



LEARNING ENGLISH: AN IMPERATIVE IN CONTEMPORARY TIMES

APRENDER A LÍNGUA INGLESA: UM IMPERATIVO DA CONTEMPORANEIDADE

APRENDER LA LENGUA INGLESA: UN IMPERATIVO DE LA CONTEMPORANEIDAD

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ABSTRACT

This article presents the results of a study analyzing the meanings attributed to learning the English language (EL) in contemporary times. It was based on essays from prospective candidates for an English teacher position at an educational institution in southern Brazil, between 2016 and 2018. Authors such as Michel Foucault, Sylvio Gadelha, and López-Ruiz provided the theoretical contributions, including concepts such as self-entrepreneurship and human capital. The results revealed: 1) teachers perceive EL learning as a way to transform their futures, contributing to a developed nation; 2) the EL equips the learner with the necessities to be and act in a neoliberal society; 3) English knowledge is considered indispensable for obtaining “great jobs” and “better” positions. The research concluded that the EL is a tool associated with professional success, making it simultaneously a form of in/exclusion.

KEYWORDS: English Language. Human Capital. Entrepreneurship.

RESUMO

O artigo apresenta resultados de uma pesquisa que analisou os sentidos atribuídos à aprendizagem da Língua Inglesa (LI) na contemporaneidade. O corpus é formado por redações de candidatos à vaga de docente de inglês em uma instituição de ensino no RS, entre 2016 e 2018. Como aportes teóricos, recorreu-se a autores como Michel Foucault, Sylvio Gadelha e López-Ruiz, operando com os conceitos de empreendedorismo de si e Capital Humano. Os resultados apontam que: 1) os professores percebem a aprendizagem da LI como forma de transformarem seus futuros, contribuindo para uma nação desenvolvida; 2) a LI completa o aprendiz com aquilo que ele necessita para ser, estar e agir na sociedade neoliberal; 3) saber inglês é considerado indispensável para a obtenção de “grandes empregos” e cargos “melhores”. A pesquisa concluiu que a LI é uma ferramenta associada ao sucesso profissional, configurando-se, ao mesmo tempo, em forma de in/exclusão.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Língua Inglesa. Capital Humano. Empreendedorismo.

RESUMÉN

El artículo presenta los resultados de una investigación que analizó los significados atribuidos al aprendizaje de la Lengua Inglesa (LI) en la época contemporánea. El corpus consta de ensayos de aspirantes al puesto de profesor de inglés en una institución educativa de RS, entre 2016 y 2018. Como aportes teóricos se utilizaron autores como Michel Foucault, Sylvio Gadelha y López-Ruiz, operando con conceptos de autoemprendimiento



y Capital Humano. Los resultados muestran que: 1) los docentes perciben el aprendizaje de la LI como una forma de transformar sus futuros, contribuyendo a una nación desarrollada; 2) La LI completa al aprendiz con lo que necesita para ser y actuar en la sociedad neoliberal; 3) Saber inglés se considera indispensable para obtener “buenos trabajos” y “mejores” puestos. La investigación concluyó que la LI es una herramienta asociada al éxito profesional, configurándose, al mismo tiempo, en forma de in/exclusión.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Lengua Inglesa. Capital Humano. Emprendimiento.

INTRODUCTION

We live in a society marked by linguistic variety, in the professional and educational spheres as well as communication between different cultural groups. Even in a country where Portuguese is the official language, Brazilians are constantly faced with the need to read, write, and speak in other languages and dialects. Among so many forms of expression, the English language is one of the most common. In fact, it is "the" most important, necessary, and useful in our daily lives, making its acquisition increasingly relevant. This article consists of reflections about the meanings attributed to learning the English language in contemporary times.

Since the middle of the sixteenth century, there has been foreign language learning in Brazil. Previously the interest was on teaching the so-called classical languages (Greek and Latin) and now the modern languages (French, German, English and, more recently, Spanish), which compose public and educational policies. The English language was specifically integrated in the Brazilian educational curriculum only in the 19th century, remaining there today (MIRANDA, 2015). Its hegemony in public and educational policies has been especially salient due to the relationship between Brazil and England (1808 - 1920) and between Brazil and the United States (1920 - present). Moreover, with the influx and establishment of multinational companies in the country, especially after the 1950s, learning English also became viewed as a unique opportunity (SANTOS, 2009) to get a job in these places.

