Brazilian schools' census (INEP, 2022) has pointed out that, in the Amazon region, almost half of the teachers who work in the final years of elementary school do not have adequate training in their area of teaching. Although more than 3/5 of them work appropriately in their areas of training in the case of high school, adult education reality, as well as that of rural areas, is concerning, where only 1/3 of the teachers have training consistent with their field of activity. If census data were directed specifically to English language teaching, we would certainly have even more alarming numbers.

Accordingly, that macro-belief, according to which it would be impossible to learn English speaking skills in public schools, may continue to influence how students view non-NESTs' competence and performance in the CDR classroom environment, even though non-NESTs at the abovementioned entity are well-prepared and qualified to teach; when added to the belief that one can only learn English in specific or private English courses (cf. BARCELOS, 2007), both views make up for a strong variable, probably able to affect learners' perceptions on non-NESTs, mainly. Consequently, some of this study participants keep

[8] "Normalmente o professor não-nativo às vezes carrega o sotaque brasileiro e pode atrapalhar".

associating non-NESTs with teaching metalinguistic aspects and grammar, as shown in one of the subsections ahead.

But before proceeding to that discussion, we should compare beliefs reported in this sub-section to those introduced below.

4.2 BELIEFS ABOUT TEACHING/LEARNING LISTENING SKILLS

Interestingly enough, beliefs regarding speaking (above) do not reproduce themselves precisely as in the case of this language skill. The following chart provides us with a general sense of how the two groups of learners view this dimension of language acquisition:

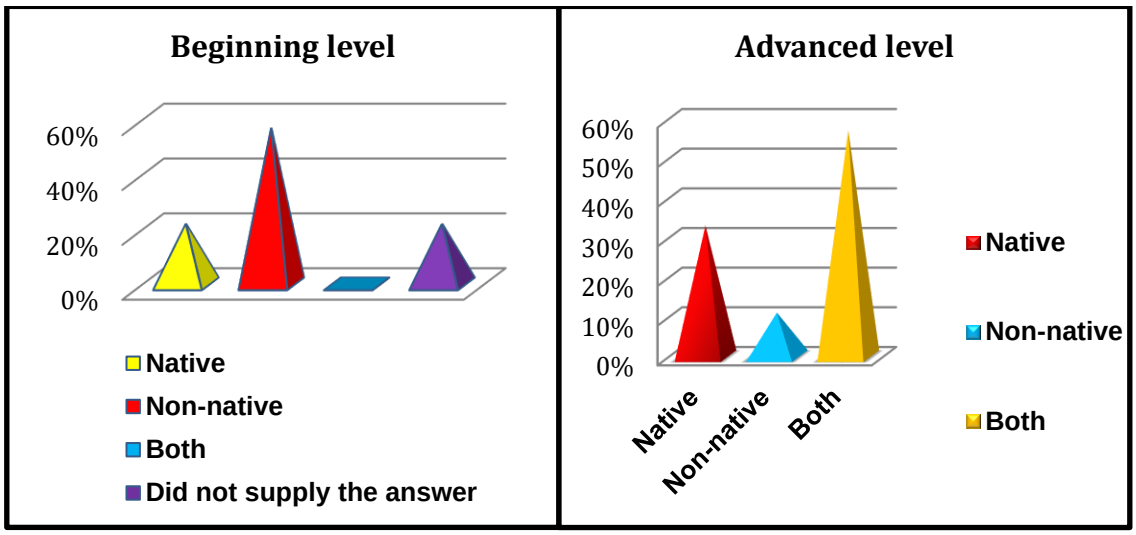

Chart 3 – Students' beliefs about NESTs'/non-NESTs' abilities to teach listening skills

In fact, students from the beginning-level group go toward the opposite end of the spectrum illustrated in the previous sub-section. Around 57% believe that non-NESTs would be the most effective teachers regarding listening abilities. Once more, having not experienced full lessons with NESTs and bringing a significant background from difficult language education in Amazon schools, learners from this level tend to keep beliefs previously constructed. The probable understanding to sustain such a picture is simple: a Brazilian teacher would have gone through the troubles of acquiring listening strategies for a language that is quite different from their own, which would enable them to "pass on" or share such approaches. In the case of NESTs, students seem to anticipate that their monolingualism would place them in a disadvantageous position compared to non-NESTs. Maybe that is why less than 1/5 of learners at this level would trust

their listening lessons to “native” speakers. Besides, none have indicated that both teacher categories as equally capable of carrying out such a task.

