The concept of language and grammar in the National High School Exam – ENEM

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ABSTRACT
The objective of this article is to discuss and analyze the concept of language and grammar that guides the elaboration of the Portuguese Language test, a curricular component of the area of Languages and Codes of the National High School Examination, in order to foster discussions about the teaching and learning of languages. Methodologically, a theoretical discussion on the concept of language and grammar and the analysis of an ENEM question are proposed. As a theoretical framework, the contributions of (SAUSSURE, 1970), (BAGNO, 2002), (MARCUSCHI, 2008), (ANTUNES, 2007/2009), (GERALDI, 1984), (MENDONÇA, 2006), among others, are presented. The study revealed that the ENEM is based on an interactionist-sociodiscursive perspective of language and grammar; It also reinforced the need for a functional look at language teaching, that is, language and grammar as a function of use.

Keywords: Language and Grammar, ENEM, Language Teaching.

1 INTRODUCTION

It is not now that the concept of language and grammar has been discussed in Literature, especially by theorists of Applied Linguistics, considering the understanding of such concepts and their repercussions on language teaching. It is considering, therefore, this issue that the main interest of this article is configured in: discuss and analyze the concept of language and grammar that guides the elaboration of the Portuguese Language test, curricular component of the area of Languages and Codes in the National High School Examination (hereinafter ENEM), in order to raise reflections focused on the teaching and learning of languages.

For this, methodologically, this study is organized and produced as follows:

✓ before entering into the basic theory of this study, a subsection is suggested that can contextualize about the ENEM and its importance for the country;

✓ Still in the theoretical foundation, in a more conceptual and epistemic section, the concept of language and grammar is revisited and discussed aiming at the construction of a section that both works and deepens the key concepts that should be treated in this study and the construction of a space of reflection that allows a critical-reflective understanding of the

concepts of language and grammar and the implications of this in the teaching and learning of languages;

✓ after weaving this theoretical discussion, we move on to the data analysis section, in which a question of the ENEM will be analyzed; This issue was removed from the event held in 2001. Since it would not be possible to analyze all the tests and questions of all the events (from 1998 to 2022) in this text, a question was chosen, as an excerpt, that minimally suggested the need to understand the concept of language and grammar to understand it; And concomitantly, reflections on how to make language teaching and learning more productive and meaningful are raised.

✓ Finally, a conclusion is made to synthesize the study developed in this article, in addition to pointing out possible developments for future research, which could not be contemplated in this investigation.

2 THE NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL EXAM – CONTEXTUALIZING THE ENEM

In Dodó's thesis (2020), the theorist contextualizes ENEM. According to the scholar, the ENEM was created in 1998 by the Ministry of Education (MEC) and has as one of its objectives to evaluate the performance of students at the end of basic education, that is, at the end of the 3rd year of High School. Currently, the event is held annually by the National Institute of Educational Studies and Research Anísio Teixeira (Inep).

> By way of explanation, the test consists of 180 questions, distributed in the four areas of knowledge and their respective disciplines. They are: 1) Natural Sciences and their technologies: disciplines evaluated: Chemistry, Physics and Biology; 2) Human Sciences and their technologies: disciplines evaluated: History, Geography, Philosophy and Sociology; 3) Languages, Codes and their technologies: subjects evaluated: Portuguese Language, Literature, Foreign Language (English or Spanish), Arts, Physical Education; 4) Mathematics and its technologies: subjects evaluated: Mathematics (Algebra and Geometry); and 5) the proof of textual production (DODÓ, 2020, p. 41).

According to this same author, the result of the ENEM: 1) also began to be used as a selection criterion for students who intend to apply for a scholarship in the University for All Program (ProUni); 2) allows admission to higher education in private institutions as a gateway; 3) allows, since 2012, the law that guarantees the obtainment of the certification of completion of High School for over 18 years; 4) in addition to allowing, as of 2011, students who wish to enter higher education in universities in other countries to do so.

We agree with Dodó (2020), when he presents the importance of ENEM for access to university and its use to evaluate the quality of education in the country. In this sense, it is understood the need and relevance of this study, since it proposes to reflexively analyze the concept of language and

grammar that guides the elaboration of the Portuguese Language test, which is part of the area of Languages and Codes of ENEM, aiming to foster discussions related to language teaching.