Thus, the English language has become understood as a language of prestige and importance in our society. Being the language of the great world powers, it is consequently attributed with the role of official language in global business and transactions. Since the United States is the greatest economic, political, and military power in the world today, according to Parma (2013), its official language also constitutes itself as the “language of power”, guaranteeing, even if imaginary, access to the best jobs and interpersonal relationships.

This hegemony is also manifested in the educational arena. Official documents such as the National Educational Law (LDB) (BRASIL, 1996) and the Common National Curriculum (BNCC) (BRASIL, 2017) highlight the need for foreign language teaching in Brazilian schools. However, they only refer to the English language. Mandatory modern foreign language class beginning in sixth grade was legally required in the 1996 National Education Law. Yet, the new wording found in Law No. 13,415 from 2016, designated the foreign



language requirements to include exclusively English. Thus, making the teaching of other foreign languages optional, as shown in the comparison of the legislative excerpts below.

Art. 26. § 5º In the diversified portion of the curriculum, it will be mandatory beginning the fifth grade to teach at least one modern foreign language, the choice of which will be the responsibility of the school community, within the possibilities of the institution.

Art. 36. In the high school curriculum [...]: III - a modern foreign language will be included, as a mandatory subject, chosen by the school community, and a second will be optional based on the availability of the institution. (BRASIL, 1996).

Art. 26. § 5 In the elementary education curriculum, the English language will be offered beginning in the sixth grade. Art. 35. § 4 The high school curriculum must necessarily include the study of the English language and may offer other foreign languages as options, preferably Spanish, according to the availability of spaces and times defined by the education institutions. (BRASIL, 2016).

At the same time as the National Education Law was being changed in 1996, so was another officially relevant document, the Common National Curriculum, which established English in school curriculums. According to Dias (2018, p. 28), the reinforced the privileged place for learning English at school, highlighting that the language has “the ability to both enable and optimize access to technology, academic, and scientific knowledge.” In this sense, the documents presented help to illustrate that in the school’s content, as in the teaching of foreign languages, English language’s prominent role is not a result of neutral relations.

Studies carried out on meanings attributed to the English language, such as those of Leite (2013), Araújo-Silva (2012), and Parma (2013), show that there is an association between mastery of the English language and success as well as the possibility of “guaranteeing a better future” both in the media and in schools. Leite’s research (2013) analyzes how the English language is represented in texts in “Veja” Magazine’s education section between 2005 and 2010. The stories published associated English with a passport to ascend in professional life and also as a source of pleasure. Araújo-Silva (2012) examines video clips of American artists, among other media materials, establishing relationships between culture and consumption. Araújo-Silva (2012) points out that learning the English language goes beyond the sphere of purely linguistic knowledge, since by consuming the language, learners also consume the habits and ways of life associated with Anglophone countries, especially the United States and England. In addition, the examined materials affirm the role of these countries as a model of democracy and civilization, highlighting the “superiority” of the colonizers.

In another relevant study, Parma (2013) observes that there is an increasing demand in Brazilian society for English language courses beginning in early childhood, based on the commonly accepted truth, that “the sooner, the better”. The author uses discourse analysis to understand how the English language is constituted in the Brazilian imaginary as a foreign language that needs to be taught earlier and earlier, encouraging and establishing so many children’s English language courses throughout the country.

Considering the research that has already been developed around the theme of this article, we highlight that one of the possible contributions of this study is in the locus investigated:



English teachers competing for job opportunities in a vocational education institution. In addition, our research is anchored in theories that have yet to be fully explored in the literature we have examined, namely the relationship between the English language and the theory of human capital. In fact, this theory emerged from the Chicago School in the 1950s when it began to be seen as a factor in economic productivity. Theodore Schultz, a professor in the Department of Economics at the University of Chicago at the time, was the first to explain the productivity gains generated by the “human factor” in production (ANDRADE, 2010). This resulted in the Human Capital Theory, in which human labor, when qualified, becomes an important means for economic productivity.

Among other characteristics, this new way of thinking about the workers and their immaterial attributes sees communication not only as admissible, but as necessary, based on the cooperation between subjects, distinct from the division of labor in factories. Thus, the emphasis has shifted from the factory - an institution of standardized (re)production of goods - to the company, whose focus is innovation. Likewise, the use of the brain is privileged over the body, marking the transition from industrial capitalism to cognitive capitalism. As Saraiva and Veiga-Neto (2009, p.192) explain, whereas in industrial capitalism innovation was an exception, “in cognitive capitalism, invention becomes a continuous process, the exception becomes the rule.” It is therefore necessary to qualify human work through capacities, knowledge, competences, and personality attributes.

