

## ENGLISH TEACHERS' IDENTITIES CONCERNING THEIR KNOWLEDGE OF SLANG

### IDENTIDADES DE PROFESSORES DE INGLÊS SOBRE O CONHECIMENTO DE GÍRIAS

Fábio Henrique Rosa Senefonte\*

**ABSTRACT:** Underpinned by a postmodern perspective of (teacher) identity, which characterizes it as unstable, multifaceted, unfinished, complex, dynamic, fluid, constructed in relation with others (BAUMAN, 2005; BOHN, 2005; HALL, 2006; BEIJAARD *et al*, 2011 among others), this qualitative research aims at exploring English language teachers' identities concerning their knowledge of slang. For this purpose, a semi-structured, audio-recorded interview was conducted with three English teachers, from the three main language institutes in Cornélio Procópio, state of Paraná. Results reveal that teachers consider themselves to be fluent in English and confident of their language and teaching skills, despite their knowledge of slang being somewhat limited. Additionally, geographical boundaries are perceived as a hindrance to address such topic in class.

**KEYWORDS:** Identity; English Teachers; Slang.

**RESUMO:** Com base em uma perspectiva pós-moderna de identidade (de professores), que a caracteriza como instável, multifacetada, inacabada, complexa, dinâmica, fluida, construída na relação com o outro (BAUMAN, 2005; BOHN, 2005; HALL, 2006; BEIJAARD *et al*, 2011 entre outros), o presente artigo objetiva explorar a identidade de professoras de inglês em relação ao conhecimento de gírias. Para isso, uma entrevista semiestruturada, gravada em áudio, foi conduzida com três professoras de inglês, dos três principais institutos de idiomas da cidade de Cornélio Procópio, no estado do Paraná. Os resultados revelam que as professoras se julgam fluentes em língua inglesa e confiantes em relação às suas habilidades linguísticas e pedagógicas, apesar do conhecimento de gírias ser de alguma forma limitado. Também a barreira geográfica é vista como um obstáculo para a abordagem do tópico em sala.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Identidade; Professor de Inglês; Gírias.

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\* UENP (Universidade Estadual do Norte do Paraná, campus Cornélio Procópio). Email: fabiosenefonte@uenp.edu.br

## INTRODUCTORY NOTES

Topics germane to identity tend to be broad and intricate, given that the formation of one's identity encompasses professional and personal factors. Hence, the context in which one acts socially is crucial for the constitution of identity. In this regard, Block (2007) contends that there are several types of identities: gender, religious, ethnic and so forth. Bearing this in mind, this research focuses on professional identity, particularly English teachers' professional identity concerning their knowledge of English slang in Brazil.

In light of a postmodern perspective, identity is understood as an unfinished, fragmented, dynamic and multifaceted phenomenon (BEIJAARD *et al.*, 2011 and others); it is constituted by a confrontation with the other in a certain context.

That being said, this investigation is centered on two research questions: a) How do English teachers evaluate their knowledge of slang? b) What challenges, if any, do teachers face when they address such topic in class? In line with these questions, the goal of this study is to explore teachers' identity concerning their knowledge of slang in English.

In order to undertake this research, three English teachers, from three language institutions, were interviewed. Findings suggest that teachers consider themselves fluent and are confident of their language/teaching abilities. Moreover, despite acknowledging some limitations as to their knowledge of slang, they do not exhibit any remnant of inferiority complex (neither

for being non-native speakers nor for the knowledge of slang).

After exposing some introductory notes, I illustrate the structural organization of this paper: introduction; the second section covers theoretical considerations on English teacher identity. Then, some methodological issues are discussed; the fourth section provides the data analysis and finally, some conclusions are detailed in the last section.

**FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHER IDENTITY**

Inasmuch as identity is a social phenomenon, teacher identity is shaped in daily interactions with people from the same or different social spheres. Therefore, identity is developed in relation to the other. So, it is a social, not a biological phenomenon. This way, identity is a continuous and contextualized process; it is heterogeneous, fragmented, unstable, unfinished, dynamic, individual and collective at the same time (BOHN, 2005; BEIJAARD *et al.*, 2011; CALVO, 2011; MARECO; SILVA, 2011; QUEVEDO-CAMARGO *et al.* 2011). Apropos such characterization of identity, Senefonte (2015, p. 5) explicates:

(...) It is heterogeneous/ fragmented, since identity is constituted by a multiplicity of interactions with different individuals. Unstable and unfinished as one is in constant daily interactions within a certain social sphere, therefore identity is not fixed. In this regard, identity is individual, however is socially (collectively) constructed.