2.1 CONCEPTUALIZING LANGUAGE FROM A STRUCTURALIST PERSPECTIVE

Before starting the discussion of language from the structuralist view, it is pertinent to clarify that, although Saussure is known as the father of structuralism, he was aware of the interactionist/communicative dimension of language. However, the concept that is presented in this section concerns the concept of strictly structural language, whose concern was form and not use, according to the Course of General Linguistics (hereinafter CLG), published in 1916.

It should be noted that it is not intended to discredit this contribution to Science, since this postulate was important to create the foundations of Modern Linguistics; To deal with language here only as form, as structure, aims to show that, in the field of teaching, there are losses, when it privileges form to the detriment of use, that is, when it empties into the structure of language.

In the CLG, language is conceptualized as: "a social product of the faculty of language and a set of necessary conventions, adopted by the social body to allow the exercise of this faculty in individuals" (SAUSSURE, 1970, p. 17). Language, therefore, "exists in the collectivity in the form of a sum of signals deposited in each brain, more or less like a dictionary whose copies, all identical, were distributed among individuals. It is, therefore, something that is in each of them, although it is common to all and independent of the will of the depositaries" (SAUSSURE, 1970, p. 27).

Although language is conceived as a "social phenomenon" in the CLG, according to Marcuschi (2008), in this concept of language defined as system, form, the structure was contemplated by the structure, disregarding its use in social and discursive practices.

On the other hand, this same theorist points out that Saussure, although in the CLG does not present concerns to the aspects of language use, the Genevan recognizes that the language must be analyzed in use, in the service of interaction through the production of texts. It is, therefore, about this perspective that the following section deals.

2.2 LANGUAGE IN THE HISTORICAL, SOCIAL AND INTERACTIVE PERSPECTIVE

It was seen, in the previous section, that in order to elaborate the foundations of Modern Linguistics, in order to make it a Science, Saussure's contribution was very decisive, when he established the dichotomy *Langue* and *Parole* highlighting that one instead of this one. However, Saussure did not rule out the need to consider the conditions of language use, that is, its interactive-communicative context, since understanding the linguistic phenomenon as an activity

> pulled language studies into consideration of the socio-communicative intentions that put interlocutors in interaction; It also ignited the interest in the effects of meaning that the interlocutors intend to achieve with the words in their activities of interlocution, brought to the

scene of the most relevant studies the discourse and text, unfolded in their relations with the active subjects, with the social practices and with the different properties that ensure their status as macro-unit of verbal interaction (ANTUNES, 2009, p.20).

Corroborating the thought of Antunes, (SOLTES and RAUPP, 2009) argue that

> language comes to be seen and studied (...) in its contexts of use, which implies saying in the linguistic manifestations – production and expression – of each community of speakers, ceasing to be seen only as a contained sign of signifier and meaning, and even a set of grammatical rules. It becomes a bridge in which we interconnect with other cultures, people, stories, because it is inserted in the lives of all speakers. What unites us to all other linguistic communities is language. The interesting thing about all this is that the language contains its own peculiar characteristics and, therefore, becomes like all of us, human beings, who follow the evolution, the walk of humanity. Faced with so many changes, one cannot imagine an intact, immobile, inflexible language (SOLTES and RAUPP, 2009, p. 7).

In order to deepen the discussion, we bring the contributions of Bagno (2002), who pointed out some considerations about language in a socio-interactionist and discursive perspective. To the author:

> a) the language presents a systematic internal organization that can be studied scientifically, but it is not reduced to a set of well-formed rules that can be determined once and for all as if it were possible to make calculations of infallible prediction. Natural languages are hardly formalizable. b) The language has stable and unstable aspects, that is, it is a variable, indeterminate and not fixed system. Therefore, the language presents systematicity and variation at the same time. c) Language is determined by immanent and transcendent values so that it cannot be studied autonomously, but must be resorted to the environment and the situation in the most varied contexts of use. The language is therefore situated. d) Language is constructed with conventional symbols, partially motivated, not random, but arbitrary. Language is not a natural phenomenon nor can it be reduced to neurophysiological reality. e) Language cannot be taken as a simple instrument of representation of the world as if it were a mirror of it, because it is constitutive of reality. It is much more of a guide than a mirror of reality. f) Language is an activity of a socio-cognitive, historical and situationally developed nature to promote human interaction. g) Language is given and manifested in oral and written texts ordered and stabilized in textual genres for the use of concrete situations. h) The language is not transparent, but opaque, which allows the variability of interpretation in the texts and makes comprehension a special phenomenon in the relationship between human beings (...) (BAGNO, 2002, p.24,25).

Thus, we can conclude that the language is versatile and impossible to be studied in isolation, since it is a tool of communication and interaction to all speaking beings (SOLTES and RAUPP, 2009, p. 8).

Having conceptualized language in the perceptual structuralist and interactionist-sociodiscursive, it is pertinent now to review the concept of grammar(s), since, in this study, this concept is also analyzed in the ENEM test.

3 RENOWNED GRAMMAR

Since the focus of this work is to also analyze the concept of grammar in the aforementioned event, it is necessary to discuss what is meant by grammar.

Franchi (1991) conceptualizes normative grammar as "(...) the systematic set of norms for good speech and writing, established by specialists, based on the use of the language consecrated by writers" (FRANCHI, 1991, p. 48). Traditionally, what is said about this conception of grammar is that knowing grammar means saying that we have mastered and know how to use this set of rules to speak and write. This concept of grammar sees, however, only a possibility of variation of the language, the standard or cultured language, considering the other forms of speech as poorly structured, as deviations, as errors (DODÓ et al., 2020, p. 105).

As for the concept of descriptive grammar, Travaglia (2008) classifies it as one that, unlike normative grammar, makes a description of how the structures of a language work, describes its forms and functions. This concept of grammar, for Franchi, "[...] is a system of notions through which the facts of a language are described, allowing to associate with each expression of that language, a structural description and to establish its rules of use, in order to separate what is grammatical from what is not grammatical" (FRANCHI, 1991, p. 52-53).

It is seen, therefore, that the interest of this type of grammar is not in prescribing how the language should work, on the contrary, descriptive grammar understands and recognizes variations in the system, seeking to analyze and describe the functioning of these linguistic structures (DODÓ et al., 2020, p 105).

There is also the concept of internalized grammar. For Franchi, this kind of grammar: "[...] corresponds to the linguistic knowledge that the speaker of a language develops within certain limits imposed by his own human genetic endowment, in appropriate conditions of a social and anthropological nature" (FRANCHI, 1991, p. 54). Travaglia (2008) conceptualizes this concept as a

> [...] conception of grammar considering the language as a set of varieties used by a society according to what is required by the situation of communicative interaction in which the user of the language is engaged, perceives grammar as the set of rules that the speaker has actually learned and that he uses when speaking (TRAVAGLIA, 2008, p. 28).

Irandé Antunes (2007) suggests the following concept of grammar:

> When one speaks of grammar, one may be talking about: a) the rules that define the functioning of a given language, as in: 'the grammar of the Portuguese'; in this sense, grammar corresponds to the intuitive knowledge that every speaker has of his own language, which has been called 'internalized grammar'; b) the rules that define the functioning of a given norm, as in: 'the grammar of the cultured norm', for example; c) from a study perspective, as in: 'the generative grammar', 'the structuralist grammar', 'the functionalist grammar'; or a historical tendency of approach, as in: 'traditional grammar', for example; d) of a school discipline, as in: 'grammar lessons'; e) of a book, as in: 'the grammar of Celso Cunho (ANTUNES, 2007, p. 25-26).

Finally, the concept of functional grammar is presented, which is the generation of (...) "a theory of the grammatical organization of natural languages that seeks to integrate into a global theory of social interaction" (NEVES, 1997, p. 15).

