



# Emotions in a Brazilian teacher's experience report on remote English teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic

## *As emoções no relato de experiência de uma professora brasileira sobre o ensino remoto de língua inglesa durante a pandemia de COVID-19*

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**ABSTRACT:** Grounded on the dialogical perspective of language and the critical approach to the study of language teacher emotions, this paper aims to discuss the emotions of an English teacher in her remote teaching experience in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. We present a case study based on the discourse analysis of the teacher's experience report during her participation in a roundtable discussion about English teaching in pandemic times. The online event took place in the first semester of 2020, during the University Week of a college located in the countryside of Ceará State, Brazil. Considering the concrete context and the broader contexts of discursive production, our analysis of the teacher's utterance indicates the predominance of emotional distress in power relations, especially, with academic, pedagogical, and legislative discourses. Notwithstanding, she reveals self-confidence in face of the demand for frequently using the computer and WhatsApp in remote language teaching.

**KEYWORDS:** emotions; English language; remote teaching; discourse.

**RESUMO:** Fundamentados na perspectiva dialógica da linguagem e na abordagem crítica do estudo das emoções no ensino de línguas, objetivamos discutir as emoções de uma professora de língua inglesa no seu relato de experiência de ensino remoto no contexto da pandemia de COVID-19. Apresentamos um estudo de caso baseado na análise de discurso do relato de experiência da professora durante sua participação em uma mesa-redonda sobre o ensino de língua inglesa em tempos de pandemia. O evento aconteceu de forma remota no primeiro semestre de 2020, na Semana Universitária de uma faculdade do interior do Ceará, no Brasil. Considerando o contexto concreto e os contextos mais amplos de produção do discurso, nossa análise do enunciado da professora indica a predominância da emoção de angústia nas relações de poder, sobretudo, com os discursos acadêmico, pedagógico e legislativo. Não obstante, a professora revela autoconfiança frente à demanda do uso frequente do computador e do WhatsApp no ensino remoto.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** emoções; língua inglesa; ensino remoto; discurso.

## 1 Introduction

After the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, caused by the new coronavirus (Sars-CoV-2), schools in Brazil still oscillated between closing or reopening in-person instruction in accordance with the infection rates, in a movement that flowed as the weekly epidemiological records were constantly assessed. In this scenario, public basic and higher education have been investing in remote teaching as an alternative for undertaking their activities safely.

The emergency transition from in-person classroom activities to remote teaching in 2020 required a sudden adaptation, along with the urgent need to articulate the integration of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in teachers' daily practices, issues that have been addressed by recent studies in Applied Linguistics (BASTOS; LIMA, 2020; PAES; FREITAS, 2020; ALVES; SILVA; BESSA, 2021). In the context of public schools, access to ICT by low-income students has become a major challenge. It is worth mentioning that Brazilian Applied Linguistics has explicitly focused on the discursive dimensions of social, political, ethnic, cultural, and educational inequalities. These papers predominantly refer to the language teaching-learning process, teacher training and language policies worldwide, as recently shown by the special issue of the journal *Raído*, organized by Szundy and Guimarães (2020) for the 30th anniversary of the Brazilian Applied Linguistics Association (ALAB). Thus, in the midst of lost lives, physical distancing recommendations and work overloads in households, we justify the relevance of discussing, within the scope of Applied Linguistics (AL), how the emotions of an English teacher are discursively interrelated to her experience in remote teaching.

Based on international literature about teacher emotions, we realize that affective issues were not considered significant to AL research in a recent past (cf. NIAS, 1996; PAVLENKO, 2013; BARCELOS, 2015). However, emotions started to gain greater visibility from the 1990s onwards, with a meaningful volume of papers suggesting the importance of emotion for teacher development and its influence on language teaching. Brazilian researcher Rodrigo Aragão, for instance, has investigated affective discourses in interface with language teaching and digital technologies, discussing the emotions of English teachers when using audio recording resources to communicate in the teaching-learning process (ARAGÃO, 2017; ARAGÃO; PAIVA; GOMES JÚNIOR, 2017).

Concerned with language teaching and the use of digital technologies in public schools in the Northeast of Brazil (BASTOS; LIMA, 2020; DANTAS; LIMA, 2020; LIMA; MENDES, 2020), our Research Group in Language Teaching-Learning (IFRN/CNPq) has recently shed light on the relationship between emotions and remote teaching during the pandemic. In response to this, grounded on the dialogical perspective of language and the critical approach to the study of language teacher emotions, this paper aims to discuss the emotions of an English teacher in her remote teaching experience in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. For this purpose, we base our discussion, above all, in the dialogue that we establish with Bakhtin (2016), Vološinov/Volóchinov<sup>1</sup> (1986/2018), and Benesch (2012, 2017, 2018). Therefore, we present a case study based on the discourse analysis of a teacher's experience report during her participation in a roundtable discussion on English teaching in pandemic times. The online event took place during the first semester of 2020, during the University Week of a college located in the countryside of Ceará state, Brazil.

Our study is organized into six sections. After this introduction, we present the dialogical principles that support the concept of language as discursive interaction. Next, we describe the research on emotions, positioning ourselves in favor of a critical approach to language teacher emotions. This interface serves as the epistemic-methodological basis, which we present in the fourth section, for the analysis of emotions from a dialogical perspective. In the fifth section, we discuss the data taking the English teacher's experience report on remote teaching during the

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<sup>1</sup> There are different spellings and accent marks referring to the author's name in different editions of *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, such as Volóchinov, Voloshinov, and Vološinov. In this paper, we have chosen to quote the Portuguese translation by Sheila Grillo and Ekaterina Vólkova Américo, published in 2018 by Editora 34, and the English translation by Ladislav Matejka and I. R. Titunik, published in 1986 by the Harvard University Press.

pandemic as a concrete utterance. Finally, we proceed to our considerations about some possible pedagogical impacts of this study and methodological paths for the continuity of research on English teacher emotions from a dialogical perspective.