Furthermore, identity is a process for a lifetime. Hence, during one's life, numerous identities (concomitant or not) can arise, which are inherently associated with innumerable social roles one plays: wife/husband, son/daughter, neighbor, boss, customer, passenger and so on.

Taking the above-mentioned tenets into consideration, the next sections of this paper seek to shed some light on the following questions: What factors contribute to the formation of English teachers' identity in Brazil? What is such identity like?

#### **FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE FORMATION OF ENGLISH TEACHER IDENTITY**

Due to countless complexities vis-a-vis the formation of identity, this section does not attempt to consider all variables for identity construction (which would be an insurmountable task). As said earlier, the context is vital for identity construction. Taking into account that identity is constituted by a confrontation with the other (who is always different), I seek to list the major factors that may contribute to the formation of English teacher identity. In this respect, I list 7 factors:

- a. *Images society has created of teachers:* such images are germane to certain expectations concerning how a teacher should be or behave (BARBARA & SARDINHA, 2005; BOHN, 2005; CELANI, 2006; BEIJAARD, 2011). Images of the teaching profession are stereotyped, as teachers are alluded to as being predominantly females (especially

in preschool and kindergarten) and having a serious stance. Even the way teachers dress is stereotyped (ALSUP, 2006). Additionally, the teaching profession is seen as a low-paying job, including long and exhausting working hours and with limited perspectives for career ascension, therefore it is not a prestigious job. Moreover, there is a consolidated discourse claiming that the teaching profession is "easy" (licentiates' degrees are not hard to accomplish, neither is getting a job as a teacher) (LORTIE, 1975a, 1975b; SHULMAN, 1986, 1987; HUBERMAN, 1989; FUNDAÇÃO CARLOS CHAGAS, 2009). Unfortunately, despite the fact that some assumptions do not hold true in numerous contexts, the discourse that upholds such tenets is generalized, powerful and influential.

- b. *Expectations from other entities* (school, government, students and their parents, and others): These expectations, apart from the ones listed above, indicate that teachers should have some attributes, such as: love, vocation, empathy, patience, content and pedagogical knowledge, good language skills and so on (SHULMAN, 1986, 1987; CELANI, 2006; FUNDAÇÃO CARLOS CHAGAS, 2009). Here, I deem relevant to stress that teachers

are constantly pressured in order to meet such social standards.

- c. *Life experiences and personal ideologies and beliefs*: Through narratives, self-reflections, representations, teachers can find who they really are and resignify their identities (NÓVOA, 1995; ALSUP, 2006; BEIJAARD, 2011). This is exactly the focus of this paper (*representation of teachers*<sup>1</sup>).
- d. *Sources of knowledge*: professional socialization (class observation, from teaching practices, self-study and others) (LORTIE, 1975a; SHULMAN, 1987).
- e. *School subject*: teacher identity can be highly influenced by the subject they teach (BEIJAARD, 2011). Apropos of English, I consider imperative to highlight that the current status of the language in the world also has some impact on the formation of the English teacher professional identity, given that such status may lead teachers to reflect upon the importance of the language in a globalized world.
- f. *Educational Context*: school, educational policies, interactions with students, colleagues and others (BEIJAARD, 2011). From my

understanding, this is one of the most influential factors for teacher identity, since teachers' practices hinge on such variables.

- g. *Personal life*: it comprises friends, partners and family (BEIJAARD, 2011 and others). These people are active participants in the formation of teacher identity, as they can influence on decision-making and other issues.

With this brief overview, I listed some variables that encompass historical, sociological, psychological, cultural and political elements involved in the construction of a teacher's identity.

#### ENGLISH TEACHER IDENTITY IN THE BRAZILIAN CONTEXT

This section provides some discussions on the English teacher identity in Brazil. As said in the previous sections, such identity is the result of both: the way teachers perceive themselves and the way they are perceived by others.

