Discourse and society: the language in a dialogical perspective

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ABSTRACT

This text summarizes a qualitative research of bibliographical nature that aimed to reflect about the language as social practice, emphasizing the dialogical nature of theoretical contributions, such as Bakhtin (2006, 2010) and Fairclough (2001), as well as considerations of Marx (1845) and other authors who recover conceptions of these theorists, including Fiorin (2011), who presents a retelling, especially of Bakhtinian positions. In the social perspective of language, principles that emanate from historical, social, cultural and ideological spheres articulate, so that the communication process articulates in fact as a tool to promote human interaction. Regarding discourse, there is need to understand the importance of understanding social and cultural changes, what knowing the context of the discursive subject implies and, consequently, to understand a discursive practice. In the perspective of Fairclough (2001), it is essential to critically analyze the transformations that have occurred in society. The language as social practice is evident in the various discourses, as evidenced by the theoretical positions that support this research. In this perspective, the understanding of the world occurs through the dialogical relationship, in which events of the present, past and future are intertwined, which signals that the discursive practices promote changes in contemporary society.

Keywords: Dialogism; Social practice; Social transformations.

INTRODUCTION

> *[...]the one who is able to practice an act of comprehension (also including the researcher) becomes part of the dialog (BAKHTIN, 2010, p. 355).*

The language, as a form of communication, promotes the approximation of subjects, either as an expression of feelings, either as a mechanism for the exchange of knowledge. In this sense, the language structures itself in the materialization of human thought, in the process of sharing of ideas with a view to the formation of the speaking subject. In this way, it is always current and a product of men's history.

In this perspective, the present text, as a result of a qualitative research through bibliographical procedure, aims to reflect about the language as social practice, from notes of theorists like: Bakhtin (2006, 2010) and Fairclough (2001), Marx (1845) and authors that reflect their ideas, such as Fiorin (2011), among others. In the social perspective of language, principles that emanate from historical, social, cultural and ideological spheres articulate, so that the communication process articulates in fact as a tool to promote human interaction.

A concept about social practice can also be found in the writings of Marx (1845), in the eighth of the *Eleven Theses* developed by the theorist Feuerbach, in which he says that "[...] social life is essentially practical. All the mysteries that seduce the theory to mysticism find their rational solution in human practice and in the understanding of this practice". This statement shows that human life in society is a social practice and, in this context, the language is materialized in human praxis, in relation to relations and meanings that the human being constructs through the communicative act.

In this sense, the process of humanization, construction of identity, permeates the social-interacting means between the individual and the social context surrounding them. This construction is mediated by the use of language, which is characterized by the functioning and social and cognitive development. Geraldi (2013, p. 6) says that "[...] the subjects constitute themselves as such as they interact with each other, their conscience and their knowledge of the world result as 'product' of this same process". Thus, the language can also be understood as a social practice, since it is constructed in the human action.

This conception rescues the ideas presented by Bakhtin and Fairclough, who state that the language is essentially social, in the sense that it favors (inter)actions through which individuals rely to promote social changes.

METHOD

This paper presents the results of a qualitative research that adopted the bibliographical procedure, focusing on the discussion of language as a social practice, for which the notes of theorists such as Bakhtin (2006, 2010) and Fairclough (2001) were fundamental, besides Marx (1845) and authors who retake their ideas, as Fiorin (2011), among others. In these reflections, it's discussed issues involving discourse, dialogism and social relations, based on social practices in contemporary society.

SOME DISCUSSIONS

The society, since the beginning, has been characterized by the communication between humans and their social groups; this communication occurs through the use of sound, graphic or manual language. Its power is not restricted only to the use, configuring it as a social practice that intervenes in human life and relations. The language can transform and influence perceptions and opinions, among other things,

which justifies the need to better understand the relationships that are established in the discourses.[1]

The reflections about language as a social phenomenon are recent, and Mikhail Bakhtin was one of the pioneers of the subject when substantiating a language rooted in the interaction between individuals, when using the same signs, which, prearranged, confer meaning and allow for the act of communication. This is perspective has been unknown until recently by scholars who understood language as a single instrument and that it constituted the appropriation of a system of signs.

Bakhtin (2006, p. 130), when formulating a concept of language, and aiming to understand clearly its fundamental reality, as well as its mode of existence, emphasizes that: "Language is a process of continual evolution, developed through verbal interaction of reporters". With this, language perceived in its discursive and enunciating aspects, once the statement of a speaker precedes and follows another speaker, confirms the conception of language as a social phenomenon, which has, in the statement, a unit of verbal communication.