The desire for economic growth is one of the characteristics that constitutes the profile of the self-entrepreneur, that is so highly celebrated by companies. Hence, educating subjects to be good self-entrepreneurs has become one of the main roles that should guide educational institutions. As Gadelha (2009a) affirms, in the field of education, new discourse activities have gained scope and the power of persuasion, seeking to form individual-micro-enterprises, which have characteristics such as proactivity, flexibility, innovation, sense of opportunity, and a remarkable capacity to promote changes. This new subject, also called *Homo Oeconomicus*, the individual is described and pursued by the new work organizations, oriented to act in accordance with what Gadelha (2009a) calls *entrepreneurial ethos*.

Investing in oneself does not necessarily mean changing locations, but investing in constant change, even when remaining in the same place, because, “in this world few things are predetermined, and even less irrevocable. Few defeats are definitive, very few setbacks, irreversible; but no victory is final either” (BAUMAN, 2001, p. 78). Thus, the subject is responsible for self-management, which involves entrepreneurship, self-entrepreneurship, the creation of numerous short-term projects and innovation, because, like a company, the self-entrepreneur can go bankrupt, fail, collapse, making one feel that they are the only one responsible for their failure (LÓPEZ-RUIZ, 2009).

In the capitalist world, where the professional is seen “essentially as the manager of their own career” (LÓPEZ-RUIZ, 2009, p. 12), investing in themselves becomes the main responsibility and the desire for self-promotion and self-care is a constant obligation. Hence, the representation of knowledge, such as that the English language is now considered indispensable to the labor market, is a process that is not impartial (and could not be), as it is closely linked to the power relations that regulate our society.



In light of neoliberalism and contemporary capitalism, a tangle of words about the ways postmodern subjects are and live is produced. This inspires us to desire to be a highly educated, worldly, culturally knowledgeable, highly qualified individual able to compete on a global level for cutting-edge jobs, capable of producing and also constantly consuming. These are some of the characteristics of the lifestyle that the self-entrepreneurial subject must have in order to obtain so-called “professional success”.

Education is an area that is extremely impacted in this scenario, as it is tasked with training qualified subjects for the production process. Since the 1990, knowledge and qualification of skills have been based on a logic of capital investment made by the worker in their education (KLAUS, 2011). This logic is only possible due to the “development” status acquired by education over the years, an idea closely linked to learning the English language, as will be discussed in the following sections.

METHODOLOGY

As stated earlier, this article aims to analyze the meanings attributed to learning the English language in contemporary times. This study was guided by the questions: What statements are present in the teaching candidates’ essays regarding the importance of learning the English language? Can attributes be found in the essay that associate this learning to an investment? If so, what would the investment be?

The research material examined consisted of a set of 70 essays, written in the English language, by subjects involved in the selection process to be an English teacher at a professional educational institution in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, in southern Brazil, between 2016 and 2018. We were given 70 essays when we requested access from the institution. These were examined and constitute the empirical material of this investigation. Each essay was identified as: “participant 1”, “participant 2”, randomly. Some excerpts from the essays will be presented throughout the article.

To participate in the educational institution’s selection process, professionals had to present an undergraduate degree in the area, desirable teaching experience in language courses, among other requirements. In addition, the candidate's linguistic competence had to be proven in two stages, namely: I) eliminatory stage: consisting of the analysis of the data presented in the file, based on the requirements demanded by the vacancy; II) classification stages composed of: a) interview; b) essay test; c) mini-class. In the essay test, the candidates had to focus on one of the following four topics presented: teaching English today, the importance of the English language today, the importance of teaching English in early childhood education, and education currently.

We consider it pertinent to highlight the particular conditions that guide the candidates’ statements that are being analyzed here. These subjects were seeking employment opportunities in a vocational education institution. They also had their academic and/or professional experiences from specific places and the textual productions were also in a very



specific context, a job selection process. In addition, it should be noted that the topic of the essays directed its production. In other words, the candidates established an imaginary interlocutor, who will be in charge of accepting or rejecting their ideas. Thus, they are likely to be concerned with aligning with widely accepted ideas in society and similarly avoiding contradicting the ideals of the institution itself, bearing in mind that institutions want to hire teachers that captivate students/clients and keep them highly motivated and interested in studying in the language courses offered by the institution.