From the other's perspectives (students, students' parents, government, etc.), we can assume some representations of English teachers in Brazil, as follows:

- a. English teachers are influenced by their former teachers (CALVO, 2011; among others). Such assumption is also exposed in North-American studies (LORTIE, 1975a, ALSUP, 2006).
- b. Teachers are mostly females, white, from lower classes, with

<sup>1</sup> Moscovici (2003) asserts that there are several types of representations, the one fostered in this study is the social representation, which in turn is the set of ideas, beliefs and ideologies that contribute to the conceptualization of something. In this study, representations (beliefs, ideologies) teachers have about themselves contribute to their identity construction, that is, from their own perspective.

low academic performance (FUNDAÇÃO CARLOS CHAGAS, 2009; CALVO, 2011). Once again, a very strong stereotype that has been perpetuated over time.

- c. Professional engagement is temporary (FUNDAÇÃO CARLOS CHAGAS, 2009). This finding is also found in international studies (SEDLAK, 1992; HUBERMAN, 1989).
- d. The other's representations/expectations from English teachers: they should have patience to teach, vocation, interest, admiration for the career, should be proud to share knowledge, and should master the foreign language (experience abroad is an advantage) and other attributes (CARLOS CHAGAS, 2009; MARECO; SILVA, 2011; CALVO, 2011 entre outros).
- e. The teaching profession is undervalued. Additionally, it is seen as a boring, bad, tiring, and low-paying profession (CARLOS CHAGAS, 2009; CALVO, 2011). North-American research has convergent results (LORTIE, 1975a, 1975b). However, for university professors, who hold a PhD degree, the teaching profession is substantially more prestigious. (BARBARA & SARDINHA, 2005; CALVO, 2011).
- f. Professional identity is problematic, because of the fluidity in contemporary societies. Hence, such identity is decentralized,

fragmented, uncertain and temporary (BOHN, 2005). International investigations seem to corroborate these findings (BAUMAN, 2005; HALL, 2006).

From teachers' own perspectives (corollary of ideologies constructed in social interactions), some factors seem to prevail:

- a. Professional identity is marked by insecurities, fear, conflicts and uncertainties. Insecurities regarding English proficiency and resistance to learning the language (BOHN, 1995; GAMERO, 2011; QUEVEDO-CAMARGO *et al.*, 2011 entre outros). Moreover, there seems to exist certain competitiveness with the native-speaker (frustrations for not having the same language abilities as a native-speaker may lead some teachers to experience an inferiority complex (TOMAZONI; LUNARDI, 2011).
- b. Teachers understand their roles as mediators. Furthermore, they recognize the importance of mastering the foreign language, teaching culture and providing critical reflections (GAMERO, 2011; QUEVEDO-CAMARGO *et al.*, 2011).
- c. In their own representations, teachers have divergent standpoints apropos different educational contexts (public and private schools, language schools and others).

Teachers tend to prefer teaching in private or language schools.

Since identity is not fixed, the above-mentioned assumptions can be revisited, especially when new participants and contexts are investigated.

### ENGLISH TEACHERS' CONCEPTIONS OF SLANG

Scarce attention has been placed on empirical research on teacher's conceptions of slang. By searching<sup>2</sup> databases such as Google Scholar and ERIC<sup>3</sup>, employing the terms: "*English teacher's perceptions/conceptions*", "*slang*", only one result was found: Senefonte (2014).

Senefonte (2014) undertook a qualitative study on English teachers' perceptions of slang. The participants were 4 high school teachers in public schools. By interviewing them, the author concluded that teachers' perceptions of slang are ambivalent. On the one hand, they seem to agree on the importance of slang in the teaching-learning process of foreign languages, on the other, slang is still seen as inappropriate vocabulary, given that it can be vulgar and offensive.

In the Brazilian context, apart from Google Scholar, I searched another database: CAPES<sup>4</sup> (with the same search terms in Portuguese). This new database

did not provide any result. Nonetheless, there was one study on non-native teachers that covered somewhat topics as to slang (TOMAZONI; LUNARDI, 2011).

Studies on non-native teachers have addressed slang (learning/ teaching), somehow (MEDGYES, 1999 *apud* TOMAZONI; LUNARDI, 2011). This way, such authors can support the theoretical framework employed in this paper. According to Tomazoni e Lunardi (2011, p. 221): "oral production is the most difficult part to be mastered and slang is particularly problematic, since many non-native teachers can involuntarily use slang that is considered outdated".

