Identidade na aprendizagem de língua.

Identity in language learning

Marcia Regina Pawlas Carazzai[1]

Abstract: This article presents an overview of concepts related to identity and language learning, as well as empirical research on student's identity in SL, FL and AL classrooms published in recent years, focusing on the theoretical and methodological approaches that supported the studies. Besides a brief history of the concept of identity, it discusses the concept in light of poststructuralist theories. Moreover, the notions of investment and imagined communities, as proposed by Norton (2013, among others) are reviewed along with some empirical studies on identity and language learning. Finally, the paper presents suggestions for further research.

Keywords: identity, language, learning

Resumo: Este artigo apresenta uma revisão dos conceitos relacionados à identidade e à aprendizagem de línguas, bem como pesquisas empíricas sobre a identidade de alunos na sala de aula de SL, LE, LA publicados nos últimos anos, com foco nas abordagens teóricas e metodológicas que embasaram os estudos. Além de um breve histórico do conceito de identidade, discute-se o conceito à luz das teorias pós-estruturalistas. Ademais, as noções de investimento e comunidades imaginadas, tal como propostas por Norton (2013, dentre outros) são revisadas juntamente com alguns estudos empíricos sobre identidade e aprendizagem de línguas. Finalmente, o trabalho apresenta sugestões para futuras pesquisas.

Palavras-chave: identidade, língua, aprendizagem.

1.   Introduction

Since the end of the 20th century, research on identity and language learning has increased considerably. This has coincided with a change in the concept of identity, which until then was conceived primarily from a psychological point of view and started to be interpreted in a more anthropological and sociological way, in line with poststructuralist theories (NORTON, 2006; NORTON & TOOHEY, 2002).

Following post-structuralist authors such as Hall (2006), Bourdieu (1977; 1991) and Weedon (1997), in the end of the last century, identity began to be conceived as dynamic and multiple. In the same vein, Norton (2006) more recently proposed that identities are composed of social and cultural aspects, ant that they are complex, contradictory and constructed through language, in a strong relationship with social practices and the

---

[1] Professora do Departamento de Letras da UniveRsidade Estadual do Centro Oeste. Doutora em Inglês pela Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina. Contato: mcarazzai@gmail.com

practice of classroom. Thus, it can be said that the construction of identity in postmodernity happens continuously, in a process that is never finished, in which aspects related to membership of the subject to various cultures, such as linguistic and national ones, are mixed to form identity (HALL , 2006).

Despite the growing interest in the topic, most research on identity and language learning and teaching focuses on second language (SL) contexts, neglecting the places where English is taught and learned as a foreign language (LE) or an additional language (AL). Moreover, in relation to research in Brazil, more specifically, most studies focus on teachers' professional identity (FERNANDES & BORGES, 2010, for example), leaving aside the aspects that are related to the identity of the individual as learner throughout his/her life.

In an attempt to deepen theoretical questions about identity and language learning, this article presents an overview of concepts related to identity and language learning, as well as empirical research on students' identity in SL, FL and AL classrooms published in recent years, focusing on the theoretical and methodological approaches that supported the studies. Initially, a brief history of the concept of identity is presented, which is discussed later in light of poststructuralist theories. Then the concepts of identity, investment and imagined communities, as proposed by Norton (2013, among others) are explained. Subsequently, some empirical studies on identity and language learning are reviewed. The paper finishes with suggestions for further research.

2.   Defining identity: a historical overview

Hall (2006) traces the history of the concept of identity from the Enlightenment until late modernity, stating that the notion of identity has been debated and modified over time. According to the author, in the XVII century, with the Illuminist influences, identity was understood as being individual, unified and rational. With the advent of social studies, in the mid of the XX century, identity started to be seen as social, in a way that the subject and the society interacted, reflecting a more complex world, as the author explains. Later, due to the several social transformations which occurred since the beginning of the XX century, and also influenced by authors such as Marx, Freud, Saussure, Lacan and Foucault, and by diverse social movements, such as feminism, there was an identity crisis, or collapse. Thus, identity started to be seen as fluid and heterogeneous, and the subject started to be identified according to his/her belonging to several cultures, such as

linguistic, national and racial, among others (HALL, 2006). Such identification is viewed as being impermanent, disarticulating the stable past identities and giving opportunity to the creation of new identities, new subjects, in a more reflexive way of live, which is conducive to a postmodern/postcolonial world.

3.   Postsructuralism: identity and communities

As Williams (2005) explains, postsructuralism is a philosophical movement that emerged in the 1960s, mainly led by French writers, such as Foucault (1980), which influenced several fields of study, such as linguistics and sociology. Authors who followed this school of thought rejected absolute truths and universalisms of the social phenomena and of human behavior, and proposed a more complex and non-essentialist understanding of the world, of identity and of language. In this subsection, some views of identity and community are summarized, mainly based on the works of Bourdieu (1977; 1991), Weedon (1997), Lave and Wenger (1996), Wenger (1998), and Anderson (1991). These poststructuralist scholars have been influential in the language learning field, serving as the foundation for the work of Bonny Norton (Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton, 2000; for example).