## 2 The dialogical perspective of language

The dialogical perspective that bases our study undertakes language as discursive interaction (VOLÓCHINOV, 2018). From this viewpoint, we assume that language is conceived in its process of realization, being continuous, uninterrupted, and linked to its ideological content; that is, we understand language in its concrete and living integrity – the discourse, carried out through utterances/texts, which are units of the discursive flow. In addition, we start from the premise that every utterance responds to others and is oriented towards a response/the other. In the words of Vološinov (1986, p. 72), any utterance “[...] is but one link in a continuous chain of speech performances. Each monument carries on the work of its predecessors, polemizing with them, expecting active, responsive understanding, and anticipating such understanding in return”.

Taking this into account, the dialogical nature of the utterance lies in the bilateral dynamics of social interactions among interlocutors. In other words, as socially organized subjects, we communicate in response *to* someone and *for* someone, using words as bridges to express ourselves in relation to each other. By doing that, we understand that every utterance is constituted from an evaluative point of view, that is, every text has an axiological relation to its subject. So, every utterance is constituted between two socially organized subjects (real interlocutor or the image of the average representative of a social group), being determined by the conditions of its production, its closest social situation. Thereby, we agree that

Utterance as such is wholly a product of social interaction, both of the immediate sort as determined by the circumstances of the discourse, and of the more general kind, as determined by the whole aggregate of conditions under which any given community of speakers operates. (VOLOŠINOV, 1986, p. 93).

Consequently, while considering language as discursive interaction, we understand dialogue in two perspectives: in the strict sense, as a form, the most important form of discursive communication; and, in the broad sense, like any form of discursive communication, regardless of type. Therefore, the dialogical perspective of language estimates that the utterance participates in a kind of “[...]”

ideological colloquy of large scale: it responds to something, objects to something, affirms something, anticipates possible responses and objections, seeks support, and so on” (VOLOŠINOV, 1986, p. 95).

Considering this, as researchers who take the dialogical perspective of language as a premise, it is our responsibility to observe the utterances and discuss the dynamic interrelationships between the discourses that constitute them. In other terms, we assume that our discussion should not be limited to the linguistic form of the utterance, to an individual phenomenon, or an isolated monological utterance, but rather to the acknowledgement of social reality and the events that involve it, entering the dimension of discourse. As we learn from Brait (2006), once we overcome the linguistic materiality of the utterance, we face the discourse in the context of its interrelations with other utterances to understand how meanings are produced, through an analysis that does not start from closed categories, but from the context and its implications in the utterance.

Moreover, it is important to highlight two more characteristics of the utterance that implicate the epistemic-methodological choices in this paper: its relative stability and its limit. Regarding the relative stability, supported by Bakhtin (2016), we understand that relatively stable forms of utterances are produced and employed in each field of human activity, corresponding to the specific conditions of their spheres of communication. About the limit, we learn that “The limits of each concrete utterance as a unit of discursive communication are defined by the alternation of the subjects of the discourse, that is, by the alternation of the speakers”<sup>2</sup> (*ibidem*, p. 29).

Thus, in our study, we consider the English teacher’s experience report on remote teaching during the pandemic as a concrete utterance in discourse interaction, that is, constituted by several other discourses that it *responds to* as well as by several other discourses it *addresses*. The communication took place in an online event held in the first semester of 2020, during the University Week of a college located in Ceará state, Brazil. In face of this, the teacher’s utterance is produced in the academic setting, in response to a question from the roundtable mediator about the teacher’s experience in remote teaching. When we discuss the teacher’s experience report from a dialogical perspective, our interpretation understands it as an utterance that responds to others, by agreeing, disagreeing, evaluating other utterances through it, submitting or opposing the discourses that

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<sup>2</sup> Our translation to: “Os limites de cada enunciado concreto como unidade da comunicação discursiva são definidos pela alternância dos sujeitos do discurso, ou seja, pela alternância dos falantes.” (BAKHTIN, 2016, p. 29)

affect the human experience. Consequently, we take the experiences of English language remote teaching during the pandemic as a social reality that engenders different emotions, for which we adopt the critical approach that we present in the next section.

### **3 Understanding teacher emotions discursively**

In this section, we examine some epistemological possibilities in teacher emotions studies. First, we present the main scholarly literature identified in systematic reviews produced by Brazilian researchers in national and international journals in the last decade. Then, we explore the concepts proposed by authors affiliated with the critical and discursive approach to emotions, the ones we elect in this paper. Finally, we review some of the most recent contributions from this perspective.

#### **3.1 Research trends identified in systematic reviews**

According to the historical systematization presented by Pavlenko (2013), studies on teacher emotion in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) affiliated with several theoretical schools throughout the decades: the cognitive perspective in the 1960s; the socio-psychological in the 1970s; the narrative in the 1980s; the sociocultural perspectives in the 1990s; and the critical approaches in the 2000s, with a special interest in questioning power relations in the teaching-learning process. However, the so-called affective turn (PAVLENKO, 2013) takes place from the 2000s on, when the interest in the social dimension and the role of emotions in language teaching-learning relationships gains greater visibility.

