

# **Critical Acts of Becoming in Teacher Practicum: Evidence from Student-Teacher Memoir of Apprenticeship in Public Schools in Rio de Janeiro**

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“Many were the questions that forced me to a reflection about the type of teacher that I intend to be and about the teacher identity that I observe myself to be constructing”.  
(Barbara)

## **Abstract**

*In times of several criticisms of free public schooling and resistance to social and authorial transformation of teacher and teaching education, a dialogical and critical perspective towards teacher education has become of paramount relevance. By looking at student-teacher memoirs of formation, the researchers examine transformative movements of becoming, in student-teacher narratives in apprenticeship, in public schools of Rio de Janeiro. By aligning critical pedagogy to a socio interactional perspective to narrative discourse of formation, we examine how student-teachers, in process of becoming teachers, view their transformative experiences in public schools during their apprenticeship. Although students depict resistance and difficulty in understanding their own roles, the place of teaching practice, as well as the role of the public schooling in Rio de Janeiro, our data demonstrates the transformation of their prejudice and pre-conceived notions of public schooling and teaching into a proactive and transformative understanding of students’*

*social role as teachers to be. Another key element which we can draw from our discursive analysis, as part of student-teacher reflection and evaluation, is the demonstration of the significance of the institutional roles of public school as a means of providing equal access to free education. Finally, the results indicate that the development of critical knowledge by all students can be considered as an equal civil right and a State obligation as reflected through the narratives analyzed in this paper.*

**Keywords:** *Critical Education; Teacher Education Apprenticeship; Narrative Studies; Memoirs; Discourse Analysis*

## **Introduction**

Brazilian author and geographer Milton Santos (2000) used to point that, in the globalized world, everything is constructed through discourse. In the field of teacher education, this perspective could not be less paradigmatic. The education of future teachers involves the apprehension of different discourses and discursive practices. We learn to be teachers through discourse, participating in discursive practices in school, at the university, and in other different environments, by dealing with multiple perspectives of what a teacher is and how to teach, among other social constructions involving education.

Besides, it is through discourse that teachers apprehend specific educational cultures, not only at their courses in universities and schools, where they develop their apprenticeship, or through participating in diverse communities of practice and social environments, but also through exchanges within different

platforms at the internet. It is then a complex myriad of practices, positionings in different contexts that must be critically developed for a student-teacher to feel s/he is ‘becoming a teacher’.

In this research, we focus on understanding specific experiences of the apprenticeship of three different student-teachers through their narratives of participation in their apprenticeships in different public schools. Our approach is oriented by a socio interactional perspective of discourse, as well as by critical pedagogy. Through a socio interactional perspective of discourse, we understand that discourse is not only a means of communication, but also a means of social practice in which people deal - among other aspects of social world - with identity construction and power relations. This means that, as Fairclough (1992, p. 63) highlights, “discourse is a mode of action, one form in which people may act upon the world and especially upon each other, as well as a mode of representation”. By also dialoguing with a critical pedagogy perspective, we understand that education is not a neutral or objective territory, but a place of conflict, shaped within social interactions.

As shown by Hawkins and Norton (2009, p. 33), “a key focus of critical teacher educators is to promote critical awareness in their teacher-learners by raising consciousness about the ways in which power relations are constructed and function in society (...).” In this perspective, we understand that the analysis of the narratives brought to this research can promote critical awareness of important issues of teacher education. Although centered around experiences of students in the city of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, we believe that some insights of this research could also address worldwide issues, related to the experience of teachers immersed in apprenticeship processes.

## **The Steps of Becoming Teachers in Practicum: A General Path of our Students**

As a starting point, we think it is important to briefly describe the structure of the course in which our students are enrolled. In Brazil, the Practicum is a pre-requisite for a student-teacher who wants to participate in teaching practice both in public and private schools. Even though many private language courses may not demand the Practicum, due to marketplace's pressure, many employers prefer to hire teachers that have graduated as certified teachers, that is, those who have finished their 'Licenciatura' (Licenciature) courses.

At the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, future language teachers must be enrolled in a Letters College in partnership with the Education College, taking part in a 400-hour apprenticeship. This involves experience in the Portuguese language and in a foreign one, so to be able to graduate as a basic school teacher. Depending on the undergraduate course of their choice, the latter can mean teaching from elementary school to high school.

In the specific case of language students, according to the current legislation, graduates will be able to teach our equivalent to junior-high and high school (or 6<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade and 3 years of high school). The research described in this paper, then, reflects our students' experiences while participating in apprenticeship in public school through narrative memoirs written at the end of such experience, either in Junior High-School, High-School, or in both of them.

In other words, to complement their undergraduate degree in teaching, students are required to take courses in psychology of education, sociology of education, philosophy, didactics, Brazilian educational system and legislation, introduction to Brazilian sign language (LIBRAS in Portuguese) and the specific

methodology classes for their degrees (in the cases we depict here, our students are also enrolled in Portuguese/literature didactics and English didactics). Also, it is relevant to mention the fact that, by legislation, all students enrolled in a Letters Course will be double major students, that is, their diplomas will give them the right to teach both Portuguese and English, or another language of their choice (i.e. French, Italian, German, Spanish).