In the explanation of the concepts discussed by Bakhtin, Fiorin (2011, p. 19) says that "[...] all statements in the communication process, regardless of their dimension, are dialogic. They own an internal dialogization of the word, which is always passed through by the other's word". Therefore, when the annunciator needs to build his/her discourse in the act of speech, he/she takes into account the speech of others, because it is also present in his/hers, once it cannot detach from the relations that the language establishes, from their individual meaning. The individual does not create, in each dialog, words, new signs, but creates another already delivered speech.

In this sense, the discourse as a social practice, in the Bakhtinian prospect, constitutes a mode of action historically situated, having, on the one hand, structures that organize the production of discourse in societies (the language and its signs) and, on the other hand, each new statement is an individual action on such structures, which can contribute to both the continuity as the processing of recurrent forms of the action to enunciating. In this direction, Bakhtin (2006, p. 125) says that: "The real substance of language is not constituted by an abstract system of linguistic forms [sic], nor by the isolated monologic statement, nor by the psychophysiological act of its production, but by the social phenomenon of verbal interaction, performed through statement or statements. The verbal interaction thus constitutes the fundamental reality of the language".

In the Bakhtinian understanding, the language is configured through the social phenomenon of verbal interaction, people communicate in society through the use of language. Fiorin (2011, p. 18) argues that "[...] the language in its concrete totality alive in its actual usage has the property to be dialogical". Therefore, through the process of enunciation, the interaction and liveliness of the language allow for it to go beyond a simple exchange of words with meaning for a social group and corresponds to all forms of verbal communication, which are not always face to face.

One needs to specify that, in this process of communication, as Fiorin (2011) discusses, for Bakhtin, the units of language are not dialogical, but the statements promoted by the use of language. The units of language are exemplified through the sound, the words and clauses; whereas the statements are the

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[1] According to Carvalho (2003), language, as a sign system, was developed by the linguist Ferdinand Saussure (n.d.) in his book *Course in General Linguistics*, considered the father of Linguistics, comprising the language constructed in an individual perspective of recognition of signs about its own use.

real units of communication used by the speaker, are unique, unrepeatable and used in accordance with the situation and the unit used for communication.

The statement, thus, constitutes an element of interaction between the reporters that permeates the subjectivity and the knowledge acquired in the collectivity, during the dialogic relationship of communication. "The units of language are neutral, while those statements carry emotions, value judgments, passions" (FIORIN, 2011, p. 23). Therefore, in the interlocutoring process, the language is constantly (re)constructed, because the subjectivity permeates every form of statement, while the language directs the speaker through the perspective of the use of words that are chosen to provide direction.

For Bakhtin, the language is also marked by the relationships that the individual performs and is crossed by ideological connotations of speeches ever made. The Bakhtinian concept of ideology, discussed by Faraco (2008), has, in its meaning, the understanding that it is involved in the universe of products of the human spirit, resorting to other intangible meanings of social context, thus becoming an ideological product.

In this direction, one only speaks of ideology from a social reality and with a meaning outside him/her and that is effective in a sign. In the Bakhtinian perception, everything that is ideological has a meaning that refers to something situated outside of oneself. Therefore, the signs are ideological and an object becomes a sign, when having meanings in other realities. Stam (2000, p. 62), when referencing Bakhtin, affirms that:

> The ideological struggle is located in the center of the discourses, either in the form of an artistic text, either with daily exchange of language. In the social life of the enunciation (either in a sentence orally delivered, a literary text, a movie, an advertisement or a parade of a samba school), each "word" is addressed to a specific person in a particular situation, and this word is dependent on pronunciations, intonations and distinct allusions.

In this process, the ideology plays an important role in the life of subjects, because the moment the subjects communicate and expose their opinion, they permeate their speech with an ideological load, and this ideology builds opinions and thoughts that assume other discourses and are brought forward in the communicative process of a society. Bakhtin discusses, in his writings, that, even if unintentional, every delivered discourse has an ideology that permeates it, since the words gain sense by the ideology that formalizes as contribution to these moments of speech and not another word.