This reasoning might also reveal a simplification of some beliefs since students appear less able to construct more nuanced and inclusive/integrative views on teaching or more complexified spectra for this particular learning/teaching aspect.

For advanced-level participants, though, this scenario does not repeat itself. For these (58%), both NESTs and non-NESTs are similarly capable of effectively teaching listening skills – which seems a further realization that, without non-NESTs, they would not have reached the advanced level in the first place, a reason why they may feel compelled to encompass non-native teachers in their positive views. Such an attitude shows that these students might as well exert much more capacity for integration and complexity while building up beliefs.

On the other hand, advanced-level students tend to trust more NESTs with this dimension. Around 1/3 (33%) of them NESTs are inherently more successful in teaching listening. Another percentage, 1/5, points out that non-NESTs are superior to “native” teachers regarding the same skills.

In this sense, there might be a pattern here. While for most skills, advanced-levels participants tend to either privilege NESTs and/or integrate non-NESTs as equally capable, beginning-level learners seem prone to go toward the extremities of the attitude spectrum. At times they highlight non-NESTs’ abilities, and at other times they focus on NESTs’ skills.

4.3 BELIEFS ABOUT READING, WRITING, AND GRAMMAR

In reality, the abovementioned pattern appears so pervasive that reading and writing aspects repeat similar proportions to the ones pointed out above. While beginning-level participants resort to extremities, advanced-level learners would rather choose the integrative beliefs pathway, with a clear preference for NESTs over non-NESTs, as exemplified in the chart below about beliefs concerning reading skills:

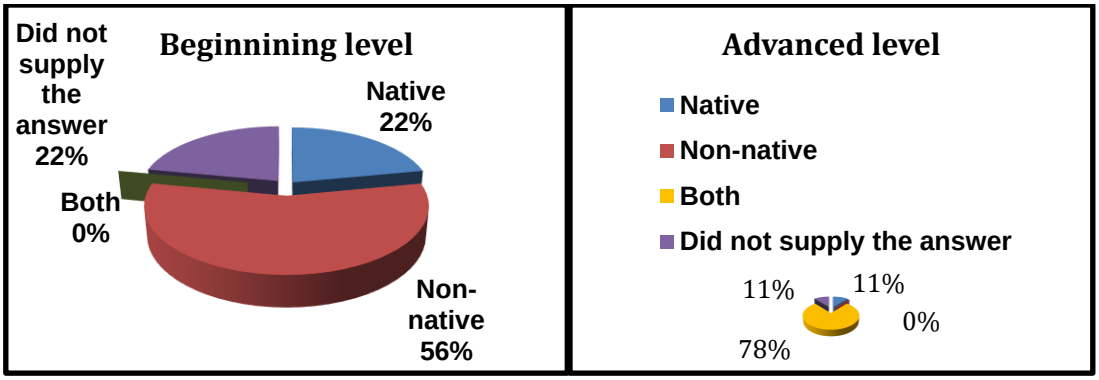

Chart 4 – Students' beliefs about NESTs'/non-NESTs' abilities to teach reading skills.

All aspects connected to language technical structure and/or more literate/formal language use tend to be more positively associated with non-NESTs in the case of beginning-level students. Concomitantly, advanced-level learners are inclined to consider both teacher categories as able but with a significant privilege for "native" teachers over non-native ones.

In the same vein, when assessing their views on the writing dimension of English teaching, a comparable pattern is once more reproduced, as one can notice from the following illustration:

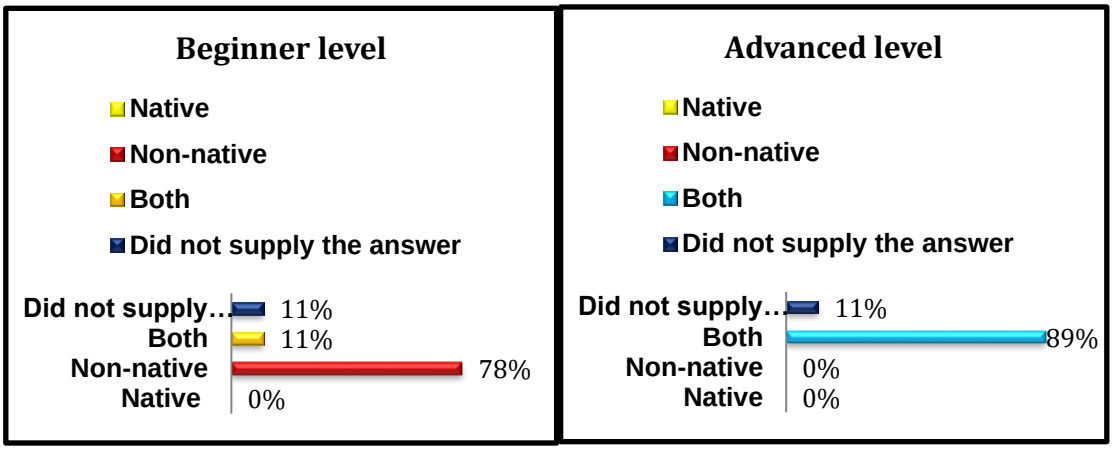

Chart 5 – Students' beliefs about NESTs'/non-NESTs' abilities to teach writing skills.

Besides the reasons and possibilities presented so far, we hypothesize that since all non-NESTs at CDR have a university degree, students from the beginning level seem to experience and recognize such an educational background. On the other hand, the mentioned pattern suggests that universities' teacher training programs might be focusing a lot on metalanguage and linguistic structures. Maybe that is why learners are so able to point out such non-NESTs' abilities from within and out CDR, considering that such beliefs did not originate

at this philanthropic institution but have been repeatedly confirmed, perhaps partially through bias as well.

Nevertheless, when it refers to grammar, the pattern is interrupted. Most students from both levels are adamant in pointing out that: “A non-native teacher [manages to] visualize writing [so well] and the issue of grammar [also]”[9] (our translation). The chart below represents the proportion of participants from the 2 levels regarding grammar teaching:

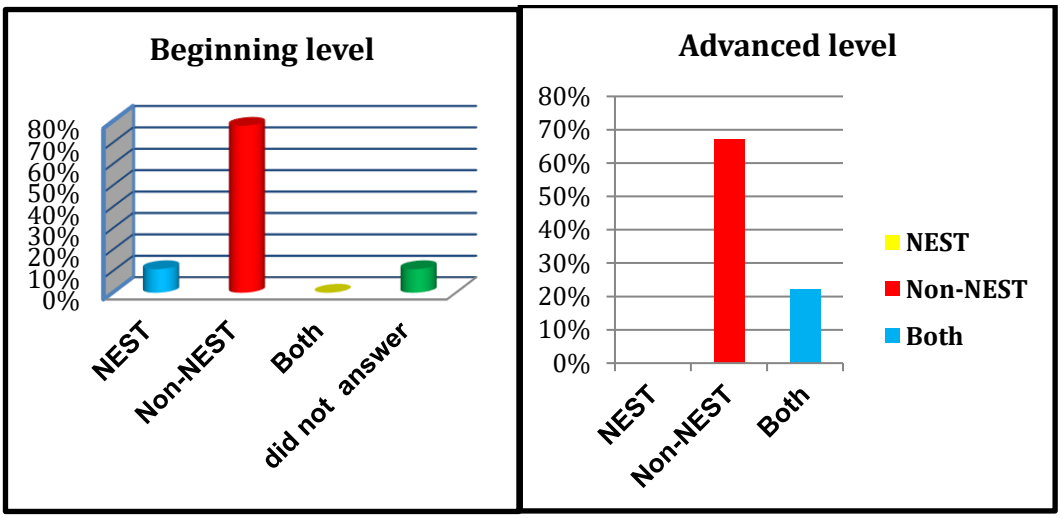

Chart 6 – Students’ beliefs about NESTs’/non-NESTs’ abilities to teach writing skills.

Accordingly, advanced-level participants, previously adopters of an integrative approach to their own beliefs, move directly toward the extremity of the evaluative spectrum in favor of non-NESTs For the first time, non-native teachers are finally seen as more effective or successful than NESTs, within this group of learners. This not only means a significant change in such students' belief patterns, but it may also suggest how powerful and pervasive this view can be throughout the learning process. Not even experiences with qualified “native” teachers appear able to alter the semantic core of this belief in non-NESTs’ superiority in teaching grammatical aspects.