The findings of Tomazoni e Lunardi's study reveal that teachers are insecure concerning their knowledge of slang. In this respect, Medgyes (1999) *apud* Tomazoni e Lunardi (2011) contends that a large number of English teachers suffer from an inferiority complex, because they perceive their language skills as inferior, compared to native-speaking standards. According to the afore-mentioned author, such teachers (non-native speakers) aspire to meet such standards in order to become "superior" or better.

Once the theory of this study was discussed, the next sections comprise the methodology adopted and data analysis.

### METHODOLOGY

This is a qualitative study, as I observe a particular social reality (VIDICH; LYMAN, 2006) in order to explore English teachers' identities in a certain context.

In line with the tenets of identity defended in this paper, the ontology adopted

<sup>2</sup> No time period was delimited.

<sup>3</sup> Education Resource Center Information < <https://eric.ed.gov>>.

<sup>4</sup> Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education in Brazil < <http://bancodeteses.capes.gov.br/bancodeteses/#/>>.

for this research draws on a critical realism (LINCOLN; GUBA, 2006), whereas the epistemology is interpretive, which in turn validates human subjectivity in knowledge construction on the one hand, and on the other, considers some objectivity of such process (SCHWANDT, 2006). With such methodological framework in mind, I can take into consideration the historical moment of this investigation, without jumping to generalized conclusions, thus my interpretations are always prone to being questioned or resignified.

In order to preserve the physical and emotional integrity of the participants in this study, some ethical recommendations were considered: Resolution No. 196 (Oct 10, 1996) and British Education Research Association (BERA, 2011). Therefore, an informed consent was prepared (appendix 1), showing participants all the process of this study, ethical commitment and my appreciation. My ethical commitment concerned identity anonymity, the right to withdraw consent without any penalty, access to the study, prevention of risks and so forth.

To achieve my research goals and questions, I chose the three major<sup>5</sup> language schools in Cornélio Procópio, Paraná. As a criterion to delimit the participants, I selected the most experienced teachers (one from each school). For ethical reasons, the participants will be referred to as teacher A, B and C

The tool for data generation was a semi-structured and audio-recorded interview

(appendix 2)<sup>6</sup>, that was fully transcribed as shown in appendix 3. Such interviews were conducted from September to November of 2016.

Drawing on discourse studies (FOUCAULT, 1978, 1997, 2009), I stress that representations of teachers about themselves are the corollary of numerous ideological constraints. Hence, such representations are socially constructed and the socio-historical contexts play a crucial role in this construction. Bearing this in mind, the next section provides the data analysis of this investigation.

#### DATA ANALYSIS

As said before, I selected the most experienced teachers (from 12-38 years of experience) who teach all levels: from beginners to advanced. Analyzing qualitative research implies a categorization of data. This way, after examining each line of the transcripts, some analytical categories emerged, as follows:

As displayed in the table above, 7 analytical categories emanate from the data examined and each category is subsumed under one of the 4 dimensions. In this regard, categories and dimensions are intertwined in a way that the latter entails a broad idea of the fact and the former narrows down such idea. In other words, such connectedness resembles a hyponymy- hyperonym interaction (SENEFONTE, 2014; REIS, 2011).

<sup>6</sup> My eternal thanks to Dr. Simone Reis, associate professor at State University of Londrina (Graduate Program in Language Studies) for her valuable contributions to the interview questions.

<sup>5</sup> In terms of number of students.

**Table 1:** Analytical Dimensions and Categories

Participants	Language Fluency	Knowledge of Slang	Use of Slang	Teaching of Slang
Dimension				
Teacher A	* <i>Conceptualization</i> (intelligibility) * <i>Self-Assessment</i> (positive)	* <i>Evaluation</i> (scale) * <i>Source</i> (formal and informal)	* <i>Purpose</i> (pedagogical)	* <i>Attitudes</i> (positive) * <i>Difficulties</i> (geographical boundaries)
Teacher B	* <i>Conceptualization</i> (sociolinguistics) * <i>Self-Assessment</i> (positive)	* <i>Evaluation</i> (scale) * <i>Source</i> (informal)	* <i>Purpose</i> (sociopragmatic and pedagogical)	* <i>Attitudes</i> (positive) * <i>Difficulties</i> (contextual)
Teacher C	* <i>Conceptualization</i> (cognitive) * <i>Self-Assessment</i> (positive)	* <i>Evaluation</i> (scale) * <i>Source</i> (formal and informal)	* <i>Absent</i>	* <i>Attitudes</i> (positive) * <i>Difficulties</i> (geographical boundaries)