Analyzing the concept of functional grammar, one can perceive a strong relationship between it and the concept of language in the interactionist-sociodiscursive perspective. This exchange suggests a reflection on the teaching of grammar in the classroom, evidencing that this teaching will only be productive and relevant if its primary objective is to develop in students

> the mastery of oral and written expression in situations of public use of language, taking into account the situation of social and material production of the text (social place of the speaker in relation to the recipient(s); recipient(s) and their social place; purpose or intention of the author; time and place, material of production and support) and select, from this, the appropriate genres for the production of the text, operating on the pragmatic, semantic and grammatical dimensions (PCN, 1998, p. 49).

This last concept of grammar dialogues closely with what Geraldi (1984) proposed to call linguistic analysis, since he understood that there must be an articulation between the axes of mother tongue teaching, which are: reading, text production, orality and linguistic analysis. For this scholar, the use of this expression:

> it is not due to the mere taste for new terminologies. Linguistic analysis includes both work on traditional issues of grammar and broadens them on the text, among which it is worth mentioning: internal cohesion and coherence of the text; adequacy of the text to the intended objectives, analysis of the expressive resources used (metaphors, metonyms, paraphrases, quotations, direct and indirect discourse, etc.); organization and inclusion of information etc. Essentially, the practice of linguistic analysis cannot be limited to the sanitization of the student's text in its grammatical and orthographic aspects, limiting itself to 'corrections'. It is about working with the student his text so that he achieves his objectives with the readers that it is intended (GERALDI, 1984, p.74).

Therefore, this article assumes the concept of linguistic analysis instead of grammar, since we agree with Mendonça (2006), when proposing the difference between "grammar teaching" and "Linguistic analysis practice[1]", evidencing that this presents a more productive and significant perspective. Consider the following table:

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[1] With the National Common Curricular Base, this terminology remains, but with the addition of the term semiotics, remaining: "linguistic analysis/semiotics", thus expanding the concept of text. It is suggested to read in full the BNCC and the article by LEURQUIN, E. Theoretical-methodological conceptions defended by the National Curricular Parameters, by the National Common Curricular Base and by the Sociodiscursive Interactionism related to the teaching of linguistic/semiotic analysis. In: GUIMARÃES et al. The Sociodiscursive Interactionism in focus: reflections on a theory in continuous construction and a praxis in movement. Araraquara: Letaraia, 2020.

Grammar teaching	Linguistic analysis practice
Conception of language as system, inflexible and invariable structure.	Conception of language as situated interlocutive action, subject to the interference of speakers.
Fragmentation between teaching axes: grammar classes are not necessarily related to reading and text production classes.	Integration between the teaching axes: linguistic analysis is a tool for reading and producing texts.
Transmissive methodology, based on deductive exposition (from the general to the particular, that is, from the rules to the example) + training.	Reflective methodology, based on induction (observation of particular cases for the conclusion of regularities/rules.
Privilege of metalinguistic activities.	Parallel work with metalinguistic and epilinguistic skills.
Emphasis on grammatical contents as teaching objects, approached in isolation and in a more or less fixed sequence.	Emphasis on uses as teaching objects (reading and writing skills), which refer to various other teaching objects (structural, textual, discursive, normative), presented and resumed whenever necessary.
Centrality of the standard norm.	Centrality of meaning effects.
Absence of relationship with the specificities of the genres, since the analysis is more of a structural nature and, when normative, disregards the functioning of these genres in the contexts of verbal interaction.	Fusion with the work with the genres, to the extent that it contemplates precisely the intersection of the conditions of production of the texts and the linguistic choices.
Privileged units: the word, the phrase and the period.	Privileged unity: the text.
Preference for structural exercises, identification and classification of morphological units/functions and correction.	Preference for open questions and research activities, which require comparison and reflection on adequacy and effect of meanings.

Source: Table taken from Mendonça (2006).

Considering this, analyzing the concept of language and grammar in the ENEM tests is a relevant study, since, from such analyses, reflections are suggested for the teaching and learning of languages, fostering the cultivation of a critical, reflective and active practice of the language teacher when working with language in the classroom.

In the following section will be analyzed a question of ENEM, aiming to find out what concept of language and grammar guides the elaboration of the proof of Languages and Codes of the Contest.