One factor that perhaps plays a pivotal role in reinforcing this belief, even after experiences with university-educated NESTs in English teaching, is the abundance of “native” teachers who are monolingual and formally unqualified for language teaching. Accordingly, with the tourist potential of the Amazon region, it is common to see private and philanthropic language schools hiring newly

[9] “O professor não-nativo visualizar na escrita e na questão da gramática”.

arrived foreigners from English-speaking countries (US mainly) as language instructors, regardless of their backgrounds, which may range from biologists to pastors or missionaries. Sometimes such “native” speakers are brought to public school events/projects as allegedly “high” references/sources of the living language.

Since we have already explored the implications of the qualification absence, we must point out that monolingualism and/or these “native” instructors' singular/precarious experiences in acquiring a second language may work against their ability to demonstrate grammar mastering fully. In this sense, bilingualism or multilingualism is essential to exercise the capacity to examine our own language from an outside perspective (cf. ELLIS, 2012), almost like a *bird’s eye view camera*, which enables one to see a wider picture of its own place and role as it progresses further away from the very scene is looking into.

At this point, a significant distinction emerges in students’ beliefs concerning NESTs and non-NESTs: while Brazilian teachers (usually qualified), having acquired a second language, can more fully grasp a complete picture of their first and second languages; U.S. counterparts (generally lacking qualification), having to yet or truly mastered a second language, have a partial view of one language, their mother tongue. With no clear or stable parameters of at least two languages for comparison, considering that difference is established in the relation of cross-linguistic elements (cf. DE SAUSSURE, 2004), NESTs tend to face more difficulties in explicating their grammatical knowledge, as one student puts it: “Because with native [speakers/teachers] we learn more how to read, speak and write correctly; a Brazilian [teacher] is better at grammar because if I do not understand he/she will know how to tell me in the Brazilian way”[10] [our translation].

Although their practical mastering of inner grammar might be unquestionable in certain linguistic/genre domains, elucidating such expertise requires, ultimately, a sufficient degree of awareness regarding the target language (cf. VANPATTEN, 2003), not to mention other resources for explication, such as metalanguage and enough understanding of students’ first language. In

[10] “Porque com os nativos aprendemos mais como ler, falar e escrever corretamente, já o brasileiro é melhor na grammar, pois se eu não entender ele saberá me dizer do jeito brasileiro”.

sum, even if NESTs master the inner/implicit grammar referring to the specific domain of language they are teaching; and even if they are aware of the functioning/operations of that grammar; they will have to eventually express such knowledge by resorting to a metalanguage, analogies, comparisons, and metaphors which must find enough resonance in students' first language. And that is when their position becomes disadvantageous from the perspective of students' beliefs, as suggested in the previous lines.

On the other hand, non-NESTs, for the reasons pointed out before, may have much fuller access to all those elements for effectively teaching grammar. Put differently, students' beliefs are not always built away from significant evidence and sound reasoning. In some cases, they emerge as sophisticated and complex as human experiences and thinking can be.

Now, the question we feel compelled to approach is: how such beliefs might affect students' motivation, which is precisely what we discuss in the following sub-section.

4.4 INFLUENCE OF BELIEFS ON STUDENTS' MOTIVATION TO LEARN A LANGUAGE.

Since, concerning most language abilities, NESTs' "nativeness" tend to be treated as a highly positive and beneficial component, it is unsurprising that students from all levels are inclined to feel motivated to study with a "native" instructor. At the beginning level, before sustained contact with NESTs, around 2/3 (67%) of learners feel motivated to have classes with "native" teacher. At the advanced level, that percentage goes up to almost 9/10 (89%).

On the other hand, those who do not feel such a motivation comprise around 1/3 (33%) of the beginning-level students, while the lack of motivation toward NESTs drops to around 1/10 (11%) among advanced-level learners. This suggests not just a change in many participants' beliefs but also their motivation degrees concerning NESTs throughout English levels. As they experience "native" teachers more and share some attitudes or views from their classmates and CDR (the institution) itself, students seem increasingly convinced of their peers' sentiments and attitudes. This may happen either due to confirmation bias

from colleagues, or through simple and positive interaction with NESTs, anchored on the adoration of everything white and foreign as well.

