

UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE VIÇOSA

**Shyness and emotional vulnerability in language teaching: Beliefs, emotions,
and challenges of pre-service teachers**

Pâmela Rabêlo Dias
Magister Scientiae

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Dissertation submitted to the Letters
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Adviser: Ana M. Ferreira Barcelos

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Assent:

Pâmela Rabêlo Dias
Author

Ana Maria Ferreira Barcelos
Adviser

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“When you go back to a list of qualities that made your best teachers so effective, you probably noticed that so much of what made them significant in your life was not what they did, but who they were as human beings.”
(Zehm; Kottler, 1993)

ABSTRACT

DIAS, Pâmela Rabêlo, M.Sc., Universidade Federal de Viçosa, March, 2026.
Shyness and emotional vulnerability in language teaching: Beliefs, emotions, and challenges of pre-service teachers. Adviser: Ana Maria Ferreira Barcelos.

Although shyness is a universal experience (Zimbardo, 1982), present in both childhood and adulthood and manifested either as a personality trait or situationally (Henderson; Zimbardo, 2001; Schmidt; Poole, 2020), Applied Linguistics (AL) still lacks studies focusing on the shyness of language teachers. Research has predominantly concentrated on learners' shyness and its impact on oral production (Candido-Ribeiro, 2008; Santos; Barcelos, 2018; Bashosh et al., 2013), with few investigations, in Brazil or internationally, addressing the effects of shyness on teaching practice. Understood as a multidimensional psychological factor that generates discomfort and inhibition in social situations (Pilkonis, 1997; Carducci; Conkright, 2020), shyness may trigger emotions such as anxiety, fear, and embarrassment (Jones et al., 2014; Firouzi et al., 2024), affecting teachers' well-being and professional performance, particularly with regard to communication, teacher competence, and interpersonal relationships (Etzold; Krüger, 2021). Given the demands of teaching, shy teachers may feel emotionally vulnerable, a condition inherent to the profession and central to understanding their experiences (Kelchtermans, 2012; Lasky, 2005; Song, 2016, 2022). Considering that beliefs and emotions are interrelated factors that influence teachers' domain of action (Barcelos, 2004, 2015; Aragão, 2005, 2007, 2011), this study presents reflections on the relationship among shyness, emotional vulnerability, beliefs, and emotions of five pre-service language teachers at a federal university. This qualitative study (Richards, 2003; Creswell, 2013) was conducted through semi-structured questionnaires, written narratives, and semi-structured interviews. The findings indicate that shyness impacts language teachers' emotional well-being, especially at the beginning of their teaching careers, when associated with limiting beliefs about themselves and about what it means to be a language teacher. Emotions perceived as uncomfortable, such as anxiety, fear, and shame (Jones et al., 2014), were identified, as well as positive emotions, such as empathy, gratitude, and passion. Participants reported feeling vulnerable when teaching, particularly due to exposure and a sense of professional inadequacy. Although dealing with vulnerability represents a challenge in the early stages of teaching, its effects tend to lessen over time and with professional experience. The implications of this study highlight the importance of valuing diverse

teacher profiles and promoting the dissemination of the practical and emotional experiences of shy pre-service language teachers.

Keywords: shyness; emotions; beliefs; emotional vulnerability; pre-service language teachers

RESUMO

DIAS, Pâmela Rabêlo, M.Sc., Universidade Federal de Viçosa, março de 2026. **Timidez e vulnerabilidade emocional no ensino de línguas: Crenças, emoções e desafios de professores em formação inicial.** Orientadora: Ana Maria Ferreira Barcelos.

Embora a timidez seja uma experiência universal (Zimbardo, 1982), presente na infância e na vida adulta, manifestando-se como traço de personalidade ou de forma situacional (Henderson; Zimbardo, 2001; Schmidt; Poole, 2020), a Linguística Aplicada (LA) ainda carece de estudos voltados à timidez de professores de línguas. As pesquisas concentram-se majoritariamente na timidez de aprendizes e em sua produção oral (Candido-Ribeiro, 2008; Santos; Barcelos, 2018; Bashosh et al., 2013), sendo escassas, no Brasil e no cenário internacional, investigações sobre os impactos da timidez na prática docente. Compreendida como um fator psicológico multidimensional que provoca desconforto e inibição em situações sociais, (Pilkonis, 1997; Carducci; Conkright, 2020), a timidez pode desencadear emoções como ansiedade, medo e embaraço (Jones et al., 2014; Firouzi et al., 2024), afetando o bem-estar e o desempenho profissional docente, especialmente no que se refere à comunicação, à competência do professor e às relações interpessoais (Etzold; Krüger, 2021) Diante das exigências do ensino, professores tímidos podem sentir-se emocionalmente vulneráveis, condição inerente à docência e central para a compreensão de suas experiências (Kelchtermans, 2012; Lasky, 2005; Song, 2016, 2022). Considerando que as crenças e as emoções são fatores inter-relacionados que influenciam o domínio de ação docente (Barcelos, 2004, 2015; Aragão, 2005, 2007, 2011), este estudo apresenta reflexões sobre a relação entre timidez, vulnerabilidade emocional, crenças e emoções de cinco professores de línguas em formação inicial de uma universidade federal. Trata-se de uma pesquisa qualitativa (Richards, 2003; Creswell, 2013), conduzida por meio de questionários semiabertos, narrativas escritas e entrevistas semiestruturadas. Os resultados indicam que a timidez impacta o bem-estar emocional de professores de línguas, especialmente no início da docência, quando associada a crenças limitantes sobre si mesmos e sobre o que significa ser professor de línguas. Foram identificadas emoções consideradas desconfortáveis, como ansiedade, medo e vergonha (Jones et al., 2014), mas também emoções consideradas positivas, como empatia, gratidão e paixão. Os participantes relatam se sentir vulneráveis ao ensinar, sobretudo devido à exposição e ao senso de inadequação para desempenhar a profissão. Embora lidar com a vulnerabilidade represente um desafio nos momentos iniciais da

docência, seus efeitos tendem a ser atenuados com o tempo e a experiência profissional. As implicações deste estudo destacam a importância de valorizar a diversidade de perfis docentes e de promover a disseminação das experiências práticas e emocionais vivenciadas por professores de línguas tímidos em formação inicial.

Palavras-chave: timidez; emoções; crenças; vulnerabilidade emocional; professores de línguas em pré-serviço

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ABP – Brazilian Psychiatric Association

AI – Artificial Intelligence

AL – Applied Linguistics

APA – American Psychological Association

CAPES – Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel

CEP – Research Ethics Committee with Human Beings

CNPq – National Council for Scientific and Technological Development

DSM – Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders

ES – Semi-structured Interview

EV – Emotional Vulnerability

FL – Foreign Language

ICD – International Classification of Diseases

Libras – Brazilian Sign Language

NE – Written Narrative

QS – Semi-open-ended Questionnaire

SciELO – Scientific Electronic Library Online

WHO – World Health Organization

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

“The eyes of others our prisons; their thoughts our cages”

(Virginia Woolf, *An unwritten novel*)

1. Introduction

Language teaching involves a wide range of intrapersonal and interpersonal challenges, encompassing cognitive and affective phenomena that go far beyond the transmission of linguistic content (Celani, 2008). Among the challenges, teachers who experience shyness may face significant obstacles that compromise not only their personal well-being, but also their teaching efficacy. In this context, shyness is not limited to a personality trait; it manifests as an emotional condition that can disrupt teacher-student interactions, pedagogical decision-making and participation in class activities.

Shyness has been widely investigated in the fields of Psychology and Education (Zimbardo, 1982, 1977; Henderson; Zimbardo, 2001; McWilliams, 2019; Monteiro et al., 2018), and can be understood as a personality trait or an emotional state that causes significant discomfort in contexts of exposure and social interaction, particularly when individuals face unfamiliar experiences. Studies indicate that emotions such as fear and anxiety frequently arise for a shy person, establishing tensions that trigger various physical and mental reactions that tend to intensify their feeling of insecurity and, in more severe cases, lead to anxiety attacks or paralysis in certain situations (Pilkonis, 1977; Jones et al., 2014; Firouzi et al., 2024).