Moreover, the method used to examine the research material gathered (the 70 essays) was discourse analysis, as discussed by Michel Foucault. “Certainly,” the philosopher states, “speeches are made of signs; but what they do is more than using these signs to designate things. It is this more that makes them irreducible to the language and the act of speech. It is this more that needs to be shown and described” (FOUCAULT, 2008, p.55). Thus, the importance of emphasizing the statement is emphasized not as a formulation, but as a repeatable modality, which circulates through different networks of meaning and changes, such as the statement “the whole world speaks English”, as examined by Hernandez (2014). This researcher found that this statement acquired true status in Brazilian society when it was disseminated repeatedly in different media outlets that are linked to advertisements for language schools, reports, articles, testimonies, and interviews with specialists, such as successful educators, researchers, and entrepreneurs. Thus, the spread of the statement that the whole world speaks English implies the construction of meanings such as the expectation that English speakers will not encounter communication problems anywhere on the planet. As an inherent characteristic of the discourse, the statement “the world speaks English” ends up being inserted in other discursive formations, such as psychology, neurology, linguistics, which produce and add other truths about the initial proposition, such as: “English should be learned by a certain age, because later the individual will not be able to be fluent” (HERNANDEZ, 2014, p. 84).

As Fischer (2001) explains, our speech acts are inscribed within discursive formations that are established through regimes of truth, “which means that we are always obeying a set of rules, given historically, and affirming truths of a time. The things ‘said’, therefore, are radically tied to the dynamics of power and knowledge of their time” (FISCHER, 2001, p. 219). To describe a statement, therefore, is to comprehend these specificities, understand it as an event, as something that emerges in a certain time, in a certain place. In order to start the undertaking of a discursive analysis based on such assumptions, it is necessary to “[...] refuse the univocal explanations, easy interpretations and also the insistent search for the ultimate meaning or the hidden meaning of things” (FISCHER, 2001, p. 198). Though one might think that discourse analysis is about seeking hidden, concealed, or intentionally misrepresented signifiers in order to reveal their true intention, Foucault instead focuses on how to think about “things said”, about the concrete practices that are alive in speech and that feed on them.

Understanding investigative doing as an exercise in the search for truths (BUJES, 2007), we sought to discuss these issues, aware that we present some of the multiple analyses possible about learning the English language. We try to follow Michel Foucault’s steps, in the sense of seeking to see beyond immediate appearances, problematizing the notion that “it is necessary



to learn English”. The next section highlights some of the views we attributed to the selected research material.

THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE AS AN INVESTMENT

After examining the research material gathered, education and learning of the English language were proven to be seen as an investment that “must be carried out” for individuals to achieve personal and professional success, as shown in the excerpts below:

People definitely have the right to get as much education as they want, because there are no limits to it, no matter the age. Therefore, **education is the only bridge that leads people to better futures, as it plays a significant role in the development of a country.** [Participant 56, emphasis added].

Nowadays, **education is the key to success.** It not only changes the way you see the world, but it also helps you to think for yourself. Due to its **power and capacity for transformation,** education is a privilege [Participant 53, emphasis added].

We guide our children and young people to the English language responsibly and with the appropriate approach, in addition to making sure that **we are training them for the necessary knowledge that is the best that a human being can transform the world around us.** [Participant 8, emphasis added].

By affirming that education is the basis of everything and plays a significant role in the country, the candidates demonstrate that investing in education is not only important but also a duty. They therefore justify that it is essential for personal growth and for the developed world. Inspired by Schultz (1967), López-Ruiz (2004) highlights that in our society there is the production of a specific way of being a successful subject associated with the wealth, development, and progress of the individual and the country. This logic enables the phrases that emerge from the essays analyzed in this study, such as “[...] education is the only bridge that leads people to better futures, since it plays a significant role in the development of a nation.”

Another excerpt, taken from one of the essays examined, represents the way individuals think about education, associating it with an important collective investment: “only with a good plan and investments in education, can we overcome poverty and elevate our nation to a new level” (Participant 13). These words show that the candidate is included in a larger instance that invites them and everyone else as a nation, to invest in education as a means of addressing poverty. Another candidate reinforces this idea by saying that: “some people do not think that it is important to study and learn English and this is very sad and makes the country regress” (Participant 44). We can see that in addition to concern, there is a strong intention that each person does their part, at the same time there is stern criticism of those who do not invest in knowledge and, therefore, do not collaborate in the country’s progress.