Another important element of the practice is that, since this specific course takes at least 18 months to be completed at formal schools, all student-teachers are stimulated to take active part in all activities at school, from regular classes and events, to teacher meetings and other school practices. Although there is a specific limit on the number of hours (240 hours in a school, out of 400 hours in total) that our students must complete in the classroom, the Practicum is usually divided in three parts.

Those include observation, co-participation (which may include among others, materials development, monitoring of students, correction of exercises, and tests), and the actual teaching of at least one class in each language in which students are majoring; in our case, one Portuguese/literature class and an English class. To add up to the 400 hours, students have 60 hours of practicum with the practicum professor (supervisor), and an extra semester (100 hours), which must be completed in non-formal educational sites.

### **Narratives as a Form of Social Construction**

Narrative is a central genre both for oral and written discourse. The perspective of narrative dealt with, is mostly based on the studies of Labov and Waletzky (1967), Labov (1972), Mishler (1999), and Bruner (1996).

The studies of Labov and Waletzky (1967) and those of Labov (1972) provide important theoretical perspectives on the structure of narrative discourse, qualifying it as method to recapitulate past experiences and characterized by a structure containing a temporal sequence, a point, an introduction, a development, and an evaluation.

The works of Mishler (1999) provide insights through which the narrative is understood as a social construction, involving aspects such as ethics, justice, and social (in) equalities. Mishler (2002) also stresses that the production of narrative is highly dependent on the audience and is conducted by a perspective of the present, which means the moment in which it is told (not only based on past perspectives).

Bruner (1997), on the other hand, acknowledges the importance of the apprehension of narratives in the processes of gaining abilities to participate in the social world, which is an important process for children of any society. Bruner (1996) also highlights the importance of the apprehension of narratives in different educational process.

In this research, we believe that the analysis of narratives of written discourses of memoirs can provide insights on how students construct their professional identities in their apprenticeships, as well as how we - as teacher educators responsible for similar groups of students- can better deal with their experiences and provide support to their formation which, in many ways, can be a challenging endeavour.

Narrative analysis also provides possibilities for comprehending how student-teachers deal with aspects of their apprenticeships, which are not always ‘visible’ to their teacher educators - or even to themselves at the beginning of their teaching practice courses. That is, in the process of writing about their experiences, students write about issues that were not always clear while participating in apprenticeship, but which may acquire new meanings as the writing and reflective processes take place. We shall detail some of these elements in our below analysis.

### **Written Memoir as a Form of Construction and Reflection Upon the Experience in Apprenticeship**

The practice of constructing a narrative memoir constitutes a very important exercise of reflection upon the process of apprenticeship. As argued by Wortham (2001, p. 157), “[t]he opportunity to tell stories about their lives can help autobiographical narrators establish a coherent sense of who they are”. In this perspective, reading and analysing a memoir of a student is to try to understand how one positions himself/herself in the world and to dialogue with the possible consequences of his/her choices.

In our work as teacher educators, asking students to produce a memoir is part of a broader process in which students can valor their experiences and memories, and critically reflect in a transformative way upon these experiences. This is important in different ways, but particularly important in the sense that it provides a ‘space’ in which students can construct coherent trajectories, reflecting upon the ways that the educational theories they study at the university meet with the everyday classroom practice, where they will eventually work as professional teachers.

### Positioning Theory as a Means to Analyze Critical Processes of ‘Becoming’ in Memoirs

When adopting an interactional perspective to analyse student-teacher construction of identity as a process of critical becoming in written memoirs, we also dialogue with positioning theory (Davies and Harré, 1990; Harré and Langenhove, 1999; Reis, 2012) to discuss how identity is constituted in discourse. Thus, we take into consideration the different contexts in which students reconstruct their experiences to create coherence in discourse, as well as the development of a theoretical and practical dialogue that demonstrates how the experience was relived and evaluated.

As positionings can also be understood as discursive constructions, when we position ourselves in discourse, we also reciprocally position our interactants, in a complementary act that may or may not be symmetrical. This means that

positioning has an interactional, as well as a relational nature, implying still that other characters can be positioned in discourse (even if this other is absent from the immediate context of interaction). This relational and interactional act of positioning is, therefore, an important tool in understanding how student-teachers shape identity in discourse and reflecting upon the apprenticeship experience.

### Interactional Evidential Strategies as a Discursive Means to Analyse Positionings Constructed in Discourse

As part of our socio interactional discursive analysis, we employ a broad view of evidential strategies (Aikhenvald, 2003; Reis, 2012; Nuckolls and Michael, 2014), to depict how positioning is constructed and how narrators signal the way they have acquired such knowledge to their interlocutors.