Despite its relevance to human relations, knowledge about the implications of shyness remains scarcely disseminated in Applied Linguistics, and studies addressing this issue are still limited. However, some studies related to the oral production of shy learners indicate that shyness can create obstacles to learning and developing speaking skills (Candido-Ribeiro, 2008; Santos; Barcelos, 2018; Oflaz, 2019). These findings have prompted reflection on how pre-service teachers may experience similar challenges regarding their oral performance in pedagogical settings.

Accordingly, this study does not approach shyness in isolation; rather, it seeks to understand it in connection with other factors that permeate language teaching and learning.

When investigating the factors that influence these processes, it is essential to consider teachers' emotions and beliefs (Barcelos, 2004, 2007, 2015; Aragão, 2005, 2011; Barcelos; Ruohotie-Lythy, 2018). It is based on the understanding that, much like personality traits such as shyness, these factors directly impact how teachers experience and define their practice. In addition, teachers constantly deal with emotional vulnerability (EV) triggered by exposure in the language classroom context, which may lead to a loss of their sense of safety (Kelchtermans, 2012; Song, 2016, 2022; Holappa et al., 2022). According to Barcelos and Ruohotie-Lythy (2018, p. 119), "[...] it is necessary that language teacher education acknowledge the role of beliefs and emotions in the trajectory of language teachers' identities and in their decision-making processes."¹

Finally, it is recognized that, historically, the teaching profession has been embedded in institutional contexts that expect teachers to manage and conceal unpleasant emotions in favor of effective classroom performance and sustained student engagement (Zembylas, 2003, 2005). When it comes to the personal and professional well-being of prospective teachers, reflecting on the structural and personal conditions associated with their lived experiences in language teaching can be transformative by "allowing individuals to reframe their experiences, learning from them about the experiences themselves and about who they are, opening up new pathways regarding how they see themselves and how they act in their worlds" (Guedes et al, 2024, n.p)².

Despite the relevance of these concepts, no studies in AL have yet investigated the intersection of shyness, beliefs, emotions, and emotional vulnerability among pre-service language teachers. Therefore, in an attempt to address part of this gap regarding shyness and the emotional vulnerability of pre-service language teachers, in connection with their beliefs and emotions, this study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What beliefs and emotions do pre-service teachers hold regarding shyness?
2. What beliefs and emotions do pre-service teachers hold regarding language teaching?
3. How does teachers' shyness contribute to or shape their emotional vulnerability?

¹ "[...] é necessário que a formação de professores de línguas reconheça o papel das crenças e emoções na trajetória das identidades dos docentes de línguas e em seu processo de tomada de decisões" (Barcelos and Ruohotie-Lythy, 2018, p. 119).

² "permitir aos indivíduos ressignificarem as suas experiências, ao aprender com elas sobre elas e sobre si mesmos, abrindo-se a novos caminhos em relação ao modo como eles se vêem e agem em seus mundos" (Guedes et al, 2024, n.p).

4. What challenges do shy pre-service teachers face? How do they attempt to overcome these challenges?

1.1. Objectives

1.1.1. General objective

The general objective of this research is to identify the beliefs and emotions of pre-service language teachers who consider themselves shy, both in relation to shyness and to language teaching, and to examine whether and how these factors contribute to their emotional vulnerability in teaching-learning environments.

1.1.2. Specific objectives

In order to achieve the general objective of this research, the following specific objectives are outlined:

1. Identify and understand the beliefs and emotions of pre-service teachers regarding language teaching;
2. Identify and understand the beliefs and emotions of pre-service teachers regarding shyness;
3. Examine whether and for what reasons these shy teachers feel emotionally vulnerable in teaching-learning environments;
4. Identify the challenges faced by shy pre-service teachers during their initial training and how they deal with these challenges.

1.2. Rationale for the study

As a rationale for this study, I present three central points. First, the need to reduce the gap in research on teacher shyness within Applied Linguistics. Second, the importance of investigating teachers' beliefs and emotions in relation to other aspects of language teaching

and learning. Finally, this study aims at contributing to the growing body of research on emotional vulnerability, a relatively recent topic in AL.

Firstly, when addressing personality-related aspects of individuals involved in language teaching and learning contexts, I highlight shyness, a phenomenon that has received attention in the fields of Psychology (Zimbardo, 1977, 1982; Henderson; Zimbardo, 1998) and Education (McWilliams, 2019; Stahl; McDonald, 2014; Monteiro et al., 2021), but has not been properly explored in Applied Linguistics. Although there are some studies on shyness among language learners (Santos; Barcelos, 2018; Bashosh et al., 2013), the field still lacks research investigating how this phenomenon affects teachers.

A search conducted on platforms such as Google Scholar, CAPES, SciELO, and ResearchGate indicates that there are few studies addressing shyness within AL at the international level, and even fewer at the national level, where no studies were retrieved. The only study identified, by Höl and Küçük (2023), although closely related to the topic of this research, adopts a mixed-methods design with a predominantly quantitative orientation. The authors investigated classroom management strategies in relation to teachers' and students' shyness, focusing on pre-service teachers as participants. It is important to note that this may not be the sole study on the topic, given limitations related to database coverage and language³; nevertheless, the scarcity of research remains evident.

Regarding the phenomenon of shyness, previous studies have shown that this trait can affect individuals in various ways, particularly with respect to oral production and interpersonal relationships (Zimbardo, 1977, 1982; Henderson; Zimbardo, 1998). In light of this, I argue that, beyond personality-related aspects, shyness is an important factor to consider in the context of teaching, since the profession involves constant interaction with others and is commonly believed to require strong oral performance (Hamid, 2020). When the focus is placed on pre-service teachers, this need becomes even more pressing.

Secondly, in investigations related to language teaching, it is essential to consider the interrelationship between beliefs and emotions (Barcelos, 2015; Barcelos; Ruohotie-Lythy, 2018). As human beings are continuously guided by their beliefs and emotions across different domains of life, reflecting on and understanding them can help clarify perspectives and foster deeper comprehension of related phenomena (Aragão; Barcelos, 2018). A

³ Only studies published in English and Portuguese were considered, with a few exceptions.

substantial body of research in AL has addressed beliefs (Leffa, 1991; Borg, 2003; Barcelos, 2004, 2007, 2015, 2019; Kalaja et al., 2016), emotions (Song, 2016; Aragão, 2005, 2011; Barcelos; Coelho, 2010), and the relationship between beliefs and emotions (Barcelos; Ruohotie-Lythy, 2018; Martins, 2021). However, none of these studies focus specifically on shyness among pre-service language teachers.

Finally, examining emotional vulnerability (EV), a still recent theme in AL, in the experiences of shy language teachers can contribute significantly to understanding their professional trajectories. To date, no study on the subject has been published in Brazil. For this reason, I align myself with Holappa et al. (2022, p. 894, as cited in Meihami; Esmaili, 2023) in arguing that the individual and structural conditions of teaching professionals “should be embraced rather than merely endured.” Thus, this study advocates for acknowledging and embracing the genuine emotional experiences involved in teaching and learning languages.

1.3. Organization of the thesis

This dissertation is organized into five chapters. In addition to the introductory chapter, which includes the present section, Chapter II presents the theoretical framework of the study and discusses the themes of shyness, beliefs, emotions, and emotional vulnerability in language teaching. Chapter III describes the methodological procedures adopted, outlining the participants’ profiles, the data collection instruments, and the data analysis procedures. Chapter IV presents the findings of the study, along with my interpretations and reflections on the themes that emerged from the analysis. Finally, Chapter V brings together the final considerations of the study, in which I revisit the research questions, discuss the study’s limitations, and suggest directions for future research. The references and appendices that compose this work are presented at the end of the dissertation.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

“I blossom into courage, although in everyday life I remain shy. In fact, I am shy at certain moments; outside them, I possess only the reserve that is also part of me. I am a bold-bashful person: it is after great boldness that I become embarrassed.”

(Clarice Lispector, *A descoberta do mundo*)

2. Theoretical framework

In this chapter, I discuss the theoretical foundations of this study, drawing on relevant literature related to each of its central themes. The chapter begins with an overview of studies on shyness, including definitions of the construct and reflections on its role in language teaching and learning. The second and third sections address beliefs and emotions, respectively, highlighting their importance to language teacher education. The fourth and final section focuses on the concept of emotional vulnerability and its implications for teaching practice.