In an international review of studies on emotions, beliefs, and identities in language teaching, Barcelos (2015) identifies that the majority of papers affiliate with cognitive and sociocultural approaches. When analyzing the constructs presented in these studies, the author establishes the following relationships: i) emotions and beliefs influence and model each other interactively and constitute teachers' identities; and ii) it is also necessary to analyze the group's interactions, discourses, and practices from a social-constructivist perspective to understand how events in the classroom shape identities, emotions, and beliefs (BARCELOS, 2015). According to the data collected, discussions about emotions and relations of power, ideology, and culture, as proposed by Zembylas (2003) and supported by Benesch (2012), remained marginalized up until then.

More recently, an international review by Barcelos and Ruohotie-Lythy (2018) has pointed to a sociocultural shift in teachers' emotions and beliefs research, considering them as the result of personal circumstances (personality, gender, age, etc.) combined with historical, social, political and cultural roots that configure the belief systems and the organizational structures of the environments where one works. In addition, this perspective defends the action of a reciprocal influence between the subject and the collective experiences of the teacher, that is, identifying and understanding teachers' emotions represent a potential for change in the educational process.

Regarding the Brazilian research on emotions in English language teaching, Aragão and Barcelos (2018) present a mapping of studies conducted in the period from 2007 to 2017. In these authors' view, these studies are categorized into three theoretical frameworks: 1) the post-structuralist, based especially on the contributions of Zembylas (2003) on the relationship of emotions with social, cultural, and power structures; 2) the biology of cognition, which deals with emotions as dynamic bodily dispositions that influence the possibilities of being and acting in the environment, and highlights the emotional awareness process; and 3) the sociocultural theory, which emphasizes how emotions and experiences influence each other, in a continuous flow of perception and reinterpretation.

In their survey, Aragão and Barcelos (2018) found that the majority of the researchers are interested in cognitive principles, representing eight of 12 studies. Three of the consulted papers follow the post-structuralist theoretical framework, while only one of them is dedicated to the sociocultural perspective. In this analysis (ARAGÃO; BARCELOS, 2018), the reviewed studies consent to the classification of teacher emotions as positive (such as *happiness, joy, contentment*) or negative (*fear, anger, frustrations, sadness, insecurity, shame, loneliness*), and connect them to language experiences. According to the authors, these findings reveal a network of structural problems in the Brazilian educational system, especially related to language policies and the low status of English teaching in the country.

### 3.2 Emotions from a critical perspective: power relations on focus

The systematic reviews previously cited (BARCELOS, 2015; BARCELOS; RUOHOTIE-LYTHY, 2018; ARAGÃO; BARCELOS, 2018) indicate a small number of studies that question the possibility of connections among emotions in language teaching and the discourses that reveal power relations. This political

and critical approach combined with a discursive perspective emerges as the latest tendency, which begins to resonate in AL and language teaching research, as demonstrated in Barcelos (2015) and Barcelos and Ruohotie-Lythy (2018). These initiatives (PAVLENKO, 2013; BENESCH, 2012, 2017; GKONOU; MILLER, 2021) seek to understand what emotions *do* from a contextual point of view (historical, cultural, socio-political), instead of just theorizing what they *are*. Accordingly, two important notions originally introduced by Hochschild (1979) in Social Sciences are still discussed and reviewed in the critical approach nowadays: the concepts of emotion work/labor and feeling rules. The author refers to emotion work as “the act of trying to change in degree or quality an emotion or feeling” (HOCHSCHILD, 1979, p. 561). This effort takes place in response to socially shared guidelines about what is considered appropriate to feel or what is not. These conventions are called feeling rules, which would be “a set of socially shared, albeit often latent (not thought about unless probed at), rules” (*ibidem*, p. 563).

Considering feeling rules as a reflection of social patterns and current discourses in the most diverse professional spheres, critical approaches intend to analyze discourses about emotions as historicized, immersed in complex cultural, ideological, and power issues, emphasizing the role of language and social practices. As one of the main exponents of this perspective, Zembylas (2011, p. 34) argues that:

[...] power relations are inherent in “emotion talk” and shape the expression of emotions by permitting us to feel some emotions while prohibiting us from experiencing others (for example, through moral norms and explicit social values, e.g. efficiency, objectivity, neutrality). Unavoidably, then, resistance is a part of this process and power is productive, that is, power is not (only) repressive but produces knowledge and truth. (ZEMBYLAS, 2011, p. 34)

One of the possible directions to investigate the relationship between emotions and language teaching is configured in what Zembylas (2003, 2011) and Benesch (2012, 2017, 2018) designate as post-structuralist perspective. It aims at analyzing emotions through teachers’ experiences with normative discourses, in an attempt to understand how/if they reject or accept them, and how they define their own identities in this context.

The critical approach to emotions is based on the two seminal concepts previously mentioned (emotion labor and feeling rules), considering the complex web of power behind the discourses that institutionalize what is appropriate



to feel while teaching. The discussions encouraged by Zembylas (2011) and Benesch (2017) consider that emotion labor involves an active negotiation between what one feels and how one should feel (feeling rules), according to social expectations in work situations. Henceforth, we adopt Benesch's (2012, 2017, 2018) assumption, seeing emotion labor as the effort that teachers make to balance their emotions with those they consider appropriate in their practices. Studies by Benesch (2017, 2018) in the field of language teaching have applied these concepts in studies about the effort made by teachers to align their emotions with what is considered appropriate in their practice, in an attempt to minimize feelings of *frustration, anger, impatience, and guilt*, for instance. This discussion emphasizes that the values commonly accepted and considered exemplary in certain situations are dialogically constituted according to a historical and social consensus.