**Source:** the author (based on Senefonte 2014)

That being said, under the dimension **Language Proficiency**, teachers *conceptualize* what they seem to understand by proficiency. For teacher A, such conceptualization is subordinated to the notions of intelligibility: “Being fluent means expressing ourselves in a spontaneous and intelligible way, using an appropriate pronunciation and intonation, so that you can communicate normally.” (lines 8-9). Teacher B draws on a sociolinguistic perspective: “hmm, it’s when you are able to use it in any situation [...]” (line 58). Apparently, this conceptualization is influenced by the Principle of Appropriateness (BEAUGRANDE; DRESSLER, 1981), which entails language adequacy to a certain context. The last participant includes a cognitive dimension to her conceptualization: “Well, in my conception, being fluent in a language is

when you are totally able to communicate in the language with confidence.” (teacher C, lines 99-100).

In addition to the conceptualization, the participants *assess* their own proficiency in English, and this *self-assessment* indicates a positive perception of their language proficiency:

I think throughout these years I fit in the concept of fluency I mentioned in the previous question (teacher A, lines 11-120).

Yes, I am fluent, because I am able to communicate normally, using the English language in different contexts. (teacher B, lines 60-61).

I consider myself fluent in the language I teach, because I have great knowledge of grammar, vocabulary and conversation in English. (teacher C, lines 102-103).

From the dimension **Knowledge of Slang**, two categories were derived. First, teachers *evaluate* their knowledge of slang. Both teachers A and B seem to evaluate their knowledge imagining a scale (a lot- a little, good-bad and so forth): “[...] it’s not exactly the object of study in any language school I know, so my knowledge is not deep.” (teacher A, lines 14-15) and “Hmm, maybe intermediate level? I know, but not deeply.” (teacher B, line 66). The negative form of the word ‘deep’ may indicate that teachers’ knowledge of slang is somewhat limited. This is corroborated by teacher C: “I have good knowledge of slang, but I think I need to improve my vocabulary in this field.” (lines 107-108).

Apropos the *source of knowledge* (of slang), teachers A and C assert that this knowledge emanates from formal and informal education: “Well...language schools, search, slang dictionaries [...]” (teacher A, line 23) and “I learned it during my studies at {language school names’ suppressed}, listening to international songs, also watching American films and talking with friends who live abroad” (teacher C, lines 110-111). On the other hand, teacher B learned slang only through informal education: “songs, movies, series, things like these” (line 68). Such data corroborate the existing literature, which bespeaks a gap in formal education vis-a-vis slang (SENEFONTE, 2014).

The dimension **Use of Slang** provided only one category, *purpose* of such use. Both teachers A and B signal a pedagogical purpose for using slang: “Hmm, slang is like an identity for some groups [...] age, social groups, it is related to culture. I only use them

to teach to my students during the classes. (teacher A, lines 28-29) and “I use them with my friends, colleagues, family and students from more advanced levels, in classes focusing on speaking. The purposes? I think it makes the conversation more relaxed, informal” (teacher B, lines 72-74). In addition to the pedagogical dimension, we can notice that teacher B adds a sociopragmatic purpose for the use of slang. Furthermore, teacher A brings out some important issues regarding the conceptualization of slang: it is a group language and it functions as an identification of such group (PRETI, 2000, 2005).

Nevertheless, this category (*purpose*) has not been found for teacher C: “Because, I don’t see any necessity of using this kind of language, having in mind the methodology I work with.” (lines 116-117). This result seems to convey a lack of prestige for slang, from the part of the participant, both in and outside the classroom. In this respect, Foucault (1978, 1997, 2009) emphasizes the extent to which society has silenced certain topics.

From the last dimension **Teaching of slang**, all the participants have a *positive attitude* when they are asked questions (regarding slang) they do not know:

Despite my experience and knowledge I have acquired during these 38 years, of course there are some words or expressions that I don’t know, so I say the truth when they ask me something I don’t know, but I always tell them I will search that and provide the information in another class. (teacher A, lines 33-36).

I search for the meaning of the word.  
I say I will search and bring the

information in the next class. I try to see the context where the slang was used to get to a correct answer. (teacher B, lines 79-80).

I have a natural reaction [...] I tell them that I don't know, but I will search for the meaning of it. (teacher C, lines 119-120).