2.1. Shyness in language teaching and learning

Shyness has been present in human history and is often considered a universal human experience (Zimbardo, 1982). The understanding of shyness as a psychological and social phenomenon has been an object of investigation in several fields of knowledge, ranging from personality psychology to education. In this section, I explore different dimensions of shyness, beginning with a historical overview of studies on shyness and personality. I then examine how this characteristic manifests itself and is understood in contemporary western society. Next, I discuss the impacts of shyness on individuals' lives, considering its emotional, social, and cognitive implications. Finally, I focus on the educational context, examining the specificities of shyness among language teachers and its repercussions for teaching practice.

2.1.1. Studies on personality and shyness: a brief overview

Shyness, in its various manifestations, has drawn the attention of scholars, particularly in the field of Psychology. Among the many authors who have contributed to the study of this phenomenon, I highlight Zimbardo (1974, 1977, 1979, 1982, 2001) and Pilkonis (1974, 1977, 1979, 2006), whose works are regarded as foundational for understanding shyness, even though they were not the first to address it from a scientific perspective.

Zimbardo began his investigations into shyness in 1974, describing it as a “fascinating aspect of human nature.” According to the author, his interest in the topic emerged from interactions with his students, who reflected on their own “problems”, including experiences of being very shy. These reflections developed into frequent informal conversations, and Zimbardo soon found himself teaching a seminar on the psychology of shyness, marked by substantial student participation. However, when he sought scientific literature on the phenomenon, he discovered that very little material was available at the time. Zimbardo (1982) reiterates that there were only “speculations” about shyness as a personality trait, as well as discussions of some of its most common manifestations, such as embarrassment and “stage fright,” for example.

Thus, although shyness began to attract scientific attention through Zimbardo’s and other researchers’ investigations, it soon came to be discussed within broader approaches to personality. Understanding shyness involves situating it within different perspectives on temperamental traits and their influence on human behavior. Studies on personality traits have gained prominence in various scientific fields in recent years (Bartholomeu; Nunes; Machado, 2008; Dias; Queiroz, 2010; Costa et al., 2020; Ahmed et al., 2024; Kapur, 2024).

Many researchers in the field of temperament recognize the importance of these characteristics, as they differentiate individuals from their peers. Cain (2012, n.p) believes that “our lives are shaped as profoundly by personality as by gender or race”. According to Tohver et al. (2020), an individual's personality tends to remain relatively stable throughout many years of their life, and becoming familiar with these characteristics can provide insights that help predict and explain certain behaviors and actions.

Analyzing our own experiences is often sufficient to reveal how, within the complex spectrum of personality, individual traits influence the ways people live and interact with the environment. I believe it is natural that we choose our friends or feel closer to certain people

rather than others based on shared affinities and interests. Drawing on Cain (2012), I argue that, based on our personalities, we tend to know what to talk about, how to express affection, how to give them gifts, how to deal with misunderstandings and, even how others might act in certain situations. Beyond personal relationships, personality may also influence one's choice of career and, as the author argues, the likelihood of success in that field.

The extroversion-introversion spectrum is a well-established area of study, originally introduced by Carl Jung in his classic work *Personality types* (1921), and constitutes one of the main pillars for understanding personality. In Psychology, there are numerous definitions of these traits; however, in general terms, Walker et al. (2021) describe an extraverted person as someone who enjoys stimulating activities, tends to be assertive, sociable, and communicative, and usually prefers to be surrounded by others. An introverted person, in contrast, is described by the authors as someone who is satisfied with a limited social circle, tends to avoid overstimulation, and exhibits more reserved and introspective behaviors.

Building on the characteristics commonly associated with the two personality types, it is common for people to be unable to distinguish introversion from shyness, often treating them as identical phenomena or understanding shyness as the opposite of extraversion⁴. This confusion is understandable, as an introverted person may appear shy or, in some cases, actually be shy. In this debate, Cain (2012), in *Quiet: The Power of Introverts*, sought to investigate the nuances of introversion and shyness, offering new perspectives for rethinking these underappreciated personality expressions. The author emphasizes that introversion is related to how individuals interact with the world, manage stimuli, and recharge, whereas shyness may, but does not necessarily, arise from introversion. Moreover, even extraverted individuals may experience shyness. In the Brazilian edition of *Quiet*, in the preface written by Gheringer (2019, n.p.), the distinction between the two concepts is clarified:

Shy individuals are people who would like to change their behavior because they fear its consequences (the Latin verb *timere*, from which the word derives, means “to be afraid”). Introverts do not share this need. They do not feel the absence of being what they are not, nor any fear of continuing to be as they are.

⁴ In English, the word “outgoing” functions as the antonym of “shy”, while “extraversion” opposes “introversion”, thus more clearly delineating the distinction between the terms, as other languages do as well. In Portuguese, there is no word that expresses the exact opposite of “tímido(a)” (shy), and when consulting translations of “outgoing” in various dictionaries, the first result is always “extrovertido(a)” (extravert). I argue that the lack of adequate vocabulary to denote the opposite of shyness and shy – although there are possible alternatives, such as “não-tímido(a)” (non-shy), which I use in the data collection instruments of this study – may contribute to misunderstandings of these terms.

Shyness is a factor that causes discomfort for those who experience it, triggering physical reactions and challenging emotional experiences as a result of a sometimes paralyzing fear of exposure, as I further discuss below. Introversion, by contrast, does not entail such harm. Nevertheless, when observing a quiet person in a social setting, it is often difficult to determine with certainty whether that person is shy or introverted.

Early studies suggested that shyness is more common among children than among adults (Zimbardo, 1982). This does not imply, however, that there is a small number of shy adults; rather, many individuals tend to overcome or mask the effects of shyness in their lives. These studies also indicate that shyness is a common characteristic among university students (Zimbardo; Pilkonis; Norwood, 1974; Pilkonis, 1977). Henderson and Zimbardo (2001) found that at least 80% of the population has already experienced the effects of shyness at some point in their lives. By contrast, only 40% describe themselves as shy. Among these respondents, approximately one quarter identified themselves as “chronically shy”, meaning that they have always experienced shyness, while 4% described themselves as “true-blue shies”, reporting shyness in every situation and with every person. At the national level, studies conducted at the University of São Paulo (USP) slightly over a decade ago indicate that more than half of Brazilians experience shyness; according to a report by *Jornal Hoje* (Gonçalves, 2012), this figure reaches approximately 65%.

Based on these data, it is relevant to establish classifications regarding the nature of shyness. Shyness can thus be understood either as an emotional state – which is transient and may be experienced by any individual under certain conditions, such as speaking in public or meeting new people – or as a personality trait, that is, temperamental shyness (Schmidt; Poole, 2020). In this latter case, shyness constitutes part of individuals’ identities and everyday experiences and is characteristic of a minority of the population, although this minority represents a substantial number of people.

Although there is currently a substantial body of research on shyness in Psychology, in this study, I seek to examine whether and how this phenomenon has been investigated in the field of Education, particularly in relation to the teaching and learning of foreign languages. To this end, I searched several platforms for studies connecting shyness to language teachers. With the exception of one article, which I discuss in greater depth later, I did not find significant results either in AL or in Education.

Interest in shyness within the field of Education dates back to the 1970s and has been consolidated mainly through research in primary education (Stahl; McDonald, 2014; Monteiro et al., 2018; Maia et al., 2024). This body of work also includes studies such as McWilliams's (2019) dissertation and an article by Deng et al. (2021), which examines teachers' shyness and self-efficacy when working with shy students. Nevertheless, studies that relate shyness specifically to teaching practice, especially in language education, remain scarce.

Among the few investigations that focus on teachers, the study by Gimenez et al. (2019) deserves particular attention. The authors examined the role of shyness in the vocal handicap of self-reported shy teachers working in Early Childhood Education and in Elementary School levels I and II. The authors, who are affiliated with a clinical institution focused on the study, treatment, and improvement of the voice, express concern that shyness may compromise these teachers' vocal performance, considering that speech is an indispensable instrument in their profession. In this quantitative study, 200 teachers completed two research instruments, including a personal questionnaire, the Vocal Handicap Index and the Shyness Scale.