The excerpts presented thus far mobilize the idea that learning the English language can be understood as an “investment”. The Human Capital Theory, highlighted in the previous section, points out that development is not measured only by physical capital, but also by the



capital invested in people. Whereas physical capital is governed by property rights, which can be destroyed, sold, transferred, given away, etc., the human capital that is acquired through education can never be lent or transferred from one individual to another. This is precisely why the word “investment” is used, quite distinct from the term “expense”. Hence, a person who spends time and money to attend a language or graduate course is making an “investment” in themselves. The notion of investment can be seen in excerpts such as “Education is constantly evolving, but there is one thing that will never change: the English knowledge you acquire is yours, and no one will be able to take it away from you” (Participant 41). In making this statement, the candidate affirms the notion of investment as a durable asset. Unlike a cell phone, whose low durability is all too familiar to us, knowledge is understood as something that remains in our lives and will be useful to us no matter the circumstances.

The distinction between consumption and investment is a central component of human capital in Schultz’, the father of Human Capital Theory (LÓPEZ-RUIZ, 2009), first texts. As an economist, he argues that a problem has arisen that was not encountered before when only accounting for physical capital goods. Yet we must ask: How can we distinguish between consumption and investment spending? Thus, we use this theory to question, for example, the meanings attributed by participant 5 when writing: “[learning English allows the subject] to pursue the best version of himself.” Here, human behavior has become the object of political economy, and it is important for scholars in the area to also understand the internal rationality that motivates the subject to consume, relate, and make choices. From the excerpts below, we can see that there is a preceding rationalization process for subjects wishing to invest in learning the English language, aiming to prove that spending money, effort, and time gaining this knowledge is truly an “investment”.

When we think about education, we normally think of regular education, which basically consists of nine years of elementary school, three or four years of high school, and four or five years of college. For most students, this is synonymous with a **promising career. Yet experience tells us that there are several other things that must be taken into account, such as, for example, other learning activities, such as a foreign language or two.** [Participant 20, emphasis added].

Nowadays it is really important for anyone to know a second language, especially English, which is the most widely spoken around the world. **It is important not only in the current situation students are facing, but also for the future and job opportunities.** [Participant 2, emphasis added].

In the first excerpt, the candidate evaluates regular education - in their opinion, high school, and completed higher education - as insufficient to guarantee a “promising career”, seeing additional knowledge, such as “a foreign language”, as necessary. A rationalization about what investments should be made in human capital is also evident, taking into account that the goal is a “promising career”. Looking to a set of “extracurricular” knowledge, the candidate chooses the English language as the one that will enable them to reach that goal. Both excerpts present learning English as a synonym for a “promising career” and “important for the future and for job opportunities”. Thus, this knowledge is seen as an “investment” and not an “expense”.

Another issue of interest to theorists studying human capital and which is present in the excerpts is the relationship between present/future and consumption/investment. According to López-Ruiz (2009, p. 209), this relationship explains the transformation from “consumption” to “investment”, because “[...] people capitalize themselves by consuming: ‘I consume today for my future’; or, what turns out to be the same, ‘I postpone my satisfaction by consuming now’.” According to the author, the previous redefinition of consumption in terms of investment allows us to make the following statement: “‘I invest today for my future,’ ‘I postpone my satisfaction by investing now’.” Investing in learning the English language, therefore, means thinking of that language as a competence that will bring today’s learner a series of future possibilities, as expressed by participant 2.

It was possible to observe that the candidates make use of a very complex argumentative web that establishes learning the English language as an investment, making it impossible to dissociate the relationship between the working subject and capital production, as shown in the excerpts below:

English is the second most commonly spoken language in the world, it is extremely important for both travel and business. [...] **Many excellent opportunities are available for young people studying abroad with full scholarships at major universities** like Cambridge and Yale. [Participant 51, emphasis added].

[...] English is used as an official business language across the planet, and here in Brazil, it is no different. **And in addition to that, we use English in our daily lives, in sports, music, and TV.** So, we are always in touch with it. But let’s talk about business. **Everyone wants a good job, with a good salary,** in a big company, and nowadays, speaking English is something that can decide whether you will get the job or not [Participant 38, emphasis added].

Mentioning that fluency in English can be useful at work, for studies, on trips, in conversations with family and friends who live in other countries, and even in our daily routine, the need to learn the English language is clearly described in the candidates’ words, as a tool that allows the subject to be and act according to the expectations of contemporary society. Other examples of these expectations are opportunities that cannot be ignored, such as full scholarships at important universities abroad and job openings in companies that provide training and specialized courses.