When addressing this issue, Fairclough (2001) argues that the ideological and political concepts constitute the discourse of society, in order to prove that, sometimes, the subject can be induced by textual marks and build his/her own thinking. The author argues that the language is constituted by the discourse and the context assumes a posture essential for the implementation of this practice. In the construction of discourse are the relations of domination and power, as well as the control, implemented by functions of ideology and hegemony that establish themselves in social relations.

Fairclough (2001) presents three assertions about the concept of ideology. First, according to him, the ideology has material existence in the practices of institutions. The second assertion is that the ideology

"[...] challenges subjects!" (FAIRCLOUGH, 2001, p. 117), constitutes the subject and his/her speeches. And the third assertion is that the ideological apparatus of the State are places of mark or delimit the class struggle, which suggest or guide the ideological discourse, as its interests, even if not intentional. Among the conclusions pointed by Fairclough (2001, p. 117): "[...] the ideologies are significations/constructions of reality (the physical world, social relations, the social identities) that are built in various dimensions of the forms/senses of discursive practices that contribute to the production, reproduction or transformation of relations of domination".

In this approach enters the human creativity, represented by the capacity of the subject in the use of language, in order to make the social relations of domination or power over that society or group in which he/she is inserted, materializing the ideology that the author presents in the third dimension of discourse analysis, the social practice.

The speeches thus represent the sociocognitive challenged by ideology. This establishes a dialectical relation, since the speeches determine some interpretations, society and individuals, from their cognitive resources, can influence and build their own interpretations of texts/speeches set out.

In this context, one needs to redeem the understanding of discursive practices, in the Faircloughnian point of view: they are practices built in both the conventional as creative way and contribute to reproduce society (social identities, social relations, systems of knowledge), that is, ways to intervene in society through speech.

"The discursive practices are ideologically invested as they incorporate meanings that contribute to maintaining or restructuring the power relations" (FAIRCLOUGH, 2001, p. 121). In his theory, the author understands that not all speeches are invested ideologically. They are loaded with ideology, or with a higher degree, those who seek to establish relations of power within a cultural group, a race, or in advertising, stating that the company is able to transcend the ideology when unable to identify it.

Therefore, no matter how ideological neutral the speeches, they assume the ability to transform and contextualize a relationship of power, thus becoming ideological. In this way, to understand the meaning of ideology is to understand that this can be checked or found in the way or ways in which the direction serves to establish or maintain relations of domination. In the beginning, it can be neutral, but, during the discourse, from the sense, it can become ideological.

The role of the language for use in relations of social practices is not permeated only by ideology, but also by alliances and integrations that establish themselves at the service of the maintenance of leadership and domination in society. Fairclough (2001) characterize these conceptions as the hegemonic power of discursive practices. "Hegemony is leadership as well as domination in economic, political, cultural and ideological domains of a society" (FAIRCLOUGH, 2001, p. 123).

This leadership is in the production, distribution, consumption and interpretation of texts that contribute to the maintenance or transformation of social relations. Only with an analysis, such as that proposed by the author, one is able to see if the power relations, present in certain discursive activity, reaffirm or challenge the hegemonic discourses in circulation. According to these considerations, Fairclough (2001, p. 122) observes: "hegemony is power over society as a whole from one of the classes economically defined as fundamental in alliance with other social forces, but never reached only partially

and temporarily, as an 'unstable balance'.

In this perspective, the hegemony is part of a stage of constant struggles of groups that seek to maintain their power over society. But it is necessary to be understood as an "unstable balance", because the social practices are open, in constant and varied interpretations, with possible changes, signaling possibilities of change. It is, thus, a striking characteristic of contemporary society and of particular interest of the Critical Discourse Analysis - CDA.

Thus, the analyses of the CDA proposed by Fairclough seek to articulate all the elements of a discursive practice, which are not only under the gaze of the language, as a closed system. They are in the intention to draw up a research of comprehensive discursive aspects that are in the social practices and may be permeated by the language during the discourse. This means that, for an effective communication to occur, social actors must belong to a group in which the words have the same meanings referring to specific circumstances in certain time period and social context.

Many reflections can be established by the analysis of the words delivered in a discourse. Every discourse comes from a process of understanding of voices previously spoken, which passed through the ideology of the subject and acquired significance for them.

In this sense, a subject does not create new words, just contextualizes, according to their significance for the group to which he/she belongs. Everything that is said has already been the answer of previous discourses, which, in the process of verbal interaction, constitutes the "I" while thinking subject and belonging to a social group.