The findings indicate a relationship between teachers' shyness and vocal handicap. Shy teachers presented higher levels of vocal handicap when compared to outgoing teachers: while 148 participants (79%) reported no vocal impairment, 58 (21%) indicated some degree of disadvantage. Within this latter group, the proportion of shy teachers was significantly higher, reaching nearly 65%. According to the authors, observed behaviors commonly associated with shyness included "low voice intensity, disfluent and monotonous speech", as well as a reduced tendency to express themselves verbally (Gimenez et al., 2019, p. 2).

In AL, however, shyness has still not been properly addressed, either in Brazil or internationally. A survey conducted by Vieira (2017) found that shyness has been little studied in Brazil, with a very low number of scientific publications. The author identified thirty-two works published between 1935 and 2013 by Brazilian publishers that had shyness as their main theme, including translations of foreign books – this number excludes self-help publications that lack consistent theoretical grounding. Most of the works analyzed by the researcher share a common aim: in addition to introducing the phenomenon, they seek to teach readers how to "overcome" or "defeat" shyness, based on the assumption that individuals must stop being shy in order to succeed in personal, social, and professional lives.

Studies in Applied Linguistics that address shyness focus predominantly on students, particularly in relation to oral production in a foreign language (Candido-Ribeiro, 2008; Santos; Barcelos, 2018; Oflaz, 2019; Lan; Nikitina; Woo, 2021), the emotions of shy EFL students (Kalantar, 2024), and EFL learners' motivation and willingness to communicate (Mohammadian, 2013). There are, however, virtually no published studies focusing on shy language teachers (except for Höl; Küçük, 2023).

The study conducted by Santos and Barcelos (2018) investigated shyness in relation to the oral production of intermediate-level learners of English enrolled in an extension course. Their results indicate that shyness interferes with the quality of oral production at several levels, with fear emerging as the most prominent factor affecting speakers' performance. Although the participants in that study do not constitute the same population examined in the present research, it is possible to infer that the situations faced by teachers may not be substantially different. Based on my own personal experiences, I argue that shyness may undermine teachers' sense of professionalism, self-efficacy, and perceptions of linguistic competence, while also generating uncomfortable emotions that are commonly believed to impair professional performance.

The only study identified that investigates teachers' shyness within a language teaching context is that of Höl and Küçük (2023). This largely quantitative study, conducted with pre-service English teachers, sought to examine how shyness affects performance, productivity, creativity, and classroom management strategies, while also taking students' shyness into account. The results suggested that teachers' use of classroom management strategies varied significantly depending on the shyness of both teachers and students, as well as their genders, and the interactions among these factors.

In light of the discussion presented thus far, I consider it important, before introducing definitions or delving into the effects of shyness and its influence on language teaching, to understand the reasons why this condition is often perceived negatively in our society and, consequently, receives little attention in the national academic context. Accordingly, the next section focuses on how beliefs about shyness and shy individuals have been historically constructed in Western society.

2.1.2. The historical construction of shyness in Western society

Although shyness has accompanied human experience for centuries, its understanding in Western societies has undergone significant transformations, shifting from a trait considered common and even natural to a condition that has increasingly been problematized and, more recently, medicalized. From the perspective that shyness is experienced by a large portion of the world's population, it is reasonable to state that it constitutes a normal aspect of human experience. This observation, however raises an important question: why is a shy personality so strongly avoided in contemporary Western societies?

In her book *Shyness and Society*, Scott (2007) draws attention to the widespread belief that people know what shyness is or understand how to deal with shy individuals, while simultaneously challenging these taken-for-granted assumptions about the nature of shyness. The author asks:

(1) What is happening in contemporary Western cultures that leads them to view shy behavior as problematic? (2) What leads us to think that shy people need to be helped to overcome this condition? (3) In what sense can shyness be seen as a social problem? (p.2).

The term shyness has been recorded since the Middle Ages; however, it did not originally refer to human beings but rather to the behavior of animals, particularly horses, that were easily startled (Lane, 2007). From the seventeenth century onward, according to Lane (2007), the term began to be used to describe individuals who were reserved and, at times, perceived as suspicious or untrustworthy. Although shy behavior had not been fully embraced in Western societies since antiquity, for much of history it was nonetheless regarded as ordinary. This perception began to change toward the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth.

In his book *Shyness: How Normal Behavior Became a Disease*, Lane (2007) reconstructs the process through which shyness was progressively pathologized during a period marked by the efforts of the American Psychological Association (APA) to redefine mental illnesses and by the World Health Organization (WHO) attempts to align North American and European models of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD). Within this context, neuropsychiatric institutions, supported by substantial financial investment from the pharmaceutical industry, “turned a minor condition into a serious disease” (p. 7), enabling the marketing medications that claimed to cure such behaviors.

As Lane (2007) argues, before a drug could be sold, the idea of the disease first had to be established. Shyness and other behaviors associated with social anxiety disorder – such as the “fear of urinating in public restrooms and worrying about saying the wrong thing” – were presented to American society as the result of chemical imbalances in the brain. These conditions were portrayed as severe and insufficiently recognized, a strategy that was strongly criticized by psychoanalysts at the time. For Lane (2007, p. 104), this process “not only defined a new segment of the population as ill but also cast their woes in an entirely different form”. Medications such as Prozac and other serotonin reuptake inhibitors often produced more side effects than benefits, a fact that did not go unnoticed by the media and eventually became the focus of intense negative publicity in the United States.

The psychoanalyst Ceccareli (2010) discusses contemporary – and problematic, though not unprecedented – discourses on pathology, highlighting how they have contributed to a growing tendency toward the pathologization of normality in the relentless search for behavioral standardization. According to the author, natural human conditions are increasingly being labeled as diseases:

[...] people are being convinced that any problem, any setback is unbearable, which has turned psychological suffering into a mental illness, for which there is an appropriate medication for the emotion that the subject should not feel [...]. This is how shyness came to be a “social phobia” (n.p.)⁵.

This ideology of normativity treats everything that makes us human as something atypical that must be corrected. As Franzen mockingly observes, “there’s a pill for every ill” (Lane, 2007, p. 173). Ultimately, capitalism continues to feed on fabricated problems in order to sell miraculous solutions, while U.S. imperialism ensures that its cultural models exert influence over other countries around the world.

In 2013, APA released the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) with the stated aim of facilitating more accurate diagnoses of mental disorders (American Psychiatric Association, 2014), a manual that has since been widely adopted internationally. In its most recent version, the DSM-5-TR (2022), shyness is described as “a common personality trait” and is not classified as a pathological condition.

Although psychiatrists recognize that shyness may function as a triggering factor for disorders when it excessively interferes with social functioning, being “correlated with high

⁵ [...] as pessoas estão sendo convencidas de que qualquer problema, qualquer contrariedade é insuportável, o que transformou o sofrimento psíquico em uma doença mental, para a qual existe um medicamento apropriado para a emoção que o sujeito não deveria sentir [...] Foi assim que a timidez passou a ser uma ‘fobia social’ (n.p).

rates of school dropout and negative impacts on well-being and productivity” (Falcão, 2024, p. 5), its most common effects are neither physically nor psychologically degrading or harmful (Levitan et al., 2011). In addition, in 2011 the Brazilian Psychiatric Association (ABP) reported that shyness predominates in the population when compared to social anxiety, whose prevalence rates range from approximately 2% to 16%, varying across years (Ramos; Santos, 2021).

Individuals may experience shyness in different situations, degrees, and with varying effects. Scott (2007) emphasizes the importance of considering how each culture interprets emotional states and personality traits, as behaviors perceived as shyness in some contexts may be understood simply as modesty in others, as is the case in certain Asian cultures. There are also variations in how this phenomenon is perceived within a single society. From my perspective, shyness does not go unnoticed in Brazil, a country often characterized as extroverted and outgoing. Perhaps for this reason, shy individuals may find it more challenging to adapt to this social context.