As Portuguese lacks a formal morphological particle, how knowledge is acquired and reconstructed in discourse is presented through a rich system of evidential strategies, (Chafe, 1986; Mushin, 2001; Aikhenvald, 2003; Reis, 2012), which allows narrators to demonstrate the stances through which they desire to represent their perspectives in discourse. Evidentiality is then an important tool for interactional discourse analysis, since it shows how experience is reconstructed in discourse through the different contexts that narrators put in action while telling their stories - both at macro and micro level.

Evidentiality studies also play an important role in discourse analysis, once it shows how truth, ethics, and responsibility are depicted. According to Paveau (2015), evidentials may not show whether a discursive construction is true or false, but they can demonstrate the writer's or speaker's virtuous dispositions in accounting for his/her discursive construction, and how knowledge was acquired and reconstituted in discourse. But as Paveau (2015, p. 94) points out "evidential marking has, partially and because of an ethical and epistemic concept, an ethical dimension that contributes to the validity of a notion of virtue in discourse".

Due to space constraints, we will briefly mention here that narrators can use different evidential strategies to construct their epistemological stance and to depict how such knowledge was acquired and put into action in narrative construction which demonstrates positioning. Such construction can vary from direct perspective (i.e. seeing, hearing, feeling) and reported speech (or reconstructing, in the context of micro-interaction, voices of others) to universal truths and beliefs (Chafe, 1986; Mushin, 2001; Reis, 2012<sup>1</sup>). It also demonstrates the degree of interaction; in a manner of speaking the standing position the narrator assumes to be in relation to the discursive construction s/he is putting in action in the micro-context of his/her narrative production. Thus,

the way such evidential strategies are constructed demonstrates the possibility of ethical and responsible discourse being constructed by the student-teachers.

### **Data Analysis**

To provide a better perspective of the students' experiences, we are going to analyse in parallel three narrative productions of three different female students, divided into four sections. In the first section, we analyse how they discursively construct the beginning of their experience in their apprenticeship. In the second one, we analyse their views on their relationship with the teachers responsible for their apprenticeship in the schools. Finally, the third section is devoted to the analysis of the description of their relationship with the school students, and to the evaluation of their apprenticeship.

For ethical reasons related to identification, we will attribute pseudonyms to preserve students' anonymity. Furthermore, it is important keep in mind that the extracts of the memoirs analysed in this research are the student-teachers' constructions of their own perspectives towards their processes of becoming teachers. As a method of analysis, we decided to bring three fragments in each section, so as to compare potentially relevant differences and similarities, as well as different perspectives of their experiences.

#### The Beginning of the Apprenticeship

In this first section, we analyse pieces of narratives that can enlighten the kind of thinking, perceptions, and perspectives student-teachers have when they begin their apprenticeship.

At first, it is important to highlight the different contexts in relation to our student-teachers. While Liz<sup>2</sup> writes about her experience in a state school in 2011, Barbara, also writing in 2011, depicts her experience in *Colégio de*

*Aplicação* (Cap - Laboratory School within the University). Pamela, on the other hand, writes about her experience also in CAp, but the year of her apprenticeship occurs in 2012. These differences highlight not only the extension of our corpus, but also how these contexts influence the different perspectives and experiences of our students, briefly heeding for the social-historical contextualisations necessary for the type of analysis in which we are engaged.

### Excerpt 1 – Liz’s Beginning

1	First, it is important to say that when I started my apprenticeship I had no
2	experience at all as a teacher, I had never even taught private classes, so for
3	me everything was very new. In the beginning of my apprenticeship, I felt
4	like a fish out of water, because it was strange to be in a classroom and not
5	just be a student. Until that moment, I had never seen myself performing any
6	other function in a class that was not that of a student, and now as a trainee I
7	had to set the example and have the right posture in the school. <sup>3</sup>

In this first excerpt, Liz positions herself as someone who had never had any teaching experience. She directly constructs the evidence of her positioning, through her own voice as a narrator, ‘confessing’ her inexperience to her interlocutors, and employs, using an interesting formulaic expression [*I felt like a fish out of water*, Line (L.). 3] to highlight her strangeness to the situation. Therefore, although being a Portuguese-English student-teacher, she takes an initial position that can only find some similitude in the ‘opposite’ side of the room [*I had never seen myself performing any other function in a class that was not that of a student*, L. 5, 6].

From this complementary position, which is that of a student; her only experience, as she constructs it; she must develop a student-teacher identity, one that will be ethically different [*I had to give the example and have the right posture in the school*, L. 7]. Although self-positioned as inexperienced, she gives direct evidence of her understanding of a changing identity; one who must assume the responsibility to set the example and put into action an ethical performance in the school.

### Excerpt 2 – Pamela’s Beginning

1	I must confess that I was always a bit afraid of taking the teaching practicum.
2	I had already heard stories about schools in which some undergraduates did
3	their apprenticeships and it is no news for anyone that public teaching in Rio
4	de Janeiro has a complex reality. Therefore, I was already getting prepared
5	for what I would face in my days of apprenticeship.