The writings of Bourdieu (1977; 1991) deal with a sociological view of education, language and society, among other topics. The author broke with dichotomous views which had been prevalent so far, and proposed that the individual and the society were interdependent components of the same reality. In this way, for Bourdieu, identity is not only dependent on individual agency, but it is also subject to the constraints imposed by the environments, in a continuous and mutual re-creation. Bourdieu used the term capital, extending it from the economics field, and proposed that there are different kinds of capital, such as economic (economic resources, money and real state), social (social relations), cultural (knowledge, kills, education, language), and symbolic (prestige, honor, recognition). These forms of capital, according to the author, are resources which are generally transmitted from one generation to another and which determine a person's position in society. Capital, thus, confers power and status, in that it offers the individual some kind of profit in society.

The view that individuals and the society are mutually dependent, defended by Bourdieu, is also present in the work of Weedon (1997). In her book, Weedon (1997) developed a feminist poststructuralist theory, taking into consideration issues like

language, subjectivity, power and gender, as a way to promote social change. The author does not use the term identity, instead she refers to subjectivity, and defines it as "the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of herself, and her ways of understanding her relation to the world" (WEEDON, 1997, p. 32). In this way, identity could be interpreted in relational terms, in other words, the individual is subject of or to a set of relationships. For Weedon, individuals construct their subjectivities through language, and language only has social and political effectivity through the actions of the individuals. Thus, the author is interested in both institutional and community contexts, and in the conditions under which individuals speak.

Both Bourdieu's and Weedon's works focused on identity in regards their relationship with the social world. However, the authors did not explore national affiliations that individuals have and how these impact on their identities. It was Anderson (1991), in his well-known book, who discussed the notion of identity in terms of nationalism and proposed that nations are imagined, coining the term imagined communities. The author views identity as national, rather than individual; and understands nationalism as a symbolic construct which results from the power that communities have to define themselves by means of perception and imagination. Anderson posits that members of a given community have a sense of belonging and feel connected, even without knowing each other, by symbols, references and experiences that they have in common. Language is one of the aspects that helps build such cohesion and gives sense to nationalism, because, as the author states, a "language is not an instrument of exclusion: in principle, anyone can learn any language. On the contrary, it is fundamentally inclusive, limited only by the fatality of Babel: no one lives long enough to learn all languages" (ANDERSON, 1991, p. 134).

The notions of communities were also examined by Lave and Wenger (1996), and Wenger (1998), who conducted studies with groups of midwives, tailors, quartermasters, butchers, and insurance claims processors and explained how people learn by means of observation and participation in a group, or community. The authors developed the concept of communities of practice, positing that such communities are groups of individuals with a common profession, craft or interest, and who by means of observation, interaction and participation learn from each other and develop, contributing in turn to the community. Learning, as a result of social participation in communities of practice, is central to human identity. It is through these communities that individuals construct their

identities; therefore, identity formation is not dependent only on individual agency. On the other hand, "building an identity consists of negotiating the meanings of our experience of membership on social communities" (WENGER, 1998, p. 145).

The common thread in the writings of Bourdieu (1977; 1991), Weedon (1997), Lave and Wenger (1996), Wenger (1998), and Anderson (1991) is the view that identity is both conditioned by the society and conditions it in turn. In other words, identity is constituted by and constitutive of the social world, in an interdependent relationship. Moreover, since individuals and the society are constantly interacting, these authors understood that identities are not fixed or essentialized, but fluid, fragmented, unstable. A final aspect that is common to these authors is that they ascribe a central role to language in identity formation, and in the relationship between the individual and the society.

4.   Norton's main constructs: identity, investment and imagined communities

In SL/FL/AL research, the concept of identity has also evolved in the past decades, mainly influenced by the poststructuralist theories that were summarized in the previous section. This has coincided with a shift in the conceptualization of identity in SL acquisition research, which had been conceived primarily from a psychological point of view, to a more anthropological and sociological approach (NORTON, 2006; NORTON & TOOHEY, 2002).

Moreover, as Norton (2006) asserts, between the 1970s and the 1980s identity was seen in a dichotomous way, either from the social or the cultural point of view. The social aspects were related to the relations established between the individual and his/her larger social world (such as institutions); while the cultural aspects referred to individuals as members of certain groups with commonalities (such as language and ethnicity). However, the author argues that such division is not adequate to deal with the nature of identity found in recent research, and that the differences have become more fluid recently.

The work of Norton (Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton, 2000; 2001, 2006, among others) has been cited in the literature (RICENTO, 2005; BLOCK, 2007; NORTON & TOOHEY, 2011, for example) as a landmark in terms of new conceptualizations on identity and its relationship with SL acquisition, SL/FL language learning and teaching. Her widely cited paper (NORTON PEIRCE, 1995) reported some of the results of her longitudinal study with immigrant women in Canada, introducing the concept of investment, which was

subsequently further explained along with the notion of imagined communities in other publications which drew on the same study (NORTON PEIRCE, 1995; 2000; 2013).