As the discussion deepens in an attempt to explain why shyness is generally perceived as a negative trait, Vieira (2017) attributes part of this perception to a widely accepted conception rooted in Aristotle’s (384-322 BC) view of human beings as inherently social. From this perspective, sociability has historically been considered essential to human survival and development, and individuals are constituted not only by themselves but also by the social experiences they live through (Vieira, 2017). The author suggests that those for whom shyness is a stable personality trait may have their development impaired and, for this reason, are viewed negatively in society. I take a different position. Precisely because we are social beings, and because shyness is socially constructed, I argue that all individuals experience shyness at some point in their lives.

Based on personal observations, I believe that, in addition to the challenges faced by shy individuals, many of which are intensified by the negative image of shyness in society, there is also a lack of sensitivity in how shy people are often treated. Excessive reactions and, at times, rudeness toward shy and introverted individuals for not displaying what is considered “conventional” behavior may function as aggravating factors in the construction of a negative self-image. By “conventional,” I refer to an extroverted or outgoing personality – commonly described in Brazil as “*pra frente*” – which is highly valued in Western societies and has come to operate as an oppressive standard in contemporary times (Cain, 2012). No

one writes on their résumé that they are shy and reserved, whereas being outgoing is often highlighted as a desirable trait.

Despite the persistent emphasis on the unfavorable aspects of shyness, there are indications that individuals who identify as shy possess qualities that often go unnoticed or are insufficiently valued in contemporary culture. From an evolutionary perspective, Coplan and Xiao (2016, n.p.) argue that “[...] shyness may afford some adaptive qualities [...] and serve to promote social cohesion (e.g., diffident behaviors may diffuse tense social exchanges).”

Although shy individuals may not express themselves according to dominant social expectations, they often demonstrate unique ways of interacting and expressing emotions. They tend to be attentive listeners, thoughtful in their speech, deep thinkers, reflective problem solvers, imaginative, creative, observant, and highly sensitive to stimuli – qualities that frequently connect them to artistic expression as a means of communicating feelings and ideas (Coelho, 1997).

Throughout history, many individuals identified as shy have become renowned for their artistic, intellectual, and scientific contributions, including J. R. R. Tolkien, George Orwell, Vincent van Gogh, Albert Einstein, Emily Dickinson, Frida Kahlo, and Gandhi (Cain, 2012). In Brazil, iconic figures in literature such as Clarice Lispector, Carlos Drummond de Andrade, and Machado de Assis are also frequently associated with shyness (Vieira, 2017).

Although some scholars continue to treat shyness as a “social disease,” this is a perspective with which I do not agree. Scott (2007) acknowledges that extreme shyness may involve uncomfortable experiences, such as anxiety, frustration, and loneliness. However, the author argues that we need to adopt a more critical stance toward its problematization. I would add that we also need to be more sensitive. Axia (1999, p. 17) reinforces this view by stating that “shyness is not an illness that needs to be cured or a deficiency to be overcome through willpower and rational self-persuasion. Shyness is a human condition”⁶.

In light of this understanding of shyness as a human condition rather than a pathological one, the following section examines its most recurrent effects, as well as the ways in which it manifests itself across different contexts and stages of life.

⁶ “timidez não é uma enfermidade que precisa ser curada ou uma deficiência a ser superada pela força de vontade e pelo auto convencimento racional. A timidez é uma condição humana” (Axia, 1999, p. 17).

2.1.3. Shyness and its implications

Shyness is a characteristic that affects human beings on a large scale. Studies indicate that approximately nine out of ten people report having experienced shyness at some point in their lives (Zimbardo; Pilkonis; Norwood, 1975), although this prevalence varies across cultures (Zimbardo, 1982). While no recent data point to significant differences regarding the ages at which shyness is most likely to emerge, it is common to hear individuals state, “I have always been shy”.

The biologist and naturalist Charles Darwin (1894) reported having observed signs of shyness in one of his children as early as two or three months of age. He noted that, at that stage, shyness does not manifest through blushing, the most commonly associated sign, since infants have not yet developed this physiological response, but rather through avoidant eye contact. Darwin recounts that after being away from his baby for a week, the child showed unfamiliarity and avoided eye contact when interacting with his father.

As Darwin’s observations illustrate, some theories argue that shyness is an innate aspect of human temperament (Rothbart; Alansky, 1990; Kegan, 1994), perspectives with which I do not fully align. Other scholars suggest that shyness may arise predominantly from lived experiences, particularly in contexts marked by strict or restrictive forms of education. For example, children who experience rejection, excessive control, or overprotection from family members or authority figures may develop insecurities as they grow older (Coplan; Xiao, 2020). Scott (2004), in turn, observes that shy individuals can be communicative and articulate in certain situations. For this reason, the author argues that shyness may originate in “situated interactions as a socially negotiated role” (Stahl; McDonald, 2024, p. 4), being oriented, produced, and socially managed (Scott, 2007), rather than constituting a fixed personal attribute.

Although numerous conceptions of shyness can be found in dictionaries, encyclopedias, and academic works, it remains difficult to establish a precise definition of the phenomenon. Over the past century, shyness has been described using terms such as “social reticence, social isolation, social withdrawal, social anxiety, social phobia, introversion, timidity, low sociability, social inhibition, social wariness, and behavioral inhibition” (Jones et al., 2014, p. 345). These labels tend to convey unitary, and sometimes exaggerated,

meanings and fail to capture the complexity of a multidimensional condition (Crozier, 1981), even though they are often used interchangeably.

In this sense, Zimbardo (1977, p. 13) concluded that “shyness is a fuzzy concept; the closer we look, the more varieties of shyness we discover [...] no single definition can be adequate, because shyness means different things to different people”. Like other theorists, Zimbardo chose to describe this complex phenomenon through its commonly expressed characteristics and effects, acknowledging that shy individuals do not all share the same experiences. From this perspective, the following excerpt from Carducci and Conkright (2020) offers a definition that captures several of the distinctive attributes associated with shyness. According to the authors, shyness may be understood as:

[...] the presence of anxious reactions and excessive self-consciousness and negative self-evaluation in the response to real or imagined social interactions to the degree that it produces enough discomfort to interfere with and inhibit one’s ability to perform successfully in social situations, often to the extent that it can also disrupt the fulfillment of one’s personal and professional goals. (n.p.)

In addition, Verztman (2014, p. 128, emphasis in the original) describes the shy individual as “someone who becomes paralyzed by the paradox of being *supervisible* or invisible”⁷, experiencing thoughts of insufficiency of a narcissistic nature due to excessive concern with the self and the gaze of the other. From this perspective, the shy person fears being misunderstood by others, a concern that, according to Jones and Carpenter (1986, p. 229), involves questions such as: “(a) Is shyness detectable by others? (b) Is it perceived as positive or negative? and (c) Do observers attribute additional qualities or motives to shy behavior?”

Vasconcellos (2005, p. 20) identifies three characteristics that help explain nuances of shy behavior: “the approach/avoidance conflict, the slow-to-warm-up trait, and the comfort zone”⁸. The first refers to the simultaneous and conflicting desire to approach and avoid social interaction; the second concerns the time shy individuals require to manage the internal conflict produced by this tension or by limited social skills; and the third relates to places, people, objects, and actions that elicit a sense of comfort. Carducci (1999) explains that the comfort zone is a universal human need, fluid and constantly changing. What distinguishes it

⁷ “[...] aquele que fica paralisado diante do paradoxo de ser *supervisível* ou de ser invisível” Verztman (2014, p. 128).

⁸ “o conflito aproximação/esquiva, a lentidão para o aquecimento e a zona de conforto” (Vasconcellos, 2005, p.20).

for shy individuals, however, is that it tends to be more restrictive and static, as they require considerably more time than non-shy individuals to expand it toward unfamiliar situations.