The teachers' answers uncover a natural and honest stance when they do not have a prompt answer for an inquiry, even though this type of situation might be embarrassing to some professionals, since there is considerable pressure on teachers as to knowing the subject they teach (SHULMAN, 1986, 1987). Hence, these results unveil that the teachers investigated in this study seem not to demonstrate any inferiority complex, as found in other studies, such as Tomazoni and Lunardi (2011).

Concerning the last category '*difficulties*' in teaching slang, the context plays a fundamental role, since it is primordial for the use and grasp of slang, Teacher B claims that some difficulty teaching slang lies in the contextual fact: "hm, hard to say. I think it all depends on the contact you have with this kind of language, within a certain context, where they are used. Also, it depends on the interest to use them" (teacher B, lines 83-85). Whereas teachers A and C attribute such difficulty to geographical boundaries:

Understanding the right situations to express ourselves through slang or idiomatic expressions needs a complete immersion, living abroad, having the daily activities, in that region, with that group, you see? [...] the user can understand the circumstances, the

correct context to use each slang. It's difficult when a student is not native, you know? The student doesn't have the contact with the country where the slang is from, so it's difficult to use this kind of language correctly. (teacher A, lines 40-45)

ah, ok. I think living abroad, in a country where English is spoken would help in the learning of slang. (teacher C, lines 125-126)

Hence, the mastery of slang is perceived as being constrained by geographical barriers; such assumption is found in the literature in this topic (TOMAZONI; LUNARDI, 2011; SENE FONTE, 2014 and others). Unfortunately, it is well known that an experience abroad is a very remote possibility for the vast majority of Brazilian students. Furthermore, it is imperative to stress that an experience abroad is not a requirement for language proficiency, especially if we take into consideration the exponential advent of technology in the globalized world. Moreover, as English has moved more and more towards paramountcy, reaching a lingua franca status, such geographical boundaries tend to be weakened.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

As stated in the first lines of this paper, identity has been influenced by the so-called postmodern world. In this sense, one may consider identity as unstable, multifaceted, unfinished, dynamic, individual and collective and it is constructed in relation to the other. Additionally, professional identity is formed/ shaped taking into account

one's own representations (focus of this investigation).

With this in mind, I bring back the research questions and goal in order to conclude this part of the study:

- a. *How do English teachers evaluate their knowledge of slang? Teachers evaluate their knowledge of slang envisaging a scale ranging from high-low, advanced-beginner and so forth. On account of the predominant negative form of the word 'deep', it seems they perceive their knowledge of slang as somewhat limited.*
- b. *What challenges, if any, do teachers face when they address such topic in class? Teachers believe that mastery of slang in English is constrained by geographical boundaries, which is perceived as a potential hindrance to the teaching of slang.*

Regarding my research goal (explore teachers' identity concerning their knowledge of slang in English), the teachers interviewed consider themselves fluent and are confident of their language/ teaching abilities, since they do not get uncomfortable when asked slang words they do not know. Despite acknowledging some limitations as to their knowledge of slang, they do not seem to demonstrate any remnant of inferiority complex (neither for being non-native speakers nor for the knowledge of slang). Based on these facts, slang seems not to be a requirement for language fluency.

As shown earlier, scant attention has been placed on slang (concerning empirical research and didactic materials). So, I believe this research may contribute to the literature

in this topic and, most importantly, I hope this study may enable teachers to reflect critically over their process of identity construction, content knowledge, teaching practices and so many others variables that embrace the teaching profession.

Being cognizant of discourses (and their ideologies) that surround us is of paramount importance so that we understand the extent to which they can shape us as human beings and, principally, as teaching professionals.

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Recebido para publicação em 21 set. 2017.

Aceito para publicação em 30 nov. 2017

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1: INFORMED CONSENT

#### INFORMED CONSENT

You have been invited to participate in the research entitled: “English Teachers’ Identity Concerning their Knowledge of English”, supervised by professor Fábio Henrique Rosa Senefonte, from the State University of Northern Paraná (UENP).

The research focuses on English teacher identity concerning their knowledge of slang. The results of such study may be published in scientific events or journals (subject to peer review). Once you have agreed to participate in the afore-mentioned research, you will undergo a semi-structured and audio-recorded *interview*, conducted in English.