3.1 DATA ANALYSIS: THE CONCEPT OF LANGUAGE AND GRAMMAR IN ENEM

The analysis is organized as follows: first, the issue is analyzed, taken from the ENEM 2001 event. A descriptive analysis is made and, subsequently, a reflective analysis, aiming to identify the concept of language and grammar that guided its elaboration. In the third analytical movement, reflections are suggested to (re)think language teaching in Brazil.

Here's the selected question.

The world is big
The world is big and fitsIn this window over the sea. The sea is big and fitsIn bed and on the mattress to love. Love is great and fitIn the brief space of kissing.
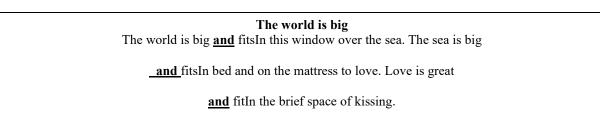
(ANDRADE, Carlos Drummond de. Poetry and prose. Rio de Janeiro: Nova Aguilar, 1983. Adapted).
In this poem, the poet made a stylistic choice: the reiteration of certain linguistic constructions and expressions, such as the use of the same conjunction to establish the relationship between the sentences. This conjunction establishes, among the related ideas, a sense of:
a) addition.b) conclusion.c) opposition.d) alternation.e) purpose.

The question brings a poem by the writer Carlos Drummond de Andrade, poet of Brazilian Modernism. To understand what is being asked, when reading the statement, the student will need to make use of the following points:

✓ 1) the understanding of what stylistic features are;

✓ 2) the concept of conjunction and its function when linking sentences; it is also necessary to understand the meaning that it establishes when it connects the prayers;

✓ 3) the understanding of the concept of traditional/normative grammar vs. functionalist grammar; (remembering that the latter considers the influence of use on linguistic structures).

Considering this, first the student must identify which conjunction is this that is repeated throughout the text and that connects the prayers. Read the text again, noting the highlighted connective:

The world is big
The world is big **and** fitsIn this window over the sea. The sea is big

and fitsIn bed and on the mattress to love. Love is great

and fitIn the brief space of kissing.

He would have to say that the conjunction that repeats itself in the poem is the connective."**and**". Traditionally, it is learned, according to normative/traditional grammar, that the "**and**" is a conjunction that establishes a sense of sum. However, in the text the student should identify that its use does not establish this sense, but a sense of opposition, the same as in the following strip:

Figure 1: Example of the conjunction "But" with a sense of opposition

Source: https://app.estuda.com/questoes/?id=302065. Accessed: September 15, 2022.

Consider the communicative situation: the son writes a letter to his father; he weaves a list of spelling-grammatical errors, saying, "It's full of spelling, punctuation, and agreement errors..." What is expected in the next prayer is that the father will reject the letter, since it has many errors. However, the exact opposite happens: "...**But** it's the most beautiful card I've ever won in my life!" This idea of opposition is established by conjunction **"But."**

This same sense of opposition was established by the connective "**and**" in Drummond's poem. Note that, the lyrical self states:

The world is big **and** it fits in this window over the sea.	Analyzing the first prayer, one has the following idea: the greatness of the world. Following this reasoning, since the world is large, it is hoped that it will not fit in the window over the sea. However, the opposite happens: the fact that the world is big does not prevent it from fitting in the window, which is much smaller.
The sea is big **and** fits on the bed and mattress to love.	This same reasoning applies to the second use of this connective. In the first prayer it is stated that "The sea is great"; soon, it is hoped that he will not fit in the bed and mattress of loving; But it fits.
Love is great **and** it fits in the brief space of kissing.	Finally, in the latter case, the lyrical self affirms, in the first sentence, that "Love is great"; however, the fact that love is great still allows it to fit into the brief space of kissing; it may be understood that the statement of the second sentence gives an idea of something small; One has an idea of opposition, therefore.

It is observed that the conjunction, in this context of use, loses its meaning "crystallized" by traditional grammar and assumes a new meaning: de *opposition* instead of sum. However, in order for the student to be able to mark the correct item of the question, which is item C, he would need to consider the **tongue** no longer as a simple structure, but as an instrument of interaction/communication. Therefore, the student would need to consider, in addition to the linguistic elements, the extralinguistic elements, such as: *Situation interactants*, *The textual genre* used as well as its *communicative purpose*.