Norton's (Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton, 2000; 2001; 2013) works on the changing identities of five immigrant women living in Canada and learning ESL was based on poststructuralist views of language and identity, mainly the works of Bourdieu (1977, 1991) Wenger (1998) and Anderson (1991). Thus, the author views identity as complex, contradictory and as constructed through language. Data collection happened for two years and by means of diaries produced by the five participants, interviews and questionnaires, and the analysis was done in an interpretative way. Norton presents her results while telling the stories and experiences of the five participants: first Eva (from Poland) and Mai (from Vietnam), who were the youngest and single participants; and then Katarina (from Poland), Martina (from the former Czechoslovakia) and Felicia (from Peru), who were older and married with children. The results revealed the women's ambivalent desire to learn and practice English; primarily because they felt they did not belong to the Anglophone social networks with which they had contact and to the communities to which they aspired. As a consequence, they did not practice English outside school as much as they would like, despite the fact that all of them wished to transfer the skills they developed in class to other contexts. Results also showed that the women's anxiety was higher in real time situations which focused on oral skills rather than literacy, essentially because in those cases they had fewer possibilities to retain the locus of control (NORTON PEIRCE, SWAIN & HART, 2003; apud NORTON, 2000) over the rate of the flow of information. In general, results showed that the five participants felt inferior and uncomfortable speaking when they were marginalized, mostly when talking to people with more symbolic or material power, with whom they wished to interact, and sometimes resorted to practices of non-participation in class, as a way to resist such positions of marginality.

Based on her findings, Norton (NORTON PEIRCE, 1995; NORTON, 1997; 2000, 2001) proposed a new view of the concept of identity, drawing on both institutional and community practices. For the author, identities are composed of both social and cultural aspects; they change constantly and dynamically, are complex and contradictory, and are constructed through language, having a strong relationship with larger social practices and power, as well as with classroom practice. In sum, as Norton (2000, p. 5) states, identity refers to "how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that

relationship is structured across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future".

It also relevant to observe that according to Norton (2000; 2001; among others), learners are inserted in and construct their identities in sites of power struggles. In this way, larger structural constraints as well as classroom practices might position students in undesirable ways, making them feel marginalized. Students in turn can affirm their identities by resisting such marginalization in several ways. They can resort to non-participation in class, either by withdrawing from the group or by not engaging in some activities proposed by the teacher (Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton, 2001). Students can also create safe houses in their larger school environments. As Pratt (1992, p. 40) proposes safe houses are "social and intellectual spaces where groups can constitute themselves as horizontal, homogeneous, sovereign communities with high degrees of trust, shared understandings, temporary protection from legacies of oppression". In this way, students can create sites where they can feel safe to express and negotiate their desires and identities.

Additionally, based on her empirical study, Norton (NORTON PEIRCE, 1995; NORTON, 1997; 2000; 2001) also associates the concept of identity to the notions of investment and imagined communities, which are presented as follows.

The concept of investment was developed by Norton (NORTON PEIRCE, 1995; NORTON 1997; 2000; 2001), based on Bourdieu's (1977; 1991) conception of cultural capital. Contrary to notions of motivation which had been prevalent in SLA research until the 90s, the construct of investment recognizes "the socially and historically constructed relationship of learners to the target language and their often ambivalent desire to learn and practice it" (NORTON PEIRCE, 1995, p. 9). From this point of view, the language learner is not conceptualized as being detached from his/her sociohistorical context, on the contrary, s/he is conceived as "having a complex social history and multiple desires" (NORTON PEIRCE, 1995, pp. 17-18) and as "having a complex identity, changing across time and space, and reproduced in social interaction" (NORTON, 2010, p. 354).

Moreover, for Norton (2010), when learners invest in learning a SL, i.e., when they commit to learning a SL, they do it with the hope to increase the value of their cultural capital, that is, they hope to acquire both symbolic resources (language, friendship, education and religion) and material resources (capital goods, real estate and money). For example, the participants in Norton's study (NORTON PEIRCE, 1995; NORTON, 1997;

2000; 2001) invested in the English language in different ways. They all took a course in ESL, but Mai, Katarina and Felicia quit the course after a while because they felt they were marginalized in class. The five women also invested in speaking practices outside the classroom, either in their work places (Mai, Martina, Eva, Katarina, Felicia), or in language exchanges that were part of their daily lives and chores (Martina, Mai). They all invested in the English language hoping to be able to get inserted in the Canadian society and to improve both their and their families' cultural capital (BOURDIEU, 1977; 1981).

Furthermore, according to Norton (2013), investing in the target language also means an investment in the learners' own identity, as learning a language does not presuppose only the exchange of information by speakers, on the contrary, it also promotes the constant (re)organization of the learner's sense of him/herself and how s/he relates to world. Therefore, there is a profound connection between a learner's investment in language learning and his/her identity. In the case of Norton's (NORTON PEIRCE, 1997; NORTON, 2013) participants, their investments were mainly related to the fact that they wanted to be recognized as Canadian citizens, rather than just immigrants. Moreover, Eva believed she had the same possibilities as other Canadians and invested in her multicultural identity; Mai resisted the patriarchal structure of her family; Katarina associated herself with her professional identity as a teacher; Martina had the role of a caregiver at home; and Felicia reinforced her identity of a wealthy Peruvian.