The current view on emotion labor embraced by other studies (cf. MILLER; GKONOU, 2018; BOTTURA, 2019; GKONOU; MILLER, 2021; OLIVEIRA, 2021) proposes a critical shift in Hochschild's (1979) original contribution, which emphasizes emotion work as an individual process. Benesch (2017) recognizes the existence of tacit feeling rules in the working environment of English teachers and the relationship between emotion labor and power inequalities. However, the author rejects the psychological perspective that emotions are internal states and contrasts her theoretical proposal by positioning emotions as part of social expectations on how one should feel in workplaces. Benesch (2017) also considers inequality of power as negotiable, susceptible to conformity or resistance, not as a fixed condition, as suggested by Hochschild (1979).

We share the same interests with these authors, but considering teachers' emotions as constituted and driven by intersubjective, cultural, ideological, and power relations, we choose to discuss emotions from a dialogical perspective. This way, stemming from the conception of language as discursive interaction that we presented in the previous section, we can produce meanings about the interrelationship between emotions and the practice of teaching English in a pandemic context, without disregarding the premises indicated by the authors who identify as post-structuralists. We also endorse the possibility of approximation between dialogism and the transgressive branch of AL (SZUNDY; MARTINS; MOREIRÃO, 2020; AMARAL; SILVA; GONÇALVES, 2020), for we believe in the inseparability between utterance and lived life. This is reflected in socially engaged research on language studies and teaching-learning relationships, strongly linked to their socio-historical and political production contexts.

In this paper, we also align with Zembylas (2003), once we accept that sharing experiences and becoming aware of emotional responses can be instruments of decision-making, empowerment, and collective resistance in the teaching praxis, undermining discourses that teachers should be strictly rational subjects. Furthermore, in consonance with Benesch (2012), we agree that, by giving emotions a prominent role in the teaching-learning process, not only do we highlight the affective experiences of teachers and learners, but we can also promote pedagogical changes, be they minimal or gradual.

Thus, in an interface with the dialogical perspective of language, in this study, we adopt Benesch's (2012) critical approach to emotions, accordingly: 1) neither should emotions be treated as subjective, irrational, and exclusively female events, nor should research be restricted to the cognitive approach; 2) nor should emotions be considered psychological and individual states, without regarding their social and embodied aspects – they should be understood according to influences of the interactional context, including the perspective of power relations; and 3) considering the dynamic nature of emotions, they should not be reduced, in the context of language teaching, to positive or negative categories.

### 3.3 Recent contributions to the critical approach to emotions

Considering the perspectives outlined so far, we take a critical approach to emotions to discuss English teaching in the context of the pandemic. In Brazil, the concept of emotion labor is discussed by Bottura (2019), who draws on emotions through a non-individual and non-cognitive bias, as proposed by Benesch (2012). Her Ph.D. thesis consists of an autoethnography of her experience as a Portuguese Welcoming Language teacher, having vulnerable immigrant women and refugees as learners in a public university context. According to the researcher, teaching a welcoming language is a process permeated by subjectivity and affectivity. Therefore, she questions how the dimension of affective awareness can reorient her praxis in an attempt of developing a more sensitive work amid situations of conflict that involve her students' intercultural, identity and gender issues, in order to achieve positive results in the target language.

Still in Brazil, Oliveira (2021) contributes to the critical/socio-political approach by examining the emotions of an English teacher from a public school in the context of critical language teaching recommended by the Curriculum Guidelines for High School. The teacher's narratives are grouped according to emotions such as *gratification*, *fear*, and *hope*. When choosing to work with progressive practices of critical literacy, the teacher is faced with contradictory

and anti-democratic discourses in the school environment. The discrepancy of these discourses in face of the teacher's standpoint results in emotions that fluctuate from *satisfaction* to *tiredness, anxiety, fear, and hope*. Resistance emotions, as Oliveira (2021) argues, are evidence that teachers' actions are affected by discourses that reproduce social practices.

Some of the latest international contributions on teacher emotions focus specifically on the transition from in-person lessons to remote education during the COVID-19 pandemic. In the study published by Macintyre, Gregerson and Mercer (2020), the participating teachers list their most stressful experiences, among them work overload, irregular working hours, online teaching and working from home. The strategies adopted to cope with these problems are: accepting the challenges, planning in advance and actively doing something about the situation. As reported by the authors, emotion labor similar to this was already reported in the context of pre-pandemic language teaching, considered one of the most stressful professions due to the inevitability of dealing with learners' anxiety, their insecurities with language skills and heterogeneous proficiencies. Not unexpectedly, the incidence of stress among teachers has increased due to the sudden shift of instructional mode to remote teaching, the lack of boundaries between work and home and the health concern (MACINTYRE; GREGERSEN; MERCER, 2020).

Next, we have the feminist reflective essay (NEWCOMB, 2020) by a female professor who discusses her journey in the context of the COVID-19 crisis in a neoliberal higher education institution in Queensland, Australia. The researcher covers the tensions between the academic demands and her personal beliefs, as she affirms that the pressure for high productivity, the concern with the emotional well-being, and the adaptation of students to digital technologies collide with her need to preserve her own family's health in the pandemic. For Newcomb (2020), the emotion labor that emerges from this crisis needs to be reflected critically to become a source of resistance against dominant sexist discourses.