In fact, when asked about the reasons for such a motivation, many beginning-level participants inform that their excitement comes mostly from the fact that NESTs are [white/seemingly wealthy/straight/cis] foreigners (33%) and/or "superior" in speaking skills (34%). At some dimension, this might as well be a refraction of the *mongrel complex* (cf. RODRIGUES, 1993, p. 161), previously mentioned.

As for advanced-level students, despite their more integrative/complexified beliefs, there is still a sentiment that imitating a "native" speaker is the ideal place to reach for (56%). They report their motivation derives from wanting to communicate orally just like U.S. people do, with a North American accent, which, for most of them, is the "correct" way of speaking. Even when the source of motivation is related to getting to know a different culture (33%), the main goal seems to be feeling closer to the U.S.

Additionally, many participants at this level state that by having classes with NESTs they can feel closer to both the "original [uncorrupted?] language" and the "correct way of speaking". Thus, they feel more stimulated to speak the language "correctly". In this case, the core of language learning seems to be "native" emulation and oral skills. English would essentially be reduced to these few aspects.

5 CONCLUSION

As we proceed to our final remarks, it is important to ratify that the results of this study do not alter this work's commitment to a conception of "nativeness" as per Canajarah's (2007) and Paikeday's references (*apud* MOUSSU, 2006, p. 12), that is, the inevitable assumption that "native" speaker is more than a figment of imagination, it is a political tool whose power has pervasive effects on learning macro-dimensions, such as school curricula, as well as micro ones, like students' beliefs, attitudes and behavior.

In this sense, beginning-level students tend to place themselves at more extreme points of the evaluative spectrum regarding beliefs. For them, NESTs

can do an overall better job at teaching English than their non-native counterparts. In this case, such participants seem to confirm results from previous studies, emphasizing the prominence of “nativeness” when it comes to language teaching.

Nevertheless, when participants are asked specifically about NESTs' "superiority" referring to each language skill/dimension (speaking, writing, listening, reading, grammar), then “native” teachers are considered better only concerning speaking. For all other aspects, non-NESTS would be more successful instructors.

It seems that, for these beginning-level students, non-NESTs' qualifications, experience, general background, and knowledge of the two languages would enable them to teach more effectively those aspects associated with formality and language structures, as well as listening abilities since they would have previously experienced English acquisition process and strategies for themselves.

In their turn, advanced-level learners tend to compartmentalize their beliefs even further while still adopting integrative beliefs regarding NESTs and non-NESTs. Instead of picking one teacher category over another, in many instances, these students prefer to assign to both NESTs and non-NESTs a significant ability to teach the target language efficiently.

Notwithstanding, advanced-level participants are the ones who more often attribute to NESTs the highest qualities and who, on numerous occasions, resort to more colorful and flattery words to describe their beliefs relating to “native” teachers. These students are also the ones who more explicitly manifest the wish to imitate "native" speakers and get closer to whatever is foreign/North American [therefore, white, Northern, wealthy... privileged].

In the Amazon region, so popular/praised as “planet-lungs” around the world, concomitantly harmed by poverty, environmental crimes, inequalities, and lack of opportunities; learners seem to project absence and anxiety into their desire to be what they imagine as being prestigious, comfortable, healthy: a “native”, a “near-native”.

There is one exception, though, which advanced-level participants indeed make. For them, grammar cannot be taught by NESTs as effectively as it would be by non-NESTs. Despite circumscribing non-native teachers' only clear-cut

advantage to one dimension of the English language, their generally more inclusive belief construction illustrates how going through the different learning stages can affect apparently fixed perceptions.

Under such circumstances, motivation associated with “nativeness” appears much more evident in the case of advanced-level students. Nonetheless, participants of the two learning levels assign to NESTs a high degree of power to stimulate them to continue studying English. Reaching for ideal places of achievement in listening and speaking, mainly, which tends to reduce language to orality, both groups of learners tend to overestimate NESTs' role in motivating them to advance in their learning process. Evidently, such a near-adoration attitude has little to do with the singularities of NESTs themselves and much more to do with the economic, cultural capital and the overall power their (Northern/white) societies of origin hold in the global context, ranging from political hegemony to aesthetic dominance.

Ultimately, students’ motivation is also about seizing the many kinds of influence, privilege and notoriety NESTs, and the nation-states they are part of, might have to offer. It is about doing their best to occupy the position of prestige they imagine a monolingual “native” speaker of a lingua franca has to offer. Perhaps that is why students are so adamant in making explicit their wish to be like the foreigner, to sound like him, to acquire another identity maybe, but not any identity, the white/Northern people’s identity and not just their language.