Based on the works of Lave and Wanger (1991), Wenger (1998) and Anderson (1991), Norton (NORTON PEIRCE, 1995; NORTON, 2000; 2001; 2006; 2010; 2013; among others) associates the term imagined communities to SL learning. As Kanno and Norton (2003, p. 241) define, "imagined communities refer to groups of people, not immediately tangible and accessible, with whom we connect through the power of the imagination". In this way, influential individuals, the government and media, among others, contribute to the creation of a learner's imagined community, which extends beyond the language classroom. In addition, imagined communities are generally both a reconstruction of the learner's past communities and relationships and his/her imaginative projections for the future. From Norton's (NORTON PEIRCE, 1997; NORTON, 1997; 2000; 2001) participants, for instance, Eva was the only one who seemed to believe that she already belonged to her imagined community, which was related to Anglophone networks in Canada. The other women (Mai, Katarina, Martina and Felicia) still wished to have access to their imagined communities. Mai hoped to belong to a community in which she

could be seen as a language broker as a way to escape her traditional family structure; Katarina hoped to have access to a community of professionals since she had been a teacher in Poland; and Felicia wished to connect with the Peruvian community, which was easier for her to access since she was wealthy in Peru.

It is relevant to mention that although imagined communities do not exist, and may be very different from the daily life reality, they are not perceived as unreal by the learner and can have a strong impact on the learner's actions and investments (NORTON, 2001). Such communities, as the author explains, exert a large impact on second language learning and on the learners' investment in the language s/he is learning.

Finally, Kanno and Norton (2003) also argue that the existence of an imagined community presupposes the existence of an imagined identity, as well, and thus, it is essential to comprehend a learner's identity not only in terms of his/her investment in the 'real' world, but also in terms of his/her investment in possible worlds, that is, in his/her imagined community.

Norton's main contributions with her work were to propose a new way to understand identity in SL acquisition, besides developing the concept of investment, instead of motivation, and the view that learners have imagined communities to which they aspire. It is important to highlight the fact that Norton's (1997; 2000; 2001, among others) concepts of investment and imagined communities were developed based on a study she carried out in a SL context (as explained in the next section, there are some studies which applied Norton's constructs to FL contexts as well).

The notion of identity as proposed by Norton (NORTON PEIRCE, 1997; NORTON, 2000; 2001, among others) which combines the concepts of identity, along with language, investment and imagined communities, is more encompassing and thus provides a better understanding of the subtleties ingrained in the formation of the subject in the contemporary world.

5. Identity and language learning: empirical studies

As mentioned before, there is a growing body of research focusing on identity and language teaching and learning in the recent years, especially with studies which focus on teachers' or student-teachers' identities (HA, 2009; CLEMENTE & HIGGINS, 2008; MASTRELLA DE ANDRADE & NORTON, 2011; SILVA, 2013; GIL & OLIVEIRA, 2014; for example), and studies on students' identities in SL contexts, in many cases with

immigrants (NORTON, 2000; LAM, 2000; SKILTON-SYLVESTER, 2002; PAN & BLOCK, 2011; for instance).

However, these studies about teachers' and student-teachers identity leave students and the role of their identity in the teaching/learning process aside. The few studies which focus on learners tend to be about learners in SL contexts only, such as the influential work of Norton (NORTON PEIRCE, 1995; NORTON, 2000, 2013). Publications on students' identity and language learning in FL or AL contexts are even scarcer and include the studies which were chosen to be reviewed here (KINGINGER, 2004; KEARNEY, 2004; LONGARAY, 2005; 2009B; CARAZZAI, 2013; PAN & BLOCK, 2011; GAO, 2005; LAM, 2000; GRIGOLETTO, 2000; GADIOLI, 2012). These studies were selected because they were carried out in either FL or AL contexts and also because they draw on poststructuralist theories of language learning and identity. The review focuses first on the studies by Kearney (2004), Kinginger (2004), Longaray (2005; 2009b) and Carazzai (2013), since the five of them draw mainly on the work of Norton (Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton, 2997; 2000; 2001, among others), and then the other five other investigations are summarized, Pan and Block (2011), Gao (2005), Lam (2000), Grigoletto (2000) and Gadioli (2012).

Kinginger (2004) offers a report of a longitudinal study with an American learner studying French as a FL both in USA and in an immersion course in France, focusing on her shifting identity and her imagined community. The study is based on poststructuralist theory, mainly on the work of Norton, thus conceptualizing identity as fluid and complex. Data was collected by means of interviews, journal writing, e-mails and letters exchanged with Alice, the participant, for a period of four years, and the analysis was done in an interpretative way. The findings indicated that as Alice was from a working class family and without privileges, she invested in her learning of French in an attempt to break free from such conditions, in a bid for a better life. Moreover, she imagined France as a place filled with refined and cultured people, with interest in her. Because Alice did not feel that she had enough practice in class, she often did not participate and eventually decided to abandon the course to focus on speaking practices that she found in informal contexts. Despite her ambivalence during the learning process, Alice invested in the French language with the hope to have access to knowledge and culture and to become a teacher, as this was her professional aspiration, increasing thus her cultural capital

(Bourdieu, 1977; 1991). In return, she hoped to be able to share her knowledge with others, and saw her learning of French as a mission.