Also in consonance with Benesch's (2017) critical approach to emotions and the basic concepts proposed by Hochschild (1979), Miller and Gkonou (2018) have developed a qualitative study with university professors from the United States and the United Kingdom. The objective was to identify the most common emotions experienced in their praxis, as well as to analyze how their relationship with students generate emotion labor and emotional rewards. The paper presents an inventory of 138 positive emotion-words selected by the participants, being *enthusiasm, happiness, caring, and satisfaction* the most frequent

among the positive emotions. On the other hand, *frustration*, *anxiety*, *irritation*, and *disillusion* are the most cited as negative emotions. The distinction between positive and negative categories, which is declined in Benesch's work, is adopted in Miller and Gkonou's study (2018) to facilitate the participants' understanding of the socially constructed connotations around emotions. In the interview phase, the teachers indicate a willingness to make a great effort to favor the learning environment, but they also signal emotion labor when they strive to align with the feeling rules, which are manifested in expectations of demonstrating *caring*, *optimism*, *empathy*, *patience* and *enthusiasm*, instead of allowing themselves to feel undesirable emotions such as *anger* and *frustration*. In the authors' analysis, the teachers' discourses reveal that feeling rules are not always a problematic aspect in the teaching experience. It is indispensable to recognize, however, that these emotions are not necessarily natural, but, rather, socially and politically constructed and instituted in teachers' daily work.

In a second paper, Gkonou and Miller (2021, p. 135, emphasis in original) have decided to no longer sort emotions into negative and positive categories; instead, they analyze them “*in relation to* other people and particular situations — situations that are shaped by local feeling rules.” In this work, the authors focus on the teachers' reflective practice as a way to manage emotions and raise awareness about the habitual feeling rules in their classrooms, imposed through power relationships as a way to discipline teachers' emotions. According to the study, implicit feeling rules have an impact on teaching praxis and influence teachers to undertake emotion labor to adapt to what is considered “being professional” (*ibidem*, p. 150).

Having made these theoretical basis considerations, we underpin the present study with the assumption that emotion labor is triggered by the professional demands of remote teaching in the pandemic and the feeling rules that are shared through different discursive spheres (BENESCH, 2012, 2017, 2018). In the next section, we present the methodological choices that we have made to analyze the emergence of emotions in a teacher's experience report on remote English teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## 4 Methodology

Our discourse analysis is built on the basis of two fundamental elements, namely: the acknowledgment of the importance of qualitative approaches to the investigation of emotions and the affiliation to what we call dialogical research.

First, we recognize that qualitative approaches have been predominant in teacher emotions' studies, making it possible to shed light on nuances that may surface when these professionals reflect on experiences (ZEMBYLAS; SCHUTZ, 2016; AGUDO, 2018). Secondly, because we bring the theoretical interface between the dialogical perspective of language and the critical approach to emotions, we follow what we call dialogical research.

Supported by Rohling (2014), we maintain that our theoretical interface leads to methodological choices that are not limited to validating theories themselves but are concerned with the construction of knowledge in the context of language studies, in a relevant and responsible manner. In this type of investigation, the theoretical-analytical parameters are: considering the concrete context and the broader contexts of discursive production/circulation; treating the categories as emerging from the relative regularity of the data, considering the particular and the general, the unstable and the stable, the new and the given; recognizing the relationship between researcher and object as neither neutral nor pre-determined, in which the subject is “[...] another (non-neutral) in the dialogue with the data (discourses)”<sup>3</sup> (ROHLING, 2014, p. 47). Thus, we justify the choice of the utterance that constitutes this case study's corpus by the fact that we are engaged in a broader research project<sup>4</sup> aimed at discussing the emotions of female English teachers from public schools in Ceará, Brazil. We assume that these emotions are discursively interrelated to their remote teaching experience in the context of the pandemic.

The corpus of this paper consists of a teacher's experience report during her participation in a roundtable discussion on English teaching in pandemic times. The online event took place during the first semester of 2020, during the University Week of a college located in the countryside of Ceará. Sara Rodrigues de França<sup>5</sup> is an in-service English teacher, who teaches eleven classes from middle

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<sup>3</sup> Our translation to: “[...] um outro (não neutro) no diálogo com os dados (discursos)” (ROHLING, 2014, p. 47).

<sup>4</sup> The broader research mentioned refers to the development of a master's thesis with the aim of analyzing the emotions in the discourse of public school female English teachers who worked with remote teaching during the pandemic in 2020. The research is under the approval of UERN's Research Ethics Committee, according to the Substantiated Opinion nº. 4.624.988.

<sup>5</sup> By signing a Consent Form, the participant has agreed to have her real name used in this paper and have her discourse analyzed. We ensure this research's ethics, once the video recording of the roundtable discussion is available online as an open access content in the event's official channel

to high school at the private teaching network and in a language course offered exclusively to high school students from the public education in Ceará. She shared her experience report during the roundtable entitled *English Teaching in Pandemic Times* (SEMANA DE LETRAS, 2020), held remotely on June 17, 2020 during the event called Semana de Letras, in which we took part as listeners. It was organized by the Faculty of Education, Sciences, and Letters (Fecli-UECE), located in Iguatu, Ceará, Brazilian Northeast. Data was collected by watching the video of the roundtable discussion, which was broadcast live and recorded on the event's official channel on YouTube<sup>6</sup>, where it remains available in open access. We segmented one of the participant's utterances – particularly the one that answers the question about teaching during the pandemic.

In view of this, this study corpus is constituted in the academic sphere, in response to a question from the roundtable mediator about the teacher's experience in remote education. According to the event description, available on its website<sup>7</sup>, the meeting aimed at fostering discussions about English teaching and the adversities faced by teachers in what we can call the first moment of the pandemic, drawing a parallel between the realities of basic and tertiary education. It is important to note that the event was produced as part of a language teacher undergraduate course; therefore, it was intended to promote opportunities for dialogues between theory and practice.