The theories of Bakhtin and of Fairclough are close, as one can see in the words of Bakhtin (2006, p. 41 when emphasizing that:

> [...] the word literally penetrates in all relations between individuals, in relations of cooperation, in those ideology-based, in the random encounters of everyday life, the relations of political character, etc. The words are woven from a multitude of ideological wires and serve as a plot to all social relations in all areas. It is therefore clear that the word will always be the most sensitive indicator of all social transformations [...].

In this way, the sense used in the said word merges with the action, acquiring the power to persuade the other with the conceptions of the speaker. In the same way, the written word also has this power over the world, when the subject uses persuasive elements capable of provoking a response from the other and, with this, lead him/her to agree with his/her discourse or text.

In this sense, the reflections about dialogism presented by Bakhtin, the theoretician underscores the importance of responsive active attitude, which implies a provocation on the part of the speaker, in the expectation of a response to determined discourse, i.e.: "The listener, when perceiving and understanding the (linguistic) meaning of the discourse, occupies simultaneously in relation to him/her an active responsive position: to agree or disagree with him/her (wholly or partially), supplementing it, applying it and preparing him/herself to use it, etc." (BAKHTIN, 2010, p. 271). To this end, it is necessary to mobilize a set of socially constructed experiences, in order to issue a point of view of the interlocutor, at certain

moment of verbal communication.

The language becomes evident, therefore, as essentially dialogical. Dialogical in the widest sense of the word, considering that all and any speech implies the involvement of other already produced, as well as the dialog with those who will still be developed. In this way, the subject, in the Bakhtinian perspective of language, interacts socially, seeking, from his/her interlocutor, a response for each enunciating act. In this approach, each enunciating act is constituted by a plurality of voices that are interwoven, which means:

> The statement is a link in the chain of discursive communication and cannot be separated from the preceding links that determine both outside as inside, generating, in them, direct responsive attitudes and dialogical resonances. However, the statement is not connected only to previous links, but also to subsequent discursive communication. When the statement is created by a speaker, such linkages do not exist. Since the beginning, however, the statement is built taking into account the responsive attitudes, in favor of which it, in essence, is created. The role of others for whom the statement is built is exceptionally large [...] (BAKHTIN, 2010, p. 300).

The dialog, therefore, is only possible when the author and interlocutor talk between themselves by means of statements and when there is mutual understanding, this understanding fosters the responsive attitude, amplifying the communicative chain. This process emerges from the definition of statement, which can be defined as "a pure product of social interaction, whether an act of speech determined by the immediate situation or by the wider context that constitutes the set of conditions of life of a given linguistic community" (BAKHTIN, 2006, p. 126).

In this way, the statements created in the formation of the text can be individual, but employ genders constructed from social practices are consolidated in the group of social conviviality, who suffer changes over time and, therefore, become rich and great variation as they accompany the evolution of subjects and their interaction in social life. The genders of discourse vary between the simple dialogs conducted in from informal situations until scientific or literary writings, oral and written texts.

Bakhtin (2006, p. 34) explains how the process of awareness happens, which, even individual, is ideological:

> The decentralized, interactive subject, forms his/her conscience by ideological chain. This ideological chain extends from each individual consciousness, connecting to each other. The signs only emerge, definitely, in the process of interaction between an individual consciousness and one another. And the individual consciousness itself is full of signs. The consciousness only becomes aware when permeated by ideological (semiotic) content and consequently [...], only in the process of social interaction.

In this direction, the positions of Fairclough complement the studies of Bakhtin, because, for this theorist, the relations established by the language result from the connection between language and power

in the discursive act, stating that all linguistic activity configures itself as a discourse, a social practice in which relations are built, according to the interests of their speakers.

This practice is the basis of the construction and negotiation of knowledge. The discursive participants build the meaning when getting involved and engaging others in the discourse, in various circumstances, as a form of exchange, of social participation. This demonstrates the discursive creativity, in the Faircloughnian conception, results of the relation of discourses that become or remain as their contexts.

Bakhtin (2010, p. 15) emphasizes that "the verbal communication, inseparable from other forms of communication, implies conflicts, relations of domination and resistance, adaptation or resistance to the hierarchy, use of language by the ruling class to strengthen its power". This leads to a discussion that the speaker uses the most varied language resources to build his/her speech and persuade his/her listener, according to his/her particular interests.