Kearney (2004) presents the results of an exploratory study which aimed at showing evidences that three FL learners formed a new identity while learning French, as well as the kinds of resources they drew upon as learners. The author also bases her study on poststructuralist theories of identity, mainly the work of Norton (1997; 2000; 2001, among others) and understands identity as a complex individual factor that influences language learning. Moreover, she follows a socio-constructivist interpretation of language and identity, in which identity is considered as being multi-faceted, dynamic, complex, and negotiated by individuals in linguistic interactions. So as to account for this elaborate concept, the author adopts ethnographic methods to data generation, which include field notes, interviews, students' works, questionnaires and documents related to the course. By means of interpretative analysis, Kearney identifies the students' 'identity narratives' (based on PAVLENKO & BLACKLEDGE, 2004) and finds that each student drew on a different kind of resource in order to deal with the activity of learning French, such as work and parenthood experience, curiosity and sense of humor, and developing theories of language learning. The results also indicated that since the beginning of the course, the learners were shaping and reshaping their identities.

In the Brazilian context, Longaray (2005; 2009b) conducted two studies on students' identities and EFL which draw on the work of Bonny Norton. The author approaches identity and English language learning conceptualizes identity from a poststructural point of view, i.e., as multiple and changing over time and space Norton (Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton, 2001, among others).

In the first study, Longaray (2005) reports on her contact with one group of 41 EFL students in a public school in Rio Grande do Sul taught by one teacher, and on the continuous process of their identities construction inside the classroom. As a participant researcher, Longaray (2005) collected data during six months by class observation and field notes, she also collected the teacher's diaries, participating collaboratively in class, and video-recorded some classes, conducted interviews, applied a questionnaire and conducted reflective sessions with the students based on the recorded classes. Data was analyzed in a qualitative way, taking into consideration the constructs of identity, imagined communities, investment and non-participation (Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton, 2001, among others). Longaray (2005) found that the students had different types of investment in the

learning of English and also that the students developed resistance towards the English language which was apparent by means of non-participation in class. In summary, the author shows how the students reproduced or confronted ideological and cultural values which were incorporated to the English language, while having classes.

In her second study, Longaray (2009b) also reports on her contact with another group of EFL students (39 this time) in the same public school in Rio Grande do Sul, taught by the same teacher from the first study. However, this time, the author focused not only on identity and investment, but mainly on the students' relationship with English as a global language. Similarly to what happened in the first study, the author collected data during six months by class observation and field notes, besides collecting the teacher's diaries, participating collaboratively in class, video-recording some classes, conducting interviews, applying a questionnaire and conducting reflective sessions with the students based on the recorded classes. However, this time, due to health problems, the teacher in charge of the group had to be absent several days and requested the researcher to teach the group in her absence, which characterized the study as action-research. The author found that students had an ambivalent desire to learn and practice English, often demonstrated by their non-participation in class. Also, the results showed that the participants of the study associated the English language with better economic opportunities and development. Based on her findings, the author proposes the reassessment of the hegemonic power of the English language in Brazilian schools, at the same time that she defends the students' rights to have access to the language.

Carazzai (2013) presents a qualitative study on the process of identity (re)construction of six Brazilian English language learners, based mainly on Norton's (2001, 2006) concepts of investment and imagined communities. Data were generated with six students taking the undergraduate degree in Letras-Inglês and included class observation, field notes, a student profile form, a written narrative, an open questionnaire, among others. The interpretative analysis showed that the participants went through a process of identity (re)construction while learning English; that the participants invested in learning English since their childhood, hoping to acquire material and/or symbolic resources and that the participant's imagined communities were related to people with whom the they wished to connect through English, including the virtual world, people with more power, experience, knowledge and/or status, and who respect and value diversity. The results also showed that the students participated more in class when they felt

confident and validated, and resorted to non-participation when they were positioned in undesirable ways. Finally, all students wished to relate to the world through the English language, but often felt marginalized and separated from other speakers and users of the language.

The studies by Kearney (2004), Kinginger (2004), Longaray (2005; 2009b) and Carazzai (2013) draw on the work of Norton on language learners' identities (NORTON 2001; 2013; among others), and apply Norton's concepts of identity, investment and imagined communities, which were originally developed based on a SL context, to FL contexts in which the language under study was not extensively used on a daily basis (RICHARDS & SCHMIDT, 2002), demonstrating that such application is possible. The four studies demonstrated that students' identities changed and were constructed throughout language. Moreover, the results of the four investigations showed that students have an ambivalent desire to learn and practice the target language and that they invest in the target language with the hope to have access to their imagined communities.

Still focusing on students learning language and how they (re)constructed themselves through the target language, there are the works of Pan and Block (2011), Gao (2005), Lam (2000), Grigoletto (2000), and Gadioli (2012).