Pamela’s initial position, on the other hand, is one of fear [L.1]. She positions herself as one who had heard stories (evidenced from paraphrasing other people’s voices and experiences) and constructing for herself ‘a reality’ or representation of such space from hearsay stories and other characters’ voices (only hinted in the story). From that evidence, she reconstructs in the micro context of the narration, a commonplace position that shows ‘a universal/collective belief’, hard to deconstruct at this initial position [*it is no news for anyone that public teaching in Rio de Janeiro has a complex reality*, L. 3, 4].

In following lines, she accepts that positioning also as hers [*Therefore, I was already getting prepared for what I would possibly face in my days of apprenticeship*, L. 5], but still offering her interlocutor the hint that she might

deconstruct this position later in her narrative. This is done by using a hypothetical evidential strategy at the end of the paragraph [*what I would possibly face*, L. 4, 5].

### Excerpt 3 – Barbara’s Beginning

1	Although doing my apprenticeship in CAp <sup>4</sup> did not seem an easy task at first
2	(because of the strikes and personal problems faced by some school teachers
3	during the academic year and the heavy load of activities and number of ours
4	required of student-teachers there), the possibility of doing co-participations
5	and propose activities for these moments was very productive for me.

Barbara’s initial positioning is constructed under a different contextual realisation. The year 2012 (in which she is writing), was a difficult year for Federal schools and universities, due to a long period of federal employees’ strikes. Barbara’s apprenticeship must then be reconstructed in the context of interruptions and setbacks caused by such long teachers’ strikes and other problems [as she evidences in L. 2]. She also positions herself critically in terms of what she perceives as *heavy load of activities and number of hours required of student-teachers there* [L. 3, 4].

Interestingly, however, she recontextualises these hurdles, in the micro-context of her narration. She presents the direct evidence that, despite the negative initial situations, other possibilities [*co-participations and propose activities*, L. 4, 5], made her initial perspective turn into a positive one. This could show her willingness to look critically at the situation in which she was positioned [*the strikes, the heavy load of activities*, L. 2, 4] and construct a teacher-student identity that could be considered both a positive perspective, and a learning opportunity.

This section brings pieces of narrative, which, from different perspectives, are representative of a pattern of the mental framework with which students in general arrive in our courses. They are usually concerned with the amount of time they must dedicate to the apprenticeship, which, nowadays is constituted of 400 hours of apprenticeship by specific educational legislation, but which is subdivided into several teaching and educational activities, of which only 240 hours are performed at a school. It must be said, though, that other teacher educating activities can be assigned, including among others, attending related academic and cultural events, visiting non-formal educational sites, such as libraries, community preparation courses (for college entrance exams), NGOs and secular connected courses that may develop interesting projects in terms of the teaching and learning of languages to underprivileged communities.

### The relationship with Teachers

In this section, we analyse how student-teachers relate their everyday experience with their school teachers or advisers. It is important to notice the different relations constructed by the students, from the standpoint that they are doing their apprenticeship in different schools.

While Liz selected a regular state school to do the apprenticeship, Pamela and Barbara are doing theirs at our CAp. These different contexts help us comprehend how the relations are constructed, depicting the importance of engagement of classroom teachers in aiding student-teachers to construct new understandings and transformative positionings in relation to the apprenticeship. As we understand student-teachers' active engagement in the interaction for a critical teacher becoming process must be framed within an interactive, dialogical and positive agency. Classroom teachers' failure in constructing such a dialogical relationship may make apprenticeship engagement an unfulfilling and demobilizing process. In the following section, we analyse how student-

teachers reconstruct their relations with teachers in the school context.

### Excerpt 1 – Liz

1	Throughout this first semester, I really felt very discouraged and even started
2	to miss some days in the apprenticeship, because I could not see any meaning
3	in what I was doing.
4	Besides, it is important to stress that both school teachers <sup>5</sup> that advised me at
5	school, had very different personalities, because one wanted me to do
6	everything for her, almost asking me to teach in her place. The other one,
7	though, did not allow me to do anything, I could only observe the classes, only
8	a few times she did ask me to do a few things, and even so it was only when
9	she wanted to advance with her schedule, so she could let the students out
10	earlier. I think she did not like to allow her trainees to correct anything or
11	prepare anything for her class, because maybe she did not feel confident and
12	was afraid that we could do something wrong and possibly do her harm.

As we observe in Liz's narrative, she demonstrates her total discouragement with her initial experience in the apprenticeship [L. 1, 3]. She then presents her reasons for her constructed perspective. She positions her classroom teachers in a rather, critical perspective. The first one is evidenced as taking advantage of her presence [L. 4, 5]. The other teacher is positioned as someone who would not allow her to do anything [L. 6, 7], but only take a more passive role as a student-teacher [*I could only observe the classes*, L. 7], and take advantage of her being there. She also constructs criticism towards the classroom teacher's behavior [*because maybe she did not feel confident and was afraid that we could do something wrong and possibly do her harm*, L. 11, 12], but mitigates this strong positioning through the use of the adverbials *maybe* and *possibly*,

and a stance construction through hypothetical language, giving thus room to different interpretations and other hypothetical reasons.