From this perspective, shyness is deeply embedded in social and cultural processes and exerts a strong influence on the individual mind (Scott, 2007). According to the author, shyness may produce multiple effects due to ambiguous and uncomfortable social situations, arising from dilemmas about how to behave and how to manage the impressions conveyed to others. Similarly, Kagan (1988) argues that shyness is systemically characterized by behavioral hyperreactivity to the environment, manifesting across psychosocial, behavioral, cognitive, affective, and psychophysiological domains (Jones et al., 2014). In line with this view, it cannot be denied that “in social situations the emotional experience of shy individuals is less pleasant than that of not shy persons” (Pilkonis, 1977, p. 605). Scholars such as Crozier (1999) and Tangney and Fischer (1995) further suggest that emotions such as fear, shame, and recurring embarrassment act as catalysts for shyness, which in more extreme cases may contribute to clinical conditions such as anxiety and depression.

Given the strong self-directed critical stance characteristic of shy individuals, the affective and emotional consequences of shyness are particularly significant. Shame and embarrassment are frequently reported emotions (Crozier, 1999; Verztman, 2014), along with fear and anxiety (Henderson; Zimbardo, 2010; Firouzi et al., 2024), which lie at the core of shyness as a lived experience. These emotions are closely linked to low self-esteem and to limiting beliefs that shy individuals may develop about themselves (Jones et al., 2014).

Vieira (2017) cites an excerpt from Klein, Câmara, and Herzog (2014, p. 145) that captures the relationship between socially inhibited individuals and the experience of “being perceived”:

[...] the gaze of the other is capable of accessing the entire recesses of one's being, aiming to carry out the most atrocious evaluations against them. The shy person reports feeling cruelly exposed and unable to hide or select what of themselves can be shown and what must be concealed. Their egoic boundaries do not offer the necessary opacity for the subject to rest safely within their interiority; transparency throws them into painful exposure at every encounter with a stranger's gaze (Vieira, 2017 apud Klein; Câmara; Herzog, 2014, p. 145)⁹.

⁹ [...] o olhar do outro é capaz de acessar todo o recôndito de seu ser, visando efetuar contra ele as avaliações mais atroz. O tímido diz sentir-se cruamente exposto e incapaz de esconder ou selecionar o que de si pode ser mostrado e o que deve ser escondido. Seus limites egóicos não oferecem a opacidade necessária para o sujeito repousar em segurança na sua interioridade; a transparência o lança à penosa exposição a cada encontro com um olhar estranho (Vieira, 2017 apud Klein; Câmara; Herzog, 2014, p. 145).

For Carducci and Conkright (2020, n.p.), the cognitive dimension of shyness involves “the excessive sense of self-consciousness (e.g., Everybody is staring at me), negative self-appraisal (e.g., What I said was so stupid), [and an] irrational belief system (e.g., Nobody at the party will find me interesting) characteristic of the way that shy people think about themselves”. Drawing on a metaphor, Cain (2012) suggests that, much like some animals carry their shelters with them, human beings do the same. Shy individuals, therefore, experience a persistent need to protect themselves from situations perceived as threatening to their emotional well-being.

Shyness also affects the physiological dimension of experience, often in ways similar to anxiety-related responses. Common manifestations include “butterflies in the stomach,” flushed cheeks, and sweaty hands during situations of exposure or social interaction (Zimbardo, 1982). Sensitivity can be such that everyday situations – such as calling a waiter in a restaurant or greeting a neighbor – may trigger facial redness. In this regard, Lane (2007, p. 29), drawing on Charles Bell, suggests that blushing functions as “a provision for expression”, allowing shy individuals to communicate feelings they cannot or choose not to verbalize. Additional symptoms may include accelerated heartbeat, dizziness, shortness of breath, muscle tension, and difficulties with speech articulation (VandenBos, 2010).

Shyness may also be expressed in either positive or negative ways. Poole and Schmidt (2020) discuss these two poles of shy behavior, noting that individuals who express shyness positively tend to seek social acceptance and attempt to facilitate interpersonal interactions. They often do so through smiles, apologetic gestures, or efforts to engage socially, even when they do not feel comfortable internally. In contrast, negatively expressed shyness is characterized by the predominance of fear and avoidance-oriented motivations.

In sum, shyness is a complex, multidimensional, and dynamic phenomenon that can generate numerous challenges for those who experience it (Zimbardo, 1982). Among the most frequently cited difficulties are: (1) limitations in enjoying social experiences, forming friendships, and interacting comfortably with people outside one’s close social circle; (2) excessive concern with how one is perceived by others, leading to heightened self-consciousness; (3) difficulties in self-assertion and expressing opinions; (4) reduced clarity in communication; (5) challenges in recognizing and expressing one’s own strengths; (6) the emergence of uncomfortable emotions and, in some cases, clinical conditions such as

anxiety and depression; (7) distressing physiological reactions associated with stress; and (8) limitations in engaging with new experiences.

The discussion of the origins and nature of shyness is fundamental to a broader understanding of this human phenomenon and its perception in Western society. In the following section, building on the arguments presented thus far, I reflect on the role of shyness and examine its possible implications and effects within the context of language teaching.

2.1.4. The shyness of language teachers

Zimbardo (1977) compares extreme shyness to the coexistence of a guard and a prisoner within the same individual. The author shares one of his statements addressed to his students, stating: “There are some shy people who have both the desire and the know-how to do a particular thing, but are held back from taking action” (p.2). This inhibition can be understood as the result of internal commands from the “vigilant self”, which restrict the shy person’s behavior and expression. Zimbardo (1977, p.2-3) describes these commands as follows:

They are inhibited from acting because of inner commands from the guard-self: “You’ll look ridiculous; people will laugh at you; this is not the place to do that; I won’t allow’ you the liberty to be spontaneous; do not raise your hand, volunteer, dance, sing, or make yourself obvious; you’ll be safe only if you’re not seen and not heard.”¹⁰ (Zimbardo (1977, p.2-3)

Appropriating his statement metaphorically, I believe that shy people may know how to dance and know the steps, yet feel unable to demonstrate them, for example, by inviting someone to dance or accepting an invitation. Similarly, shy language teachers may possess the necessary competence and knowledge but feel inhibited in fully demonstrating them. Having this in mind, I recall several moments in my own trajectory, especially during the process of choosing and becoming an English teacher, in which the “vigilant self” prevented me from taking risks, expressing myself, making my voice heard, showing my true qualities and skills, seeking to improve as a professional and even being somewhat more professionally ambitious.

¹⁰ “There are some shy people who have both the desire and the know-how to do a particular thing, but are held back from taking action,” I said. “They go to a dance, they know how to do the dance steps, yet something within keeps them from asking anyone to dance or accepting an invitation. Similarly, in the classroom, there are students who know the answer and want to make a good impression on the teacher, but something keeps their hands down and stifles their voices.” (Zimbardo, 1977, p.1-2)

In that way, my teaching history was marked by not “dancing to the music”, that is, by being unable to demonstrate my competence as an English teacher. I therefore ask how the professional trajectories of other shy teachers have unfolded. Although research on shy language teachers remains scarce, to date it is possible to infer, based on studies already conducted on shyness in general or on language learners, that the shyness of language teachers affects both their well-being and professional performance.

In the previous section, I presented the condition of shyness and its effects, first highlighting the impairment of communication. Teachers are professionals who work with the voice; in this sense, having good vocal projection is fundamental not only to be clearly heard by students (Gimenez et al., 2019) but also for exercising authority in the classroom. Teachers are expected to be effective communicators (Zlatić et al., 2014; Etzold; Krüger, 2021). When shyness compromises the ability to communicate, the quality of teaching is affected, impacting their sense of self-efficacy, perceptions of competence, and professional self-esteem. In the context of foreign language teaching, these effects may intensify, since language knowledge is also put to the test.

The teacher’s work environment requires an active stance and constant interaction with students, teachers, school management, and other staff members. In institutions where teachers move from class to class, they encounter dozens or even hundreds of new students each academic cycle. Exposure to these new realities, since each student and each class are unique and may challenge teachers in different ways, can be especially stressful for those with shyness. As previously mentioned, new people, places, and situations challenge the boundaries of their comfort zone (Ebrahimi; Souza, 2010), and these professionals may need more time to adapt and open themselves to such experiences. Shyness is a psychological condition that generates tendencies toward social avoidance (Pilkonis, 1977); consequently, the benefits of social interactions may be hindered.