Pan and Block (2011) discuss the notion of English as a global language, by investigating the beliefs of EFL students and teachers in six universities in China. The authors refer to the work of Pajares (1992) on beliefs and also to works on English as a global language, mainly based on linguistic system theory and on the instrumental values of English. The paper does not focus on identity directly, and thus does not offer conceptualization for the term; however, the views expressed by the participants account for the role of English in their lives and their experiences. The paper is based on one of researchers' PhD thesis and data was collected with one closed questionnaire and interviews with 53 university teachers and 637 students in six universities in Beijing; and the analysis was done both in quantitative and qualitative ways. The results indicate that most students and teachers believed English had an instrumental value which can bring more and better opportunities for individuals and for the country. The English language was also assumed as a qualification for employment, career and education development.

The work by Gao (2005) investigates, in a biographical way, the development of two Chinese EFL students' learning approaches in different educational settings in mainland China. In terms of theoretical construct, although the author discusses the fact that the

learners went through an identity crisis, there is no direct reference to the term identity in the review presented. Nevertheless, it is possible to infer that identity is seen as non monolithic and to acknowledge the existence of differences which are associated to the interactions that happen in small contexts (HOLLIDAY, 1996), rather than national or ethnic ones, avoiding thus stereotyping and essentialism. The data was collected by means of two interviews with two Chinese students taking an undergraduate course in a college in China. The analysis followed grounded theory and the participants revealed their learning experiences, difficulties and the impact of their learning styles on their self-perceptions, as well as on their perceptions of the English language. The results showed that the students' learning style was influenced by several aspects, including the identity crisis through which the participants went, when they felt threatened by a highly competitive educational context. Additionally, the results indicated that the English language was seen as a way to gain more social status and to have better economical, professional and educational opportunities.

Lam (2000) focused on an immigrant Chinese student, who was learning English in the USA, to verify how the student constructed his identity at the same time that he developed his literacy, by engaging in computer mediated communication. The author bases her study on poststructuralist concepts of identity and voice, as well as on how these can be constructed through computer mediated communication. The study presented is part of an ethnographic project with a group of immigrant teenagers in the USA. Despite the fact that the participant was an immigrant learner in the USA, he did not have much contact with the American community, since he lived in a Chinese community and studied in a bilingual Chinese/English school. In this way, the smaller context in which the student was inserted was more similar to a FL context, than to a SL context. Data was collected with one participant, Almon, by means of participant observation, interviews, and data from the student's computer which included his activities. The analysis was both thematic and also interactional, besides following critical discourse analysis methods. The findings indicated that Almon used computer games and the internet in order to be in contact with pop culture and everyday English, rather than the standard one he was exposed to in class. In this way, he constructed his identity as a member the World Wide Web community he aspired to.

In Brazil, Grigoletto (2000) explored the discourse of some public school students about learning and knowing EFL. The author follows French discourse analysis which

considers the subject as being heterogeneous, dispersed and constituted through history, and proposes that speaking a FL involves changing subject positions and adopting new identifications or affiliations. Data consisted of a corpus of 50 reports written by students in elementary and secondary public schools, as well as interviews with eight of the students. The analysis followed French discourse theories and resulted in the identification of predicaments, or categories. The findings showed that the students believed that they needed to master the English language, which includes being able to speak and understand it well, using the language to communicate, knowing what is taught at school, and knowing it fully, like native speakers, suggesting the myth of the perfect speaker. The results also demonstrated that the students believed that for the students, the ideal place to learn a language is where it is spoken, thus, it is only possible to acquire fluency studying abroad. Finally, the students also believed that it is not possible to learn English in public schools in Brazil, only in private language institutes.

Also in the Brazilian context, Gadioli (2012) investigated, in an ethnographic way, students in a secondary school and how they resisted and accommodated to practices in the English language by means of performativity. He followed poststructuralist and postcolonial notions of identity, language and agency. Also, following Schlatter & Garcez (2009), the author conceives of English as an AL in Brazil, in that it is a language added to the learner's repertoire and used for transnational communication, fostering citizenship in the contemporary world. As such, Gadioli (2012) presents a different perspective from the studies reviewed so far and seems to move forward towards a more de-essentializing view of how languages are taught/learned. In this study, data was collected during one year, with class observation, field notes, interviews and internet corpus, and was analyzed in a qualitative way. The findings indicated that students had multiple practices of agency, by means of resistance and accommodation both in and outside class. For the participants, the English language was a locally constructed linguistic practice, which they often used in information situations, for example, online games, personal blogs and drawings. Moreover, some students tried to please powerful people (such as the father and the teacher), as a way to accommodate to the school practices and belong to them, while others resisted to participate and remained silent during the class, and others still tried to reinvent or reorient themselves so as to increase their cultural capital (BOURDIEU, 1977; 1991). Finally, the results also demonstrated that the students had a utilitarian view of the English language,

as it was seen as a way to have better job opportunities, and imagined a community in which they had more status by using the English language.