The concrete utterance that we analyzed discursively corresponds, in the immediate concrete situation, to the teacher's report when answering the roundtable mediator's question about how the teacher would be organizing her routine and what strategies she was using to teach eleven classes remotely. The limits of this utterance correspond to seven minutes of reporting, from 32'40" to 38'40" of the webcast available at Semana de Letras (2020), delimited by the alternation of speakers. Considering the immediate context of discursive production, the teacher's utterance emerges from tensions such as: the purpose of the event in the academic setting; the question of the roundtable mediator, who asks for information about her routine and teaching strategies in the pandemic; the uniqueness of the lived world, which is her experience with emergency remote teaching, brought through her discursive memory; among others. We emphasize that, although the purpose of

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on YouTube.

<sup>6</sup> Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0eMB9lry8lg&t=1926s>

<sup>7</sup> Available at: <https://www.even3.com.br/letrasvirtual/>

the event was not to talk about emotions, bringing teachers together to debate their professional experiences amid the pandemic and social distancing led us to assume that emotions would be present in their utterances in this debate; therefore, we chose to dialogue with the experience report.

We also clarify that the preference for dialoguing with a female's discourse derives from a feminist ideological position on our part in the face of gender inequalities faced by women in the professional and household spheres. In times of crisis, the implications are even greater for women due to the disproportionate burden of domestic chores while working from home in the context of social distancing, a debate that we wish to foster in the scientific sphere together with UN Women (2020), Oliveira, Queiroz and Diniz (2020), and others.

In our discussion, following the approach adopted by Benesch (2012), we avoid categorizing emotions as negative or positive, and we illustrate our analysis with excerpts from the teacher's utterance, considering the discursive clues of emotion labor and feeling rules. In addition to the aforementioned excerpts, we highlight in *italics* the clues of the teacher's discourse that we inserted in our discussion. Likewise, our discourse analysis also highlights the interrelationship of the discourses that constitute the experience report on teaching English remotely during the pandemic.

## 5 Data discussion

The teacher's experience report begins in response to the following question made by the roundtable mediator: "Could you tell us how you organize your routine, how are you teaching? Because you said you have eleven classes, isn't that right?" The first emotions we identify in the teacher's utterance are *gratitude* and *admiration* to the teachers for their role in the *front line of the pandemic* in education. The teacher shows *empathy* for those who faced this situation, evaluated by her as a difficult circumstance: "I wish to offer my sincere thanks and my sincere admiration, because, guys... this is not easy".

Another emotion that we identify at the beginning of the utterance is *happiness*, expressed by the teacher considering the opportunity to share her experience at the event promoted by the college where she graduated. In her opinion, the role of the teaching training course is to promote this type of discussion, as it is explicit in the excerpt: "I'm very happy to be here at this moment in my house, which is Fecli, doing what the college, what the university, what the teaching training course has to do, which is to discuss teaching in practice, how it happens in reality". Through

these initial considerations, we realize that the teacher recognizes the university as responsible for motivating peers to share their experiences. We agree on this point and add, convinced by Zembylas (2003, 2011), that this process fosters the reflective practice and creates emotional and professional ties.

We observe that, instead of answering the question from the roundtable mediator providing technical information on teaching strategies with digital technologies, the teacher expresses emotions through explicit clues, allowing us to recognize that these emotions permeate her entire utterance on the experience of remote teaching adopted in the context of the pandemic of COVID-19. These clues emerge as a way of attributing a value judgment to the lived experiences, pointing to the inseparability between affection and teaching, which is noticeable when the teacher explains that her discourse encompasses different aspects, as we can see in the excerpt below:

So, this is actually going to be an ‘outburst’ session because I really want to show you... reality as it is, how it’s going in all angles - psychological, educational, technical. How exhausting it is and also [...] in which areas it’s motivating, in what areas it’s working, right? (SARA, experience report)

In this excerpt, we can see that the teacher opposes the academic discourse that, in its power relationship with the participants who are invited to university events, prescribes how teachers/academics should feel during their participation in a roundtable. This relationship makes it impossible for this discursive interaction to allow the teacher’s *outburst*, which results in the interrelation with the emotion expressed by the teacher: she is *worn out*. However, in this tension between the duty to feel and the explicit expression of what she really feels, the teacher returns to submit to the expectations imposed by the academic discourse when indicating that she is *motivated* in the context previously and explicitly evaluated as challenging. In other words, the invited teacher will be able to respond positively to what is asked, since that would be the academic objective of this interaction: a university that produces and shares the necessary knowledge to face social problems, to which she replies: “*right?*”, an approval-seeking demonstration. The contrast between emotionally feeling *exhausted* and *motivated*, feelings that appear side by side in the utterance, illustrates the assumption that the inequality of power in emotion labor is negotiable, as highlighted by Benesch (2017). Thus, teachers might be susceptible to moments of resistance/contestation and acceptance/compliance, affected by the reproduction of discourses that reflect social practices.



After this initial tension, the teacher engages in controversy with a facet of the neoliberal capitalist discourse related to productivity. She quotes a meme that she saw on the Internet (“I apologize for my lack of productivity, this is my first pandemic”), inserting the discourse of the other explicitly in her own discourse to justify the sensation of immobility for feeling *less productive*. In this way, we realize the impact that this discourse has on the teacher’s tension between how to feel and what to do, even though she is at the forefront of the sudden change in her routine as an English teacher responsible for eleven classes.