If we make up the realities of the world from the things we say, we can affirm that assertions such as “speaking English is something that can decide whether you will get the job or not” support that learning the English language is projected as an indispensable investment in a context with characteristics linked to capitalist and neoliberal expectations such as competition, the desire for success, and ascension prevailing in society. When guided by these principles, the subject finds themselves induced to manage their life as a business, making them equivalent to previously described new concept of economic agent, who assumes responsibility for their agency, searching for additional qualifications, possessing several types of knowledge, and bringing this knowledge to other activities throughout life (TAVARES, 2014).



We therefore hope to have shown that the English language is understood as a necessary skill for an individual's development, progress, and success as well as being represented as an indispensable opportunity to distinguish oneself in the job market. Thus, it can be said that there is an "imperative" associated with learning the English language found in the essays, appearing to be an irreversible need for the subject to act, exist, and become a productive successful business person with a great career.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this concluding section we intend to present some of the truth effects that the statement "it is important to learn the English language" generates for contemporary individuals. One of these effects is related to the incorporation of values that govern business logic in contemporary forms of life, regulating subjectivities, and making individuals self-entrepreneurs. What used to be access to education has become "training" for ultra-competitive daily life. Moreover, these changes have brought with them a new lifestyle, with values that guide the individual to understand themselves as an enterprise and, with this, to change their work routine, career, personal relationships, and all areas of their lives.

Thus, this study verified that the English language is shown as a tool that makes the learner more useful, productive, and aligned with the characteristics required by our society. Knowing the English language therefore allows the entrepreneurial subject to find the "best opportunities", driven by ambition and the desire for success, opting for daily choices increasingly marked by economic utility analysis.

The responsibility to search for the best opportunities in the endeavor towards long-awaited success, as we tried to point out in the article, lies with the individual. In times when the nation-state no longer tries to eliminate ambiguities, to define what is right and wrong, friend or foe, neighbor or stranger, choices and decisions become faced individually, in the private sphere. There is, therefore, a shift in social control, previously exercised by the State, but which is now mediated by the market, enabling space for the neoliberal discourse to legitimize itself as a guide for individual actions.

If the market was previously a place for mass consumption it has been transformed into a space for investment. Hence becoming excellent for a new political rationality based on the institutionalization of a competitive dynamic. With a logic where individuals constantly feel obliged to take risks and responsibility for themselves, they are insecure in a market with increasingly high unemployment rates that instigates rivalries with all of those around. Guided by subjectivation processes and policies, individuals are continually less able to extricate themselves from the values proclaimed by the market. With the market as a normative principle, the state must be constantly active in neoliberal logic, while simultaneously stimulating societal participation.

Thus, being constantly updated is a way of remaining attractive to the market, in fact it is a necessity not to be excluded from the universe of possibilities that opens up through learning the English Language. If through implicit rules and practices we are led to enter and remain in the economic game of neoliberalism, this study presents evidence that points to the English



language as one of those rules that help in the regulation of the market, inviting everyone to be part of that game, and, at the same time, creating their own forms of in/exclusion.

Thus, knowing English is necessary to take the place that the *other* cannot occupy because they do not have knowledge of the language, generating the exclusion of those who do not speak. The group of workers who are not willing to learn the English language will be doomed to remain on the margins of the labor market, “because there is no chance of rising, within the capitalist system, for those who do not submit to its rules” (SANTOS, 2009, p.61). Hence, as expressed in many of the essays examined, learning the “planet’s official language” is one of the rules that operates in our contemporary capitalist system. It is possible to recognize professional success and financial growth in our society in line with a capitalist discourse of globalization and work. As a result, the group of workers who do adhere will be on the margins of the labor market, and this excluded group will have less important jobs, in equally smaller companies.

The inclusion in the “privileged” group of those who speak English implies the existence of exclusion of those who did not seek the opportunity to learn it. A “good” job opportunity, as mentioned in some essays, is conditioned on the recruitment of workers whose only requirement is to speak English fluently. Reading between the lines, it can be interpreted that bad jobs do not require knowledge of the language. In other words, it can be understood that jobs obtained without the requirement of knowing English will be poor quality jobs. Therefore, based on our analysis, we observed the presence of the discourse that the learning of the English language is an imperative, since the language is highlighted as a tool that acts in line with “today’s world”, in which the subject needs to constantly adapt.

Finally, it is important to highlight that the research carried out sought to inquire and discuss some of the meanings attributed to the learning of the English Language in contemporary times, keeping in mind its “manufactured” character (BUJES, 2007, p. 25), that is, the data and considerations that we present represent our view of the research material gathered, using the chosen theoretical lenses. We are sure that there are many possibilities to look at the theme presented in this research, which instigates and moves us to do so in future studies.

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