Throughout life, a shy person may doubt the sincerity of close relationships and persistently ask themselves, “Does this person really like me?” The study by Zheng et al. (2024) shows that concern with metaperception, that is, how one believes they are perceived by their peers, is common in foreign language teaching and learning environments, but often leads to mistaken conclusions. The research highlights a gap between how much people believe they are liked and how they are actually seen by others; participants “consistently believed that their conversation partners liked them less than how they were actually

perceived” (p.3). Most notably, this gap was even greater among those who presented the shy personality variable.

However, although the bodies and minds of shy individuals perceive social situations related to teaching as threatening, a conflict arises between this response and the teacher’s need, as well as desire, to approach students and colleagues. After all, teaching is a social, collective action grounded in constant dialogue among those involved (Freire, 1968/2019). When teachers do not experience a successful socialization process, they are likely to feel lonely in their work, which may lead to serious consequences such as depressive disorders, or even to leaving the school and, in some cases, the profession itself (Almeida *et al.*, 2019).

“But why do shy people choose teaching?” one might ask. I would actually respond, “Why not?” Despite the limitations, a shy person may genuinely love and feel passionate about teaching. Like many non-shy teachers, they undergo the same training process as other professionals, seek to develop their theoretical and practical knowledge, and bring to the profession their personality-based qualities that a non-shy teacher may not possess, while, at the same time sharing similar strengths and limitations.

Shy individuals are present in all professions, including the field of education. A shy teacher does not cease to be shy, but may find ways to soften the manifestations of this trait in the classroom. Some theories suggest that teaching involves a performance, in which teachers gradually construct the *persona* they present to students as they gain experience. Davis (2011, p.1) argues that “teachers and actors have similar jobs – they perform for audiences, and those audiences can interact with the actors and change the outcome of the performance based on their reactions”.

The persona adopted by teachers is part of their professional identity and takes time to be constructed (Davis, 2011). This identity is related not to “who I am”, but rather to “who I want to be” as a teacher (Marcelo, 2009). Although this performance may enable shy teachers to feel more comfortable in their professional practice and in how they are perceived, it may also be exhausting, as it demands intense and continuous emotional labor (see section 2.3.1), so that their insecurities and uncomfortable emotions do not surface.

Recalling the ideas of Poole and Schmidt (2020), I suggest that shy teachers may express their shyness positively, for example, by consistently smiling at their students even when they feel anxious or afraid, or by frequently apologizing for mistakes made during

classes, such as when a planned activity does not occur as expected or when linguistic slips occur. These behaviors stem from the desire for acceptance and recognition, which are natural feelings for teachers to experience within their professional environments.

In light of these reflections, I conclude that teachers who experience shyness may encounter significantly challenging situations in a profession in which effective communication is an indispensable requirement (Hamid, 2020). As I discuss in the next section, this awareness may become a source of stress, insecurity, and vulnerability for those who identify themselves as shy. Returning to Hendin and Cheek (1999, p.2), whose analysis is directly linked to the aims of this study, the “symptoms of shyness fall into three main categories: feelings, thoughts and behaviors”. Therefore, as a foundation for the following sections, it is necessary to reflect on the teaching conditions of shy teachers, to reconsider limiting beliefs, to listen to their experiences, and to understand their emotions and perceptions about the profession.

2.2. Beliefs about language teaching and learning

The investigation of beliefs in the context of language learning has proven fundamental to understanding how teachers and learners perceive, interpret, and influence teaching and learning processes. This section begins by presenting studies and definitions that outline the concept of beliefs in AL, highlighting their characteristics, functions, and implications for pedagogical practice. It then turns specifically to beliefs related to shyness in language teaching and learning contexts, considering how such perceptions shape the actions and experiences of both teachers and students.

2.2.1. Studies on beliefs and its definitions in AL

Beliefs have accompanied humanity since its earliest times, as observed by Barcelos (2007). They are present in values, cultures, social norms, traditions, individual experiences, emotions, and actions. According to the author, once human beings develop the capacity to think, they also develop beliefs. Although beliefs might initially be understood as strong ideas or convictions individuals hold about themselves and the world, this understanding is overly simplistic, as Nascimento *et al.* (2020) argue.

Given the undeniable presence of beliefs throughout human life, the end of the twentieth century was marked by significant increase in studies on cognition in educational contexts. Since the mid-1970s, beliefs have been investigated in the field of education (Kalaja et al., 2016). Kelchtermans (2009, p.260) notes that in the 1980s, research on teachers and teaching was already being influenced by “the developments in cognitive psychology and more in particular the growing understanding how people’s actions are influenced by their cognitions”.

As shown by Barcelos (2004), in Brazil, research on beliefs emerged only in the 1990s, grounded in the studies of Leffa (1991), Almeida Filho (1993), and Barcelos herself (1995). Tracing the trajectory of AL, early publications addressing beliefs initially emphasized teaching outcomes in relation to learners’ learning and behavior. Over time, however, researchers began to focus on the situational and cognitive dimensions of teaching, which encouraged closer attention to language teachers’ perceptions, an area that had previously received limited consideration (Barcelos; Ruohotie-Lythy, 2018). Over the past two decades, influential studies have been developed within Applied Linguistics (Barcelos 2004, 2006, 2007, 2015, Borg, 2003, 2006; Kalaja; Barcelos, 2013). The extensive body of literature on beliefs in language teacher education currently available reinforces the relevance of this theme (Kudiess, 2019; Godoy, 2020; Nascimento, 2020; Paula, 2023).

The concept of beliefs draws on contributions from multiple areas of knowledge, including Anthropology, Psychology, Sociology, Philosophy, and Education (Barcelos, 2004), with which Applied Linguistics engages extensively in exploring this phenomenon. Beliefs are also discussed in fields such as Discourse Analysis (Perine, 2012), Law, Medicine, and Political Science (Pajares, 1992). Although this study adopts the term “belief”, which is the most frequently used in contemporary AL, other terms addressing similar concepts can be found in the literature, such as “cognitions, learning culture, teaching approach, representations, personal theories, myths, among others”¹¹ (Perine, 2012, p.369).

Beyond terminological differences, Pajares (1992, p.309) argues that reaching a consensus on a definition of beliefs is particularly challenging and describes it as “at best a game of player’s choice”. As a result, comprehensive definitions often combine ideas from different theoretical perspectives and fields of knowledge. Table 1, adapted from Oliveira

¹¹ “cognições, cultura de aprender, abordagem de ensinar, representações, teorias pessoais, mitos, entre outros” (Perine, 2012, p.369).

(2023), summarizes three approaches identified by Barcelos (2004) in the history of research on beliefs: Normative, Metacognitive, and Contextual.

Table 1 - Approaches and definitions of beliefs

Approach	Definition
Normative	Within this approach, beliefs are understood as synonymous with preconceived ideas, myths, and misconceptions.
Metacognitive	Based on Wenden's (1987) framework, beliefs are defined as knowledge constructed by learners during the process of language learning. They are relatively stable yet fallible (not always empirically supported) and interactive, insofar as they influence learning outcomes and may, at times, be inaccurate.
Contextual	Beliefs are viewed as contextual, dynamic, and social. Context is understood as socially constituted through interaction, rather than as static or merely a social container.

Source: translated and adapted from Oliveira (2023)

Although Oliveira (2023) concisely summarizes these three approaches; as described by Barcelos (2004), as described by Barcelos (2004), the Normative and Metacognitive approaches tend to impose a prescriptive view of how a language should be learned and adopt a judgmental stance toward students' beliefs. In contrast, the Contextual approach highlights the social, interactive, and dynamic nature of beliefs.

Drawing on Barcelos (2006), beliefs can be described as:

A form of thought, constructions of reality, ways of seeing and perceiving the world and its phenomena; co-constructed through our experiences and resulting from an interactive process of interpretation and (re)signification. As such, beliefs are social (but also individual), dynamic, contextual, and paradoxical (p. 18).

In this sense, beliefs are dynamic because they can be altered as a result of an individual's life experiences, while also requiring time to be formed and consolidated. Their mutability is related to the fact that beliefs are situated within social contexts (Barcelos, 2006). Their paradoxical nature is manifested in their contradictory character: beliefs are not

intrinsically positive or negative and may “act as instruments of empowerment or as obstacles within the context of language teaching”¹² (Rocha; Brisolara, 2020, p.58).