Next, we illustrate an excerpt in which we observe that the teacher feels *distressed* when her experience report is interrelated to the prescription of the pedagogical discourse:

The first few weeks were very distressing because one of my first questions was: what about the four skills? What now? I no longer have the students in contact with each other. [...] I no longer look in the eyes of my students. I don’t see my student pronouncing the word. (SARA, experience report)

For her, teaching English demands working with the four communicative skills, which is challenging in the midst of limited contact conditions, without looking into the eyes of her students. The pedagogical discourse prescriptions are represented by the teacher through questions that she asks herself, which we interpret as evidence of the discourse of the other in her report: an inquisitive discourse that charges the teacher to give an answer by feeling *self-confident*. This leads us to interpret the power relations in the pedagogical discourse that prescribe a teaching practice that prevents the teacher from subverting or innovating her experience, even in the midst of the health crisis. When the teacher submits to these prescriptions, she feels *distressed* and insecure about how to act, emotions that are evidenced by the dialogue established with herself when reflecting in the present about the experiences lived in the past, while participating in the discussion about her recent experiences. In the same excerpt, we also highlight that we grasp interrelationships of *distress* to what we consider a brief flirtation with a facet of the neoliberal capitalist discourse on private property. The teacher feels *wronged* by the *invasion* caused by the overlapping between what is constituted as a public space (the online English classroom) and the privacy of her home. She resists to this experience, as follows: “I resisted putting my face here on a screen like it’s happening now. I didn’t think it was fair. I thought that was... invasive”.

We notice that the controversial dialogue between *resistance* and *acceptance*, discussed by Zembylas (2011), Benesch (2017), and Oliveira (2021), appears again when the teacher opposes the emotion of *distress*, for having her in-person lessons suspended, to the need for *reinventing* herself to live the experience of remote teaching, as explained in the following excerpt:

And it was lived all at once. The distress and, right in the second week, the reality: we won't stop. So... reinvent! Let's reinvent ourselves. Notice that this means reinventing your issues as... a human being, as a person, to achieve this reinvention as a professional later. (SARA, experience report)

In this case, based on Zembylas' (2011) assumption that power relations are intrinsic to the debate on emotions in a discursive dimension, we interpret that the teacher conforms to the legislative discourse, feeling *distressed* once again while she needs to react in order to *reinvent* herself. Therefore, we reclaim the utterances that materialize the legislative discourse, causing *distress* and prescribing the need to feel *self-confident* in order to reinvent her professional practice, due to the power relations it exercises over the teacher. The first evidence is the Decree n. 33,510/2020 (CEARÁ, 2020), published on March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2020, which determined the suspension of in-person lessons in all schools, colleges, and universities in the state of Ceará. After a short period, on March 26, 2020, the Secretariat of Education (SEDUC; APEOC, 2020) determined guidelines for remote classes. Amidst this tension, in our analysis, we also comprehend that the *distress* emotion is interrelated to a facet of the positivist discourse that is associated to an attempt to discipline human experience, which seeks to separate the person from the professional being. The teacher explains that, first, she needed to reinvent herself as a *human*, and so she could reinvent herself as a *professional*, which explicitly signals to the existence of rules for feeling and acting in the professional practice of the English teacher.

Subsequently, the pedagogical discourse once again brings questions to the teacher's remote teaching experience, as we can see in the following excerpt:

How am I going to be able to teach a virtual class developing the four skills, as it is the focus of the language course? [...] My students don't have a smartphone. I have students who don't have this device that I'm using now. How am I going to reach them? [...] So, there is a very strong social issue among public school students [...]. I have students who don't have any technological device, nor internet

access at home, who are climbing on the cajarana<sup>8</sup> tree to attend class. (SARA, experience report)

We notice, however, that the second part of the teacher's report is permeated with academic discourse, demanding answers that are more confident and pressuring the teacher's own discourse. Given the uncertainties, she starts giving visibility to the discourses of inclusion, claiming students' access to digital technologies and denouncing the socioeconomic gaps of the society in which she is involved. Thus, while joining and honoring the academic discourse, the teacher is able to feel secure when seeking answers to her own concerns in discourses produced in the academic sphere. We observe this when she expresses that she used to search for articles, books, and consult university professors for suggestions about language teaching, such as *how to improve reading and pronunciation*, in her pre-pandemic routine and during teacher training. According to the teacher, as part of the solution, she used to develop projects in college. However, when it comes to converging technology and English teaching, she still associates this experience with feelings of *uncertainty*, explaining that she had experiences to share with her interlocutors because she had researched *how she should proceed* while implementing virtual classes, but did not find *effective methods*.

In addition, considering the analysis parameter between the new and the given, the teacher's utterance calls our attention to the expression of *exhaustion*, observed in the next passage:

We have many doubts, many anxieties, many questions, and, mainly, one of the most exhausting things, which is most favorable and most rewarding, is a lot of creativity. I remember that, on the first night of the event, X and Y talked about the creativity that is born in times of crisis, right? (SARA, experience report)

In cognitive approaches to emotions, *exhaustion* could be related to negative emotions. In a dialogical perspective and in accordance with Benesch (2012), however, we interpret the teacher's expression in response to *creativity*, which is positively evaluated, also in agreement with previous statements by two university professors in another roundtable live broadcast of the same academic event. When

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<sup>8</sup> Cajarana is a sour fruit typical of northeastern Brazil. The teacher refers to the effort made by the students to get internet connection in the rural area.

feeling *exhausted*, her emotion is one of *gratitude*, once again showing the tension between distinct assessments of the remote teaching experience in the pandemic.