Respecting some ethical observations, should you accept this invitation, your identity will be kept anonymous during the whole process of the study. Additionally, your participation is voluntary, which entitles you to the right to withdraw your consent at any time, without any penalty or consequences. Moreover, you are entitled to access to the results of the study. In case you interested, please provide your contact information (phone, address or email address).

Furthermore, you will neither have any kind of financial cost nor have risks of any kind. Your participation is very important and will contribute to the literature in the afore-mentioned topic. Thank you for considering my request.

---

XXXXXX (researcher)  
State University of Northern Paraná (UENP)  
fabiosenefonte@uenp.edu.br

I, \_\_\_\_\_, identity number \_\_\_\_\_,  
declare that I am fully aware of the content of this term and also that I have received a copy  
of this term, dated and signed by both parts.

Cornélio Procópio, \_\_\_\_\_, 2016.

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Participant  
email

**APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW**


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 Institution you work at: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Levels you teach: \_\_\_\_\_

## Interview

1- Where did you study English?
2- How long have you been using the language?
3- How long have you been teaching the language?
4- What is your conception of language fluency? Do you consider yourself fluent? Why?
5- How much do you know of slang in English?
6- (for affirmative answers in 5) How do you evaluate your knowledge of slang?
7- (for affirmative answers in 5) How and where did you learn it?
8- Do you use slang in English? If so, * In what contexts? * For what purposes? *How do you feel using slang inside and outside the classroom? (- For negative answer in 8) Why not?
9- What is your reaction when students ask you slang words you do not know?
10- What challenges, if any, do you face when you address such topic in class?

**APPENDIX 3: TRANSCRIPTS***TEACHER A*

**Researcher:** So, let's start. Where did you learn English?

**Teacher A:** At {language school' name suppressed} and at {university's name suppressed}

**Researcher:** How long have you been using the language?

**Teacher A:** Hm, let me think [...] for about 38years, I guess

**Researcher:** How long have you been teaching English?

**Teacher A:** for 35 years

**Researcher:** What's your conception of language fluency?

**Teacher A:** Being fluent means expressing ourselves in a spontaneous and intelligible way, using and appropriate pronunciation and intonation, so that you can communicate normally.

**Researcher:** Do you consider yourself fluent? Why?

**Teacher A:** I think throughout these years I fit in the concept of fluency I mentioned in the previous question.

**Researcher:** How much do you know of slang in English

**Teacher A:** Hm, hard question {laughter}, it's not exactly the object of study in any language school I know, so my knowledge is not deep.

**Researcher:** How do you evaluate your knowledge of slang?

**Teacher A:** Han [...] when I teach slang or swear words in English or Spanish, because I teach Spanish as well, I tell my students that there are some expressions naturally associated with the language, but also with culture as well and the use of slang, swear words or idiomatic expressions is related to the context and culture of a certain region, which makes the use of this type of language very difficult, especially to foreigners.

**Researcher:** How and where did you learn it?

**Teacher A:** Well...language schools, search, slang dictionaries, because I need to teach these things to my students, right?

**Researcher:** Do you use slang in English?

**Teacher A:** Yes!

**Researcher:** In what contexts and for what purposes?

**Teacher A:** Hmm, slang is like an identity for some groups [...] age, social groups, it is related to culture. I only use them to teach to my students during the classes.

**Researcher:** How do you feel using slang inside and outside the classroom?

**Teacher A:** I almost never use slang outside the classroom, I use more idiomatic expressions.

**Researcher:** What is your reaction when students ask you slang words you don't know?

**Teacher A:** {laughter} Despite my experience and knowledge I have acquired during these 38 years, of course there are some words or expressions that I don't know, so I say the truth when they ask me something I don't know, but I always tell them I will search that and provide the information in another class.

**Researcher:** what challenges, if any, do you face when you address slang in class?

**Teacher A:** Let's see, using slang or idiomatic expression is not easy at all, because this kind of language meets a cultural demand, I think. And sometimes it is contextual, in a specific region, related to social groups. Understanding the right situations to express ourselves through slang or idiomatic expressions needs a complete immersion, living abroad, having the daily activities, in that region, with that group, you see? [...] the user can understand the circumstances, the correct context to use each slang. It's difficult when a student is not native,

you know? The student doesn't have the contact with the country where the slang is from, so it's difficult to use this kind of language correctly.