In the context of research on language teaching and learning, the concept of beliefs is further specified as “impressions that teachers and students have about themselves and their peers and in relation to one another, within a given context of actual practice or within an imagined context”¹³ (Coelho, 2005). Aragão and Cajazeira (2017) follow a similar line of thought, clarifying that beliefs operate in complex ways, shaping participants’ views regarding the most appropriate or effective ways to teach and learn languages.

Beliefs maintain interactive and reciprocal relationships with human action (Godoy; Barcelos, 2021). They impact our actions in non-linear ways, functioning as a web whose threads connect irregularly and asymmetrically. That is, beliefs affect decisions, actions, and behaviors, and are, in turn, affected by them. This relationship is further modulated by multiple internal and external factors and is often activated by what Barcelos (2006, p.25) refers to as “catalytic moments of reflection”¹⁴, which may trigger deeper reflection on one’s beliefs.

For Barcelos and Ruohotie-Lythy (2018, p.111), the importance of beliefs came to be recognized in the field of language teaching because they enable “(a) teachers to reflect on their practice and understand some of the conflicts and resistance that may occur in the classroom; (b) researchers to understand why teachers act the way they do, how they respond to change, and how they learn how to teach.” With regard to pre-service teachers, the literature further reinforces the relevance of discussing and reflecting on beliefs during this crucial period of professional identity development (Barcelos, 2004, 2015).

Considering that beliefs are considered particular certainties held by individuals or collectives and that they influence both actions and emotions, Aragão and Cajazeira (2017) emphasize that teachers often fail to perceive the extent to which their pedagogical practices are shaped by such beliefs, or to recognize the importance of reflecting on and questioning them. Changes in beliefs are described as “synonymous with uncertainty” (Morelato;

¹² “atuar como instrumentos de empoderamento ou de obstáculo dentro do contexto do ensino de línguas” (Rocha; Brisolara, 2020, p.58)

¹³ “impressões que os professores e os alunos têm sobre si e seus pares e em relação um ao outro, dentro de um determinado contexto de atuação real ou dentro de um contexto imaginário” (Coelho, 2005).

¹⁴ “momentos catalisadores de reflexão” (Barcelos, 2006, p.25).

Engelbert, 2024), as they involve vulnerability, conflict, destabilization, and the experience of leaving one's comfort zone.

With regard to this study, it is important to clarify that no research has yet investigated beliefs about shyness in language teaching and learning, nor in other fields. Therefore, knowledge concerning the intersection of these topics is extremely limited. In the following section, I explore possible relationships that may exist between beliefs, shyness, and language teaching.

2.2.2. Beliefs about shyness in language teaching and learning

In many cultural contexts, shyness may be perceived as a disadvantage in different aspects of life, reflecting socially shared beliefs about the phenomenon itself and about how individuals are expected to behave (Scott, 2007). As previously discussed, there were periods throughout the past century in which shyness was framed as an ailment to be overcome or as a social flaw. Such views contributed to the widespread belief that individuals must conform to an extroverted ideal in order to succeed in social and professional contexts.

According to Magalhães, (2018, p.45), “with the aim of achieving efficiency in communication, it is indispensable to overcome shyness and inhibitions”¹⁵. This perception reflects a common belief that shyness negatively affects communicative performance, turning it into an obstacle to professional success, particularly in the job market. This phenomenon becomes especially visible in self-help sections of bookstores, where beliefs about shyness are, according to the author, at the “root of the success of self-help literature” (p.44). Increasingly, individuals seek quick solutions to communicate effectively and reduce shyness, motivated by the perceived professional consequences associated with this trait. This goal resonates with the following excerpt from Scott (2007, p.9):

Shy people report feeling as if everybody else seems to know the unspoken rules of interaction and thus are able to provide a more poised, socially competent performance. This feeling of relative incompetence is central to the experience of shyness, and indicates the roles played by team-mates, audiences and supporting actors.

The search for self-help books is particularly common in business environment; however, similar assumptions can also be identified in the field of education. According to

¹⁵ “Com a finalidade de alcançar a eficiência em se comunicar, é indispensável superar a timidez e as inibições” (Magalhães, 2018, p.45)

Pontes (2021, p.81), “the professional [language teacher] needs to possess professional competence, which is the sum of implicit, theoretical applied, and linguistic communicative competences”¹⁶.

Among the qualifications required of language teachers, the author highlights communicative competence, noting that participants in the study consider both linguistic knowledge and didactics skills to be equally important. From this perspective, it can be assumed that if a shy teacher’s communicative performance is compromised, they may experience difficulties engaging students, which can ultimately affect their teaching practice.

There is no scientific basis to support the assumption that a shy teacher lacks linguistic competence, since such a teacher may possess extensive knowledge of the subject matter. What may actually be affected as a result of shyness is performance. As early as 1957, Chomsky had already argued that an individual’s linguistic competence rarely manifests itself in a fully transparent manner in communicative performance, which may fluctuate between effective communication and problematic situations depending on multiple factors. Thus, a shy teacher with solid training and broad knowledge may, at certain times, fail to express themselves fully, without this necessarily compromising their competence or professional effectiveness, although it may influence how they are perceived by others.

In the same study previously mentioned, Pontes (2021) reflects on language teachers’ preference for communicative approaches, which have gained prominence recently, as they are not teacher-centered but rather focused on the students. Many teachers share the belief that this approach is the most effective for language teaching. As a shy teacher, I recognize and identify with this perspective, although I must acknowledge that the initial adaptation was not an easy process. I do not intend to question the effectiveness of any teaching approaches in this study; instead, I raise questions for which I do not yet have clear answers: how do shy teachers feel about the communicative approach in language teaching? Do they also believe it to be the most effective? How does this relate to their experience of shyness? Perhaps these questions may constitute material for future research.

Another belief that appears to be widespread is that shy individuals do not make good leaders because of perceived difficulties with assertiveness. In educational contexts, this belief undermines teachers’ authority in the classroom. Based on stereotypical views, people

¹⁶ “o profissional [professor de línguas] precisa possuir uma competência profissional, que é a soma das competências implícita, teórico-aplicada e linguístico-comunicativa” (Pontes, 2021, p.81).

may believe that all shy individuals tend to adopt avoidant stances toward social situations or that shyness necessarily manifests itself in an evident way in behaviors and reactions. However, according to Poole and Schmidt (2020), a large part of shy individuals express their shyness in adaptive ways, that is, they are willing to engage in social situations, recognize their importance, and strive not to display emotional conflict. Context, therefore, emerges as a key factor in whether shyness is expressed or not. From this perspective, it is possible to assume that the language teachers are aware, from the moment they choose the profession, that teaching requires intense social interaction and may demand that they step outside their comfort zones in order to fully act in this environment.

Beyond general and, to some extent, stereotypical beliefs about shyness and language teaching, I argue that the most limiting factor for those who experience this combination may be their own beliefs about what it means to be shy and to teach, as well as beliefs related to identities, competence, and interpersonal skills. Clark (2001, as cited in Scott, 2007, p.7)

provides an account of the way shy people perceive and cognitively process social situations, for example by critically reviewing their past or anticipated performance from the perspective of others and combining unconditional negative beliefs about the self with unrealistic beliefs about the consequences of making a social blunder.

At the level of action, shy individuals may adopt strategies, or “safety behaviors” (Scott, 2007) such as, wearing discreet clothing in order not to draw attention to themselves or beginning a speech with justifications for potential poor performance. Statements such as “Sorry, today I do not feel like participating”, “I have a headache” or “today I am very distracted because of X, Y and Z” were some of my own justifications used to mitigate anxiety in situations in which shyness manifested itself more intensely, even though I must admit I am not proud of it.

Scott (2007) exemplifies how the “illusion of competence” shapes the beliefs and actions of shy individuals, who tend to perceive themselves as players on a team. According to the author, shy individuals often view others as naturally competent, capable of acting effortlessly, and, in an attempt to meet perceived peer standards, they anticipate situations by investing extra effort in preparation to feel more secure. One may imagine, for example, an English teacher preparing for a class: rehearsing the exact words they intend to say to students or repeatedly practicing, aloud, the