It is necessary to expand horizons not to fall into such a neo-colonization trap. Suppose we want our students in the Amazon region and anywhere else to master a language, enrich their intellectual/inner/social world and diversify their identities without making them subservient or without serving the purpose of Northern/white power maintenance. In that case, it is pivotal that we also teach them to value their own culture, society, and origins. In the same vein, diversity should not be about sophisticated speeches. Still, it should be a reality ranging from textbooks to everyday activities, highlighting English speakers from all over the globe, especially from the Global South, with all kinds of accents, genders, sexual orientations, backgrounds, and ethnic-racial identities, despite market pressure by Anglo-American/hegemonic universities/publishers, which tend to make invisible certain speakers and dialects that are not similar to the US-European standards.

It is only through such daily and macro-practices that we may collectively overcome the most subtle and overt forms of neo-colonization, promoting, in the process, a learning experience that is not just organic but also committed to students' self-determination, autonomy, creativity, originality, and freedom not to have to copy anyone, finding their own identity and ways of being within the target language.

ENSINO DE INGLÊS NA REGIÃO AMAZÔNICA:
CRENÇAS SOBRE PROFESSORES DE INGLÊS
ENQUANTO NATIVOS E NÃO-NATIVOS

Este artigo tem como objetivo identificar e explorar crenças de estudantes em relação a professores nativos (estadunidenses) e professores de inglês não-nativos (brasileiros). Nesse sentido, este trabalho procura verificar em que medida tais crenças estão relacionadas à motivação dos alunos para a aprendizagem da língua inglesa. Dados foram gerados a partir de questionários, entrevistas e observações com estudantes do Centro de Desenvolvimento Regional, Altamira, Brasil. Nosso referencial teórico inclui as definições de natividade de Cook (2005), Nayar (1994) e Medgyes (2001), bem como as concepções de crenças e motivação de Barcelos (2001), Pajares (1992) e Dörnyei (2001), entre outras. A análise de conteúdo foi empregada para escrutinar os dados, de acordo com os procedimentos de Bardin (2008). Os resultados sugerem que a maioria dos alunos considera que falantes nativos são melhores no ensino de inglês oral em geral. Por outro lado, esses estudantes acreditam que os falantes não-nativos são aqueles que ensinam gramática/escrita de forma mais eficaz ou bem-sucedida, uma vez que teriam um conhecimento mais profundo/técnico de tal dimensão. Além disso, percebemos que as crenças têm um grau relativamente alto de influência sobre a motivação dos alunos para aprender um idioma. Portanto, indicamos que essas crenças afetam positiva e negativamente os alunos em todo o processo de aprendizagem da língua, especialmente na forma como eles representam e se relacionam com ambas as categorias de professores, nativos e não-nativos.

Palavras-chave: Professor nativo. Professor não-nativo. Crenças. Motivação.

REFERÊNCIAS

AMARO, A. P; MACEDO L. **A arte de fazer questionários**: metodologias de investigação em educação. Universidade do Porto, Faculdade de Ciências, Departamento de Química, 11 jan. 2004. Available at:< https://www.mobilizadores.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/A-arte-de-fazer-question%C3%A1rios.pdf>. Access: 03 Feb. 2017.

ARVIZU, M. Students' beliefs, and expectations of native and non-native English teachers. **Mextesol Journal**, v. 38, n. 3, p.1-15, 2014.

BARCELOS, F. M. A. Reflexões acerca da mudança de crenças sobre ensino e aprendizagem de línguas. **Rev. Brasileira de Linguística Aplicada**, v. 7, n. 2, p. 109-138, 2007.

_____. Metodologia de pesquisa das crenças sobre aprendizagem de línguas: estado e arte. **Rev. Brasileira de Linguística Aplicada**, v. 1, n. 1, p. 71-92, 2001.

_____. **A cultura de aprender língua estrangeira (inglês) de alunos formandos de letras**. Dissertação (Mestrado em Linguística Aplicada) – Departamento de Linguística aplicada, Instituto de Estudos da Linguagem, Universidade Estadual de Campinas. Campinas, p. 200. 1995.

BARDIN, L. **Análise de conteúdo**. Trad. L. A. Reta e A. Pinheiro. 2ª ed. Lisboa: Edições 70, 2008.