Still, it is important to note that these positionings of others are depicted after the student-teacher introduces her own self-positioning as a belief that she has developed through her own observation and perspective [I think she did not like to allow her trainees to correct anything or prepare anything for her class, L. 8, 10]. In terms of clause parsing, this clause is syntactically located as a main clause to her positioning of other in subordinate position. This sentential organisation seems, however, to construct a certain hierarchy in terms of the types of positions and perspectives constructed in the narrative memoir.

### Excerpt 2 – Pamela

1	During advising, the classroom teacher would elaborate with me
2	and another student-teacher such activities. Another girl and I had
3	active participation in everything that happened in the classroom,
4	and the activities planned for the trimester, etc. It was great,
5	indeed, to live as that 9 <sup>th</sup> grade junior- high school teacher.

In the above excerpt, Pamela depicts a thoroughly different construction of a student-teacher and her teacher relation. Active agency and a chance for responsible self-positioning are constructed and strongly evidenced, as the narrator brings to the narrative the actions of different characters in her story (the classroom teacher herself and another colleague), as shown in Lines 1 to 4 in this excerpt. Also, it is relevant to note the evaluation of these active roles present at the moment of this interaction [*It was great, indeed, to live as that 9<sup>th</sup> grade junior- high school teacher*, L. 4, 5]. We can still observe that at the end of the excerpt she positions herself as a “teacher”, evidencing the active and agentive role that she could assume in the school as part of her apprenticeship.



**Excerpt 3 – Barbara**

1	One <sup>6</sup> of the teachers that I followed, for instance, used to be quite friendly of
2	the students and avoided activities in which a traditional teacher-student
3	relationship became evident. In general, the students were quite autonomous
4	in classroom, learning in a ludic and meaningful way and they could feel at
5	ease to share their personal lives with the teacher (talk about musical bands
6	that they liked, indicate music and shows, ask for the teacher’s help or try to
7	console him when he seemed to have some personal problem). That,
8	however, would not hinder that students faced the teacher with respect and
9	understood that the space in the classroom is a space of formal learning.

In the excerpt from Barbara’s memoir, we can see that she puts in action, in the micro context of her narrative, the active positioning of a character in her story; that of a male teacher. She depicts his relationship with the students and how he mingles both personal and professional selves in the context of his teaching [*One<sup>7</sup> of the teachers that I followed, for instance, used to be quite friendly with the students and avoided activities in which a traditional teacher-student relationship became evident*, L. 1-3]. Barbara also positions the students in relation to him, assuming active and dialogic roles towards the teacher, who, despite assuming, in her words, a non-traditional teacher identity, is portrayed as someone who was treated with “respect”. Students are portrayed also as actively understanding the different meanings of the classroom, but specially, as understanding the main social function of the classroom, as a place for learning. Barbara assumes a narrator’s position to evidence the relationship constructed in the classroom and critically evaluates the relationships constructed in the classroom, depicting the teacher’s capability of constructing a dialogic and agentive relation with the students.

In the excerpts above, each of the future teachers bring their perceptions of their relationship with the classroom teacher in the schools. As they do both apprenticeships of Portuguese and English at the same time, we have different constructions, since both English and Portuguese teachers are constructed under different positioning perspectives.

### The Relationship with the Students

In this section, we analyse the relationship that the student-teachers create with classroom students at school, how (un) critically they perceive their actions in the classroom, and how these actions relate to a critical construction of teacher identity, as we have been discussing.

Again, we first analyze Liz's perspective of what she observes in her classroom and how she reconstructs these observations in her narrative memoir. Next, we do the same with Pamela's and Barbara's perceptions.

#### **Excerpt 1 – Liz**

1	During the first months, it was as if I had gone back in time, and
2	seen myself through those students, because I was a trainee in a
3	high school freshman class and there wasn't a long time that I had
4	been there. Soon, I realized that it had always been like that,
	regardless of the students, social class or anything else, most of the
5	students always talked a lot, didn't do homework, didn't pay
6	attention when the teacher explained something, and then asked
7	the teacher to repeat the explanation. Finally, I understood that
8	these are the characteristics present in Brazilian education
9	regardless of social or economic factors.

In this excerpt, Liz again positions herself back to time when she was a student [L. 1, 4], evidencing the reification of a situation she reconstructs in her narrative as repetitive movement, no matter the agents put in action, or the context of the action [L. 3, 7]. This reification of a social situation can be seen both as a lament [*Soon, I realized that it had always been like that*, L. 3, 4], and as a social problem that is widespread throughout the country [*Finally, I understood that these are the characteristics present in Brazilian education regardless of social or economic factors*, L. 7, 9]. This grave perception positions Liz in an awkward situation and brings to the fore the critical reflection of one's possibility of transforming a disadvantageous perspective.