Each discourse established with society, each text or statement produced, is marked by an ideology, by means of which the speaker tries to persuade the other and modify, or even strengthen the mind of the reader or receiver, even if involuntarily. For Fairclough (2001, p. 93), "the discursive constitution of society does not emanate from a free game of ideas in people's heads, but from a social practice that is firmly rooted in material, concrete social structures, directing to them."

It is important to establish, in this moment, the distinction between text and discourse. Fiorin (2011, p. 148), author who seeks to clarify these two terminologies, points out that "[..] the discourse is the plan of the content, while the text is the plan of the expression. [...] The text is the manifestation of a discourse. Thus, the text logically presupposes the discourse, which is, by implication, prior to it". The author adds that the discourse is of the immanence order, and the text is of the manifestation field order and, with this, through the discourse, the subject is known, as well as his/her thinking, his/her perception of the world.

Fairclough (2001, p. 91) states that "the discourse is a practice not only of representation of the world, but also of signification of the world, constituting and constituted the world in meaning". The subject means the world from establishing relations with it, which occurs in social relations, for example, work and family. The world knowledge of each subject is expressed by the effective use of discourse, and each subject has a diversified understanding of this knowledge, since each one of them elaborates his/her representations in a particular way, according to his/her experiences.

Fairclough emphasizes that the discourse becomes a social practice of reproduction and, at the same time, transformation of social realities. On the other hand, the ideological discourse is able to shape and transform discursive practices that constitute the society, thus being dialectic, able to emphasize the discursive formations or re-signify them, being molder and molded by society. According to Fairclough (2001, p. 100): "[...] when producing their world, the practices of the members are molded, unconsciously, by structures, power relations and the nature of social practice involving them, whose delimiting marks always go beyond the production of senses".

When the discourse is presented in the text, both written as oral, it constitutes and helps to constitute social identities, social relations and systems of beliefs, involving knowledge of the world that interferes in the social life of subjects.

In this conjecture, "[...] the discursive practice constitutes both conventionally as creatively, contributing to reproduce society, […] but also contributing to transform it" (FAIRCLOUGH, 2001, p. 92). These discursive social practices offered by language constitute the foundations of construction and negotiation of ways of knowing and relating.

The participants of the discourses construct the meaning when getting involved and engaging others in discourse, in various circumstances, as a form of exchange, of social participation in all spheres in which communication is present and is essential to the process of social inter(action) and the very survival of a community.

Thinking of the society without the attributes of language and its variables would be the same as not thinking of the human being but as animals without any relationship between themselves, because all manifestations are expressed by language, and, if the human being is social, lives in organized societies, the language reveals itself as a social practice.

As the language remains alive over the years, it also modifies and adapts to constant changes in society, in a permanent dialogic process. In this sense, Bakhtin (2006) emphasizes that life is also dialogic, to live is to be in constant dialog with oneself and the other with standards, opinions and situations that emanate from the verbal inter-relationship that social life demands; it is experiencing the advances and modifications of dependent language, and this movement means dialog with the language expressed in and by the collectivity.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This text sought to reflect about language as a social practice, in the perspective of theorists, such as Bakhtin (2006, 2010) and Fairclough (2001), in addition to authors who have contributions of reinterpretation of these theoretical propositions.

The notions of dialogism, in the Bakhtinian point of view, clarify that human communication only constitutes itself in relation to the other, which is why the process of social interaction occurs by means of the language, a process that goes beyond the mere decoding of the linguistic sign, having in view it involves the understanding of the world of the subject and the social context in which they are inserted. In this regard, Fairclough 2001) highlights the relevance of the context to address the language as a social practice, which highlights the proximity of the ideas of both scholars.

When addressing the speech, Fairclough (2001) emphasizes that, to understand the discourse, to know the context surrounding it becomes necessary, and to understand a discursive practice, it is essential to examine the social and cultural changes that have occurred.

For the theoreticians, the act of understanding the world occurs through a permanent dialog of events in the present and their relations of historic rescue of the past and projection of the future. Therefore, in the understanding of the relations of the discourse of another who understands the history that permeates this discourse.

The importance of the propositions of Bakhtin (2006, 2010) and Fairclough (2001) about the discourse and society lies in the fact that both recognize the centrality of discourse in social life, because, by means of discursive practices, the subjects interact in society, promoting social changes.

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