CANARAJAH, S. **Lingua Franca English, Multilingual Communities, and Language Acquisition.** The Modern Language Journal, v. 91, n. 01, p. 923-939, 2007.

COOK, Vivian. Basing teaching on the L2 user. *In*: LLURDA, Enric (Ed.). **Non-native language teachers: Perceptions, challenges, and contributions to the profession**. New York: Springer US, p. 47-61, 2005.

DE SAUSSURE, Ferdinand. Course in general linguistics. **Literary theory: An anthology**, v. 2, n. 1, p. 59-71, 2004.

DÖRNYEI, Z. **Motivational Strategies in the Language Classroom.** London: CUP, 2001.

DOUGLASS, Frederick. **Self-Made Men**. Washington: US Library of Congress, 2004. Available at: <https://monadnock.net/douglass/self-made-men.html>. Access: 03 May 2022.

ELLIS, Elizabeth M. Language awareness and its relevance to TESOL. **University of Sydney Papers in TESOL**, v. 7, n. 1, p. 01-23, 2012.

INEP, Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais Anísio Teixeira. Censo Escolar 2022. **Gov.br-MEC**, 08 Dec. 2022. Available at: <https://www.gov.br/inep/pt-br/areas-de-atuacao/pesquisas-estatisticas-e-indicadores/censo-escolar/resultados/2022>. Access: 08 Feb. 2023.

KALAJA, Paula et al. **Beliefs, agency and identity in foreign language learning and teaching**. New York: Springer, 2016.

LAN, Shanshan. Between privileges and precariousness: Remaking whiteness in China's teaching English as a second language industry. **American Anthropologist**, v. 124, n. 1, p. 118-129, 2022.

LEVIS, John; SONSAAT, Sinem; LINK, Stephanie. Students' beliefs about native vs. non-native pronunciation teachers. *In*: AGUDO, Juan de Dios Martinez (Ed.). **Native and non-native teachers in English language classrooms**. Berlin: De Gruyter, p. 205-238, 2017.

LIMA, S. S. **Crença de uma professora e alunos de quinta série e suas influências no processo de ensino e aprendizagem de inglês em escola pública.** Dissertação (Mestrado em Estudos Linguísticos) – Programa de Pós-Graduação em Estudos Linguísticos, Instituto de Biociências, Letras e Ciências Exatas, Universidade Estadual Paulista. São Jose do Rio Preto, p. 213. 2005.

MEDGYES, P. When the teacher is a Non-native Speaker. *In*: CELCE-MURCIA, Marianne (Ed.). **Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language**. 3rd ed. Boston: Heinle & Heinle, p. 429-442, 2001.

MOUSSU. M. L. **Native and Non-native English-Speaking English as Second Language Teachers:** students' attitude, teacher self-perceptions, and intensive English administrator beliefs and practices. West Lafayette: Purdue University, 2006.

PAJARES, M**.** Teacher's beliefs and educational research: cleaning up a messy construct. **Review of Educational Research,** v. 62, n. 3, p. 307-332, 1992.

RODRIGUES, Nelson. **À sombra das chuteiras imortais**. 3rd ed. São Paulo: CL, 1993.

SHAKOURI, Elham; SHAKOURI, Nima. On the death of native speaker: A revisiting stance. **Int. Journal of Educational Investigations**, v. 1, n. 1, p. 220-226, 2014.

SILVA, A. K. **Crenças e aglomerados de crenças de alunos ingressantes em letras (inglês).** Dissertação (Mestrado em Linguística Aplicada) – Departamento de Linguística aplicada, Instituto de Estudos da Linguagem, Universidade Estadual de Campinas. Campinas, p. 243. 2005.

SILVA, H. A; FOSSA. T. I. M. Análise de Conteúdo: exemplo de aplicação de técnicas para análise de dados qualitativos. **Qualit@s Revista Eletrônica**, v. 17. n. 1, p. 01-14, 2015.

TANAKA, Koichi. **Changes in Japanese students' beliefs about language learning and English language proficiency in a study-abroad context**. Doctoral Thesis (PhD in Linguistics) – Department of Applied Language Studies and Linguistics, The University of Auckland. Auckland, p. 347. 2004.

VANPATTEN, Bill. **From input to output**: a teacher's guide to second language acquisition. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2003.