Since the text is a poem, its comprehension cannot be limited to what is prescribed by traditional/normative grammar. (By the way, perhaps, in no text, should one limit its analysis based only on the prescriptions of normative grammar.) One must take into account the stylistic resources of the language to construct the meanings of the text. Thus, the **functionalist grammar** It helps to understand how the context of production can influence the use of linguistic structures in the poem.

Thus, to understand the issue, the practice of **linguistic analysis** It is necessary, since it gives the student the opportunity to develop his epilinguistic skills. Therefore, the student:

- ✓ must understand language as a socially and historically situated interlocutive phenomenon;
- ✓ it should not be limited to identifying the conjunction that repeats itself;
- ✓ should analyze and reflect the information contained in the prayers, considering the communicative context, to understand the meaning that the conjunction establishes when connecting the prayers;
- ✓ Attention will be paid to the effects of meaning constructed in the text by influence of the communicative context, that is: it considers the elements of communication and how they intersect to construct the text and its meaning.

By analyzing the question that served as an excerpt for this study, it could be concluded that the concept of language and grammar that guides the elaboration of the ENEM Languages and Codes test is based on the assumptions of interaction and communication. In this case, it is understood that in ENEM, language is understood, according to Antunes (2009), as a linguistic phenomenon, as an activity, that is, as an interlocutive event, in which those involved in this interaction are considered, the text produced, the purpose of the text, etc. That is, language is dynamic, interactive, dialogical.

In this conjuncture, if the language is seen as a "meeting point", of interaction (ANTUNES, 2009), this implies that the concept of grammar that guides the ENEM test is based on the functionalist perspective of the language, since such a look considers the use in function of the linguistic-structural choices (NEVES, 2008).

Considering what has been seen so far, the discussions converge to what the National Curriculum Parameters prescribe regarding language teaching:

> By taking the mother tongue as an object of teaching, the dimension of how the subjects learn and how the subjects develop their discursive competence cannot be lost. The teaching of Portuguese Language must take place in a space in which the practices of language use are understood in their historical dimension and in which the need for analysis and theoretical systematization of linguistic knowledge stems from these same practices, (...) because it is in the practice of reflection on language and language that the construction of instruments that will allow the subject to develop the discursive competence to speak can take place, listening, reading and writing in the various situations of interaction (BRASIL, 1998, p. 33).

Language teaching being organized in this way becomes a productive and meaningful practice, capable of developing students' linguistic-discursive skills. Consequently, the grammatical approach

that should guide the work with the language in school needs to be based on the commitment to develop and expand the language skills of students.

4 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The focus of this article was to analyze which concept of language and grammar guides the elaboration of the ENEM Languages and Codes test. To achieve this goal, a cut was made that selected a question from the event. Data analysis revealed that the concept of language and grammar adopted in the test is epistemologically based on the view that conceives language as a function of interaction, communication; Therefore, grammar is also seen by this dialogical bias.

These findings imply a series of reflections related to language teaching that need to be always considered by the teacher when working with language in the context of the classroom, namely:

- ✓ the concept of language that guides and bases its practice;
- ✓ the privileged grammatical approach in language classes;
- ✓ the importance of external tests (ENEM, for example) and their repercussions in the classroom;
- ✓ the need for continuing education; But not that type of training that treats the teacher as a mere viewer: the search for this continuous formation must make the teacher a researcher, a critical-reflective agent of his practice.

Recognizing that many pertinent questions are no longer contemplated in this study due to space issues, it is suggested, as future research, studies that expand the number of questions analyzed, to refute or corroborate this research, in addition to extending this analysis to other external tests, such as the vestibular (UECE, among others), the *Basic Education Evaluation System* – SAEB and, more specifically for Ceará, the Permanent System of Evaluation of Basic Education of Ceará - SPAECE etc. Such investigation is important, since it can yield reflections and questions in order to improve and (re)guide the work with language practices in the classroom.

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