Finally, we emphasize that the *distress* emotion is frequently present in the linguistic expression of the English teacher's report, who demonstrates *worry*. As attentive observers of this utterance, we also possibly interrelate the teacher's *distress* with her facial/body expressions, among them: frowning; the withdrawal of both hands to the chest; the pressure while she extendedly closes her eyes; and the shape of the mouth closure. Hence, we realize the predominance of the emotion of *distress*, accompanied by *uncertainty*, for which the many questions stylize the teacher's utterance about her experience on remote teaching. While predominantly responding to academic, pedagogical, and legislative discourses, her utterance reveals the tensions between the duty to feel and the actual feeling, causing a standstill sensation. In contrast, later, the teacher reveals that she feels capable of changing her teaching practice to remote teaching through a frequent use of the computer and the application WhatsApp Messenger, as shown in the passage below:

[...] none of my classes were planned to use the computer so much and disturb my students so much through Whatsapp. All technologies that now involve my practice routine as an English teacher are sure to completely change everything I have done so far and everything I intend to do from now on, from the pandemic onwards. (SARA, experience report)

We notice in the teacher's report a feeling of *acceptance*, which is the answer she found to adapt to the new times. In the wake of a critical approach to emotions, we claim that the emotion labor resulting from the crisis needs to be recognized in a critical emotion reflexive process and, as a result, converted into attitudes of resistance and empowerment against dominant discourses. This aspect appears in the teacher's report polemics with the facet of a neoliberal capitalist discourse related to productivity, for she uses humor and irony discourses from a meme to accept feeling just O.K. when she stops doing what it is prescribed to her by discourses that neglect the human conditions of education professionals.

## 6 Final remarks

We presented in this paper a discourse analysis of a teacher's experience report while participating in an online roundtable discussion on remote English teaching during the pandemic in the first semester of 2020, in the countryside of Ceará state, Brazil. In this study, characterized as dialogical research

(ROHLING, 2014), we drew our discussion on an interface of the conception of language as discursive interaction (BAKHTIN, 2016; VOLOŠINOV/VOLOČHINOV, 1986/2018) with a critical approach to emotions in language teaching (BENESCH, 2012, 2017, 2018). We started from the premise that utterances about emotions in language teaching-learning relationships must be interpreted as historicized discourses, permeated by cultural, ideological, and power issues. Thus, we sought to understand the manifestations of emotions in the experience report of the English teacher in a context of crisis, in which she needed to adapt her teaching practice and adopt the use of ICT on an emergency basis. Supported by the notion of utterance as a link in discursive interaction, which occurs in response to previous utterances and generates new responses in an uninterrupted chain, we identified discursive clues of emotion labor and feeling rules (BENESCH, 2012, 2017, 2018) and their interrelationships with discourses produced and circulating in the academic, pedagogical and legislative spheres.

By choosing the teacher's turn as our analysis' corpus for dialogical research, we decided not to adopt categories *a priori*, once we believed that the utterance would cause unknown tensions to us. Thus, when watching the teacher's report on the YouTube broadcast, we took notes on the socio-historically, politically, and culturally constituted discursive dimensions, within the reach of our axiological relations with the text as researchers. A finding that we consider relevant in this work is the confirmation that emotion labor and feeling rules manifest in the English teacher's discourse about remote teaching. Even though the teacher was not invited to talk specifically about the emotions experienced in the sudden transition from in-person to remote lessons, the utterance about her practice in this specific context is drenched in emotions such as *distress, uncertainty, exhaustion, motivation, gratitude* and *acceptance*, in a way that it is not possible to dissociate the emotions experienced in the professional and personal spheres. In many moments, the teacher's utterance addresses emotions in response to other circulating discourses in her work environment, in a tension that makes her emotions oscillate between feelings of resistance and conformity, a form of negotiation evidenced in studies by Zembylas (2011), Benesch (2017) and Oliveira (2021), which we corroborate.

In our readings of scholarly studies on teacher emotions from a discursive perspective in the last ten years and in Brazilian and international reviews, we have not yet found suggestions of interactions between the dialogical notions of discourse and the concepts of feeling rules and emotion labor. For this reason, we identify ourselves as researchers exercising a dialogic Brazilian Applied Linguistics, inviting other researchers interested in teacher emotions to discuss this topic. In

the field of the discursive approaches, we believe, therefore, that this study has the potential to contribute methodologically to a dialogical perspective on how to analyze the emergence of emotions in the text as a concrete utterance exercising power relations with other discourses.

It is important to highlight that this paper was produced in the context of an ongoing research that intends to expand the discussions on English teachers' emotions, focusing on female teachers working in public secondary education. We aim at working especially with female teachers from schools that are not located in capitals or large urban areas, but in spaces considered peripheral, such as Brazil's Northeast countryside. Afterward, in addition to illustrating concepts of emotion labor and feeling rules in the teachers' utterances, as we have rehearsed in this article, we plan to discuss the narratives of emotions in remote teaching as a critical and reflective process that might favor conscious and gradual changes (BENESCH, 2012, 2017, 2018; BARCELOS; RUOHOTIE-LYTHY, 2018; MILLER; GKONOU, 2018; GKONOU; MILLER, 2021) in the remote English teaching-learning process by Brazilian teachers.

### **Acknowledgment**

We are grateful to CAPES (Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior) for the research funding. Process n°. 88887.610899/2021-00 (Karoline Zilah Santos Carneiro).

### **Author's contribution**

The two authors wrote sections 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6 collaboratively, while section 3 was written by solely the 1<sup>st</sup> author. This collaboration includes: (A) conception, planning, analysis, and data interpretation; (B) the writing of the article and its critical intellectual review; and (C) responsibility for final approval for publication.

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