Since the beginning of her narrative, she presents a positioning in which she depicts her lack of room to act, daunted by the amplitude of her action. For her, change seems impossible [*Finally, I understood that these are the characteristics present in Brazilian education regardless of social or economic factors*, L. 7, 8), because she seems to reconstruct this position as something embedded, or totally imbricated in Brazilian culture. Such view puts what she sees under the “characteristics of Brazilian Education”, and she evidences these as a conclusion that can neither be counter-argued, nor be presented as a general truth, since she seems unable to reanalyse or consider it from a different perspective.

**Excerpt 2 – Pamela**

1	Another aspect that called my attention at CAp was also concerned with the
2	relationship between students and teachers. As I said before, I believe both
3	groups must be close and must fight side by side for their collective interests,
4	but without losing respect. Unfortunately, the limits between the relationship
5	teacher/student and friendship, sometimes were crossed. I don't remember
6	any specific case, but in a certain way, I saw students in CAp as having little
7	limits as, for example, they would enter the teacher's room, a space that is
8	"ours" to rest, or sometimes of more work, where students entered without
9	even knocking at the door.

In this excerpt, Pamela tackles one important aspect of social relations at school, one that is related to students' behaviors and discipline. First, she reckons the importance of social action between students and teachers [*I believe both groups must be close and must fight side by side for their collective interests, but without losing respect*, L. 2, 4], evidencing through her own self-positioning the importance of collective actions and mutual respect.

She then presents evidence of cases where she felt the limits of collective action *were crossed*, [L. 5, 9]. Nevertheless, it seems that she is considering two different aspects of education: one that is critical, pertaining to the action for fighting towards social justice issues; and another one that is related to every-day education practice and action. The narrative construction here positions students and teachers in two different domains of social action, demonstrating the complexity of the educational endeavor at school.

**Excerpt 3 – Barbara**

1	One of the aspects that I could observe and that made me reflect a lot during the
2	long time of my apprenticeship, for example, concerns the way teacher and
3	students relate. This has always been a question that intrigued me. I don't think
4	that knowing how to dose friendship and authority is an easy task. Nowadays, it
5	is no longer up to the teacher to keep a distance from the students, in a superior
6	position. At the same turn, teacher and students are not peers. The fact the
7	students come to the classroom with the objective of learning something with
8	the teacher (regardless of the degree of autonomy students might have) seems
9	already evidence to me that there is some kind of hierarchy in the classroom.

In considering teacher-student relations, Barbara's narrative tackles a few important points, which seem crucial to her reflection as a student-teacher. Here, the uneasy relation between friendship and authority is brought into consideration. Taking the stance of reflection upon observation [*One of the aspects that I could observe and that made me reflect a lot during the long time of my apprenticeship*, L. 1, 2], she ponders on understanding this complex relationship, as she puts it. In Lines 4 to 6, she writes *Nowadays, it is no longer up to the teacher to keep a distance from the students, in a superior position*; and in Lines 6 to 9, she observes [*at the same turn, teacher and students are not peers. The fact the students come to the classroom with the objective of learning something with the teacher (regardless of the degree of autonomy students might have) seems already evidence to me that there is some kind of hierarchy in the classroom*].

In that excerpt, Barbara seems to acknowledge the existence of a duality or paradox: while the teacher seems to have lost power in controlling the relationship, she recognises that there is a hierarchy in the relationship. As she

evidences from her direct observations, this is an *intriguing question*, one that critically positions her reflection as part of her becoming a teacher.

### Evaluating the Apprenticeship

As memoirs can be typically characterized within the scope of narrative genres that require writers to construct reflective positionings based on both practical experience and academic knowledge, evaluation sections are one of the main parts of the students' memoirs of apprenticeships. In this section, we analyse some of the students' reflections upon the experience of the apprenticeship and upon the construction of teacher experience per se.

Evaluations are extremely important, because, as pointed by Labov and Waletzky (1976) and Labov (1972), they bring narrative experience back to the present so that narrators can reflect on its present meaning and perspectives to actors who took part in the story. It is relevant, in the sense that it presents the resulting actions of the apprenticeship to the readers, since student-teachers are required, as part of their final assessment, to produce an evaluative piece for the whole process of the apprenticeship.

Therefore, although student-teachers are free to write about what they feel it is important in the apprenticeship, to stress the fact that the student-teachers are writing to an ultimate reader, their practicum supervisor, who is going to assess their memoir. In this sense, it must be said that we, as practicum supervisors, do not consider whether we agree with the content of students' positioning or not, but whether the latter were able to reflect upon the experience and critically position themselves on how and what they have experienced from the apprenticeship.

In this section, then, we look at how narrators put into perspective their evaluation of the apprenticeship experience in their narrative memoirs.