The results of these five investigations (PAN & BLOCK, 2011; GAO, 2005; LAM, 2000; GRIGOLETTO, 2000; GADIOLI, 2012) revealed the importance of learning a FL or AL in students' lives, how the experiences they went through while learning the target language (re)shaped their views or identities. Some of the findings also showed that the English language is seen as a utilitarian means to have better opportunities both in the job market and in terms of education. Additionally, the investigations carried out in Brazil also showed that students tend to believe that is not possible to learn English in public schools, and said that in order to develop fluency it is necessary to attend private language institutes or to live abroad, echoing the findings of some studies with teachers and student-teachers (BARCELOS, 1999; FELIX, 1999; COELHO, 2006; TICKS, 2007).

Comparing the results of all the nine studies reviewed in this subsection (KINGINGER, 2004; KEARNEY, 2004; LONGARAY, 2005; 2009b; CARAZZAI, 2013; PAN & BLOCK, 2011; GAO, 2005; LAM, 2000; GRIGOLETTO, 2000; GADIOLI, 2012), it is possible to notice that while studying a FL or AL language, students seem to go through some changes and reshape their identities. These investigations also indicate that language students often feel marginalized both academically and socially, mainly when interacting with people who have more power and who may act as gatekeepers to their imagined communities (to the job market, or the society, educational or governmental institutions). Moreover, the findings of the studies also indicate that learners tend to value the English language for its instrumental value, and tend to have an idealized view of the English language, hoping to have more status in society and more opportunities, especially related to work and career, and a better life as a reward from their learning, in other words, learners hope to increase their cultural capital (BOURDIEU, 1977; 1991).

6.   Final remarks

This article presented a review on the concept of identity, along with investment and imagined communities, besides summarizing some empirical studies on identity in the language classroom conducted both in Brazil and abroad.

As previously noted, research on identity and language learning is still limited, in that it tends to focus on teachers' and student-teachers' identities, mainly in Brazil, or on students' identities in SL contexts. In this way, it is suggested that more studies on identity

and language learning are carried out taking into account contexts in which the language in focus is an additional or foreign one.

Moreover, most studies tend to focus on individuals and their stories, without examining the contexts in which they were inserted very thoroughly, thus leaving aside the macro analysis of participants' identities. Therefore, studies that focus on students' identities in relation to their educational and community contexts comprehensively are necessary, so as to give an account of both individual aspects and contextual aspects of students' identities and language learning.

Finally, in regards the Brazilian context more specifically, studies tend to follow theories of identity and language learning which were developed based on investigations carried out in ESL contexts (NORTON, 2001, among others). Since language learning contexts play an important role in students' identities, theoretical conceptualizations should take into account the different contexts and realities students are inserted in. In this way, understand that Brazilian scholars need to theorize on identity and language learning based on the local contexts, taking students, teachers, schools and society into consideration. This is a big enterprise that needs to be done in conjunction by several Brazilian authors, and considering the findings of several studies conducted in Brazil.

References

ANDERSON, B. *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. New York: Verso, 1991.

BARCELOS, A. M. F. Reflexões sobre a prática como fonte de temas para projetos de pesquisa para a formação de professores de LE. In de Almeida Filho J. C. P. (Ed.) *O professor de língua estrangeira em formação*. (pp. 157-175). Campinas: Pontes, 1999.

BLOCK, D. The rise of identity in SLA research, post Firth and Wagner (1997). *The Modern Language Journal*, *91*, 863–876, 2007).

BOURDIEU, P. *Language and symbolic power*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991.

BOURDIEU, P. The economics of linguistic exchanges. *Social Science Information*, *16*(6), 645-668, 1977.

CARAZZAI, M. R. P. *The process of identity (re)construction of six Brazilian English language learners: a poststructuralist qualitative study*. 2013. Tese (Doutorado em Inglês) - Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, Florianópolis. Disponível em: <http://tede.ufsc.br/teses/PPGI0005-T.pdf>. Acesso em: 07 jun. 2014.

CLEMENTE, A. & HIGGING, M. J. *Performing English with a post-colonial accent: ethnographic narratives from Mexico*. London: Lightning Source, 2008.

COELHO, H.S.H. "É possível aprender inglês na escola?" Crenças de professores sobre o ensino de inglês em escolas públicas. In: Barcelos, A.M.F. & Abrahão, M.H.V. (orgs) Crenças e Ensino de Línguas: foco no professor, no aluno e na formação de professores. Campinas, SP: Pontes, 2006.

FERNANDES, A. E. P. ; BORGES, T. D. A reconstrução identitária dos professores do PECPLI. In: barcelos, a.m.f. & coelho, H.S.H. (Orgs.). *Emoções, reflexões, e (trans)for(ações de alunos, professores e formadores de professores de línguas*. (pp. 101-124). Campinas: Pontes, 2010.

FOUCAULT, M. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, (Ed.) Colin Gordon, Harvester, London, 1980.

GADIOLI, I. *Práticas subversivas na escola pública: resistência e acomodação na agência de alunos dentro e fora da aula de inglês*. 2012. Dissertação (Mestrado em Linguística), Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina. Disponível em: http://www.tede.ufsc.br/teses/PLLG0517-D.pdf. Acesso em 08 junho 2011

GAO, X. *A tale of two mainland Chinese English learners*. Asian EFL Journal, *7*(2), 1-20, 2005.