**Researcher:** Ok, anything else?

**Teacher A:** Hm, no, I think that's it.

**Researcher:** Thank you so much!

**Teacher A:** not at all, whenever you need...

*TEACHER B*

**Researcher:** Ok, can we start? Where did you learn English?

**Teacher B:** I learned at {language school's name suppressed}, in {town suppressed}

**Researcher:** how long have you been using English?

**Teacher B:** Well, I finished my course in 2004, so 12 years, right? {laughter}. But I already used it, before I started teaching

**Researcher:** How long have you been teaching the language?

**Teacher B:** I guess, about 10 years.

**Researcher:** What is your conception of language fluency?

**Teacher B:** hmm, it's when you are able to use it in any situation. Yes, that's it.

**Researcher:** Do you consider yourself fluent? Why?

**Teacher B:** Yes, I am fluent, because I am able to communicate normally, using the English language in different contexts.

**Researcher:** How much do you know of slang in English?

**Teacher B:** hmm, I know some slang words well, but I don't use them a lot, they don't apply to my job, you know? I use more in more relaxed situations.

**Researcher:** How do you evaluate your knowledge of slang?

**Teacher B:** Hmm, maybe intermediate level? I know, but not deeply.

**Researcher:** How and where did you learn it?

**Teacher B:** Let's me see [...] songs, movies, series, things like these.

**Researcher:** Do you use slang in English?

**Teacher B:** yes, I do.

**Researcher:** In what contexts and for what purposes?

**Teacher B:** I use them with my friends, colleagues, family and students from more advanced levels, in classes focusing on speaking. The purposes? I think it makes the conversation more relaxed, informal.

**Researcher:** How do you feel using slang inside and outside the classroom?

**Teacher B:** Actually, I don't use much neither in English, nor in Portuguese, so, my use is not frequent.

**Researcher:** What is your reaction when students ask you slang words you don't know?

**Teacher B:** I search for the meaning of the word. I say I will search and bring the information in the next class. I try to see the context where the slang was used to get to a correct answer.

**Researcher:** What challenges, if any, do you face when you address this topic in your classes?

**Teacher B:** hm, hard to say. I think it all depends on the contact you have with this kind of language, within a certain context, where they are used. Also, it depends on the interest to use them

**Researcher:** Would you like to add anything?

**Teacher B:** well, I think it's a very interesting study and I want to know the results later {laughter}.

**Researcher:** Certainly. Thank you very much for your participation.

**Teacher B:** You're welcome.

### TEACHER C

**Researcher:** So, we can start. Where did you learn English?

**Teacher C:** At two language schools {names suppressed}, with friends who live in Canada and the USA.

**Researcher:** How long have you been using English?

**Teacher C:** Gee, I don't know. 18 years, maybe.

**Researcher:** How long have you been teaching the language?

**Teacher C:** about 15 years.

**Researcher:** What's your conception of language fluency?

**Teacher C:** Well, in my conception, being fluent in a language is when you are totally able to communicate in the language with confidence.

**Researcher:** Do you consider yourself fluent? Why?

**Teacher C:** I consider myself fluent in the language I teach, because I have great knowledge of grammar, vocabulary and conversation in English.

**Researcher:** How much do you know of slang in English?

**Teacher C:** Well, I think I have a good vocabulary about slang.

**Researcher:** How do you evaluate your knowledge of slang?

**Teacher C:** I have good knowledge of slang, but I think I need to improve my vocabulary in this field.

**Researcher:** How and where did you learn it?

**Teacher C:** I learned it during my studies at {language school names' suppressed}, listening to international songs, also watching American films and talking with friends who live abroad [...] Canada, the USA, and so on.

**Researcher:** Do you use slang in English?

**Teacher C:** No. I don't

**Researcher:** Why not?

**Teacher C:** Because, I don't see any necessity of using this kind of language, having in mind the methodology I work with.

**Researcher:** What is your reaction when students ask you slang words you don't know

**Teacher C:** {laughter} I have a natural reaction [...] I tell them that I don't know, but I will search for the meaning of it.

**Researcher:** What challenges, if any, do you face when you address such topic in class?

**Teacher C:** Sorry?

**Researcher:** Challenges, what challenges, if any, do you face when you address slang in class?

**Teacher C:** ah, ok. I think living abroad, in a country where English is spoken would help in the learning of slang

**Researcher:** Is there anything else you would like to say.

**Teacher C:** No.

**Researcher:** Ok, so thanks for your participation in this study

**Teacher C:** You're welcome, it was a pleasure.