### Excerpt 1 –Liz’s Evaluation

1	It is important to observe that at the end of my apprenticeship I was already
2	familiarized with the students and felt at ease in the classroom. In other words, I
3	didn’t see myself only as a student. I believe that all this process was of extreme
4	importance during my own teaching class, because I didn’t feel insecure or the
5	need to practice a thousand times for the class I was going to teach. Both classes
6	that I taught flowed naturally and in a very pleasant environment, and what was
7	most gratifying of all was to hear the students complimenting me at the end of
8	the class, saying that I explain things very well, that my hand-out was great, and
9	that they had understood all the content matter. I believe that there is no better
10	feeling than what I felt at that moment, and so I could perceive how much that
11	year of apprenticeship had been productive and crucial for my life both
12	professionally and for my maturing as a person.

Liz’s final evaluation of her practicum demonstrates a different positioning from what she had presented in previous excerpts. She positions herself as someone who does not feel *only as a student* [L. 3]. She evidences, as a private personal stance, that she did not feel insecure, a position, which, in the beginning of her narrative, she had attributed to her teacher [excerpt 2, Liz]. Important to stress is also the fact that she understands her position as an active one, and also as someone who felt comfortable in class [*Both classes that I taught flowed naturally and in a very pleasant environment, and what was most gratifying of all was to hear the students complimenting me at the end of the class, saying that I explain things very well, that my hand-out was great, and that they had understood all the content matter*, L. 6, 10].

She finally analyses her experience as transformative and productive [*crucial for my life both professionally and for my maturing as a person*, L. 11, 12].

From her perspective, she could perform well in teaching her class in the sense that she narrates that she could do the procedures in an effective way, and uses students' voices, as reported speech, to evidence her agency in teaching [*what was most gratifying of all was to hear the students complimenting at the end of the class, saying that I explain things very well, that my hand-out was great, and that they had understood all the content*, L. 7, 9]. This gives support to her narrative and evaluation once, in the micro context of the interaction, these are uttered by other characters in her narrative, implying that what she has written should not be seen as a brag.

### **Excerpt 2 – Pamela's Evaluation**

1	Overall, my apprenticeship at CAp was very profitable. Despite living in
2	Niterói <sup>8</sup> and having to be in Lagoa <sup>9</sup> for class at 7am twice a week, I could
3	learn a lot. I attended classes from a different perspective, I practiced,
4	pondered, reflected on pedagogic practice together with my classroom
5	teachers, and I think that that made me grow a lot as a person and as a
6	professional. As I said before, I know that the reality in the country's public
7	school is not this one. CAp, despite all infrastructure problems, aside from
8	what I mentioned earlier, is a differentiated school, in which the teacher has
9	room to stop and think about what was good or bad in his/her class. From
10	everything I saw at CAp, what is going to be marked forever is exactly this
11	space for exchange that we had with our classroom teachers during
12	orientations. I can say I was lucky with the teachers I had, because they
13	were always open to discussion, reflection, and different points of view.

In Pamela's evaluation of her apprenticeship, she reconsiders the hurdles of



being in a school far from home at 7am. She presents her reflections and results of her learning in school as *profitable* and mitigates a previous criticism about the ‘reality’ of public school [*As I said before, I know that the reality in the country’s public school is not this one. CAp, despite all infrastructure problems, aside from what I mentioned earlier, is a differentiated school, L. 5, 8*], indicating thus the possibility of constructing a public schooling that is both transformative and concerned with social justice and democracy. She acknowledges the importance of classroom teachers in co-constructing the apprenticeship and providing room *for discussion, reflection, and different points of view*, [L. 12, 13].

Indeed, CAp is a special school, but one that considers its transformative role in constructing democracy through their agents’ social participation in school tasks. Pamela seems to understand this significance and positions herself as a student-teacher who seems to embrace such teaching positionings in school practices.

### **Excerpt 3 –Barbara’s Evaluation**

1	During the process of the apprenticeship, many were the questions that forced me
2	to a reflection about the type of teacher that I intend to be and about the teacher
3	identity that I observe myself to be constructing.
4	I sought, during all the time, to reconcile these reflections with those I was doing
5	in the context of the university. At each new experience in the apprenticeship,
6	new questions imposed themselves, but I was also gaining more confidence and
7	felt more at ease in my practice. That reflected in my own teaching classes, more
8	specifically in the English one, since I could utilize all the repertoire of practices
9	and reflections (including those that came up after my Portuguese teaching class)

10	to think about what I expected from the students and from myself in that class.
11	Now, having finished my apprenticeship at CAp, I understand the importance
12	that such period, allied to other practices, had in my
13	becoming a teacher. But I believe that the process of self-evaluation and
14	reflection about the learning process and the process of citizenry formation of
15	students is not over, and ought to always be part of the routine of those who
16	engage in this career. Therefore, I still do not face my identity as a teacher as
17	being completely formed and hope to always learn with each new experience that
18	I have.