GIL, G. ; OLIVEIRA, C. C. *Investment and imagined communities: A narrative analysis of the identity construction by student-teachers of English. Calidoscópio, vol. 12, n. 2, p. 191-201, mai/ago, 2014.*

GRIGOLETTO, M. Representação, identidade e aprendizagem de língua estrangeira. *Claritas*, *6*, 37-47, 2000.

HA, P. L. English as an international language: international student and identity formation. *Language and intercultural communication*, *9*(3), 201-214, 2009.

HALL, S. *A identidade cultural na pós-modernidade*. 11. ed. Rio de Janeiro: DP&A, 2006.
KANNO, Y., NORTON, B. (Eds.). Imagined communities and educational possibilities [Special Issue]. *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education*, 2(4), 2003.

KEARNEY, E. Negotiating identity as a beginning foreign language learner. *Working papers in educational linguistics*, *20*(1), 47-69, 2004.

KIRGINGER, C. Alice doesn't live here anymore: foreign language learning and identity reconstruction. In: Pavlenko, A. & Blackledge, A. (Eds.). (2004). *Negotiation of identities in multilingual contexts*. (pp. 219-242). Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters, 2004.

LAM, W. S. E. L2 literacy and the design of the self: A case study of a teenager writing on the internet. *TESOL Quarterly*, *34*(3), 457-482, 2000.

LAVE, J.; WENGER, E. *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

LONGARAY, E. A. *Globalização, antiimperialismo e o ensino de inglês na era pós-moderna*. 2009. Tese (Doutorado Letras) - Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul. Disponível em: http://www.lume.ufrgs.br/bitstream/handle/10183/16893/000707061.pdf?sequence=1. Acesso em: 07 jun. 2014.

LONGARAY, E. A. *Identidades em construção na sala de aula de língua estrangeira*. 2005. Dissertação (Mestrado em Letras) - Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul. Disponível em: http://www.lume.ufrgs.br/bitstream/handle/10183/10973/000468514.pdf?sequence=1. Acesso em: 07 jun. 2014.

MASTRELLA-DE-ANDRADE, M. R.; NORTON, B. Querer é poder? Motivação, identidade e aprendizagem de língua estrangeira. In: M. R., Mastrella-de-Andrade (Org.) (2011). *Afetividade e emoções no ensino/aprendizagem de línguas: Múltiplos olhares*. (pp. 89-114). Campinas, SP: Pontes Editores, 2011.

NORTON PEIRCE, B. Social identity, investment, and language learning. *TESOL Quarterly, 29*(1), 9-31, 1995.

NORTON, B. *Identity and language learning: Extending the conversation*. 2nd Edition. Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 2013.

NORTON, B. *Identity and language learning: Gender, ethnicity and educational change*. Harlow, England: Longman/Pearson Education, 2000.

NORTON, B. Identity as a sociocultural construct in second language education. *TESOL in Context* [Special Issue], *1*, 22-33, 2006.

NORTON, B. Non-participation, imagined communities, and the language classroom. In M. Breen (Ed.), *Learner contributions to language learning: New directions in research* (pp. 159-171). Harlow, England: Pearson Education, 2001.

NORTON, B., & TOOHEY, K. Identity and language learning. In R. B. Kaplan (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of applied linguistics* (pp. 115-123). New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

PAN, L.; BLOCK, D. English as a "global language" in China: An investigation into learners' and teachers' language beliefs. *System*, *39*, 391-402, 2011.

RICENTO, T. Considerations of identity in L2 Learning. In E. Hinkel (Ed). *Handbook of research on second language Teaching and learning*. (pp. 895-911). Mahwah, NJ. Lawrence Erlbaum, 2005.

RICHARDS, J.C. & SCHMIDT, R. *Longman dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*. London, Longman, 2002.

SILVA. J. F. S. The construction of English teacher identity in Brazil: a study in Mato Grosso do Sul. 2013. 261 F. Tese (Doutorado em Inglês: Estudos Linguísticos e

Literários) – Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, Florianópolis, 2013. Disponível em: http://tede.ufsc.br/teses/PPGI0004-T.pdf . Acesso em 15 dezembro 2015.

SKILTON-SYLVESTER, E. Should I stay or should I go? Investigating Cambodian women's participation and investment in adult ESL programs. *Adult Education Quarterly*, *23*(1), 9-26, 2002.

TICKS, L. K. O perfil identitário do professor de inglês pré-serviço subjacente a narrativas de história de vida. In 4TH INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON GENRE STUDIES. 2007, Tubarão- SC. Proceedings…2007. Diponível em < http://www3.unisul.br/paginas/ensino/pos/linguagem/cd/Port/73.pdf>. Acesso em 01 julho 2011.

WEEDON, C. Feminist practice and poststructuralist theory (2nd Edition). Oxford: Blackwell, 1997.

WENGER, E. *Communities of practice: learning, meaning, and identity*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

WILLIAMS, J. *Understanding poststructuralism*. Chesham: Acumen Publishing, 2005.