Barbara's final evaluative positioning is deeply reflective of her own process of becoming a teacher and of the practicum's role in this process. Whether this reflects discussions done in class with her fellow colleagues and the practicum supervisor (one of the article's authors), or her own positionings and constructions is discursively intertwined in writing. At any rate, she tries to come to terms with both contexts - school and university – [*I sought, during all the time, to reconcile these reflections with those I was doing in the context of the university*, L. 4, 5], and reconstructs this meaning into her own narrative.

She also attributes new meanings to the importance of the apprenticeship and the value of social justice and transformation through education [*...the learning process and the process of citizenry formation of students is not over, and ought to always be part of the routine of those who engage in this career*, L. 14, 16].

She still positions herself as a teacher 'in the making', maybe acknowledging that the process of becoming, is not only a process that occurs while one is doing the apprenticeship, but a process somehow always in movement, since

teachers are constantly faced with different students and actors in school, as well as with different contextual configurations, both in terms of school organisation and educational policy.

This last part of our analysis presents different perspectives of the end of the apprenticeship, and of the evaluation that students construct from their experiences.

### **Final Considerations and Limitations of Present Research**

Our analyses provided different dimensions of the experience of being/becoming a teacher. We focused our research on the discourse construction of four sub-themes. First, we analysed how the students constructed the beginning of their apprenticeship; following, we reflected upon the way they talked about their relationship with teachers and students and, finally, we discussed how future teachers constructed their evaluative positioning towards their apprenticeship.

Our analyses did not aim at covering other important aspects of their experiences - which we intend to explore in future discussions -, such as the work developed (or not) by the students during the time of their apprenticeship, and the views which they construct about their work in this period. Also, as this paper does not present a case study of one single narrative memoir, this must be borne in mind in terms of its possibility for general comprehension and other methodological validity and reliability of narrative memoir approach to student-teaching apprenticeship.

We believe that the excerpts of the three memoirs, however, could give our readers a sense of the potentialities for use of this discourse genre for reflective

action in teaching practice. As we have demonstrated, student-teachers started out their stories by either doubting or resisting entering the school or even starting apprenticeship in public school. But as they immersed into the practice, they depicted that they had understood the potentials of experiencing the teaching process, which turned out to be transformative of their initial identity

constructions and comprehension of social and power relations in school.

Already, in previous research (Reis and Santos, 2015, p. 53), dealing with the analysis of another memoir, we observed that another student constructed her experience showing that she was able to link theory and practice in her process of becoming a teacher, and that she was also able to cope with problems during the apprenticeship. In this research, we observe a similar paradigm.

The three narrators describe moments of tension in which they had to face problems or, at least, moments of tension and conflict in their apprenticeship, but once they were able to overcome them, they made a choice to be teachers or, at least, carrying on with their process of formation until the end, pondering over their experience with responsibility and ethics, which seems crucial for a transformative relationship in the act of becoming a professional and relating with students and other important actors in the school context. Particularly important, is to highlight the engagement in the apprenticeship process, not as a mere bureaucratic instance, but as a responsible act towards their current and future actions.

In this perspective, we can reflect that students' narration about their experiences of professional formation can be considered a critical part of the education itself, one action that can help student-teachers' experiences become particularly meaningful and significant.

A narrative approach to assessing student-teaching experiences in apprenticeship is a relevant resource for creating true dialogue between theory and practice for language teachers. It is also a relevant alternative method to traditional forms of assessment, since students are asked to reflect upon their own experiences, which are uniquely individual and meaningful.

Finally, as a future research endeavor, we shall continue to experiment with the narrative approach to teacher education, as we can closely observe their reflective positionings and transformative understandings of the roles of teachers in the school system, and the strength of developing critical knowledge to students as part and parcel of equal citizenry comprehension.

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<sup>1</sup>For more on this powerful analytical tool, the interested reader is referred to the works aforementioned.

<sup>2</sup>Names were changed to preserve anonymity.

<sup>3</sup>The authors tried to maintain students' writing form also in the translation, therefore deciding not to interfere with differences in mechanics and punctuation, for instance.

<sup>4</sup>CAP refers to "Colégio de Aplicação" (*School of Application*) which is a school located in one of the Federal University Campi. Although being a regular school, it has the function and main mission in aiding the practicum teachers forming future teachers. The teaching staff acts as direct co-agents in doing that. It is different from other schools because in regular state and municipal schools this is not mandatory, although these schools are also partners in receiving teacher-students.

<sup>5</sup>As in Portuguese, nouns and adjectives are marked for gender, it must be pointed out that in this fragment both teachers are defined as being females. This information is lost in translation, but it may be important for analysis's sake.

<sup>6</sup>Pronoun marked as a male teacher.

<sup>7</sup>Pronoun marked as a male teacher.

<sup>8</sup>Adjacent city to Rio de Janeiro across the Guanabara Bay, distant 26 Km (16 miles) from the School.

<sup>9</sup>Neighborhood in the Southern Zone of Rio de Janeiro, where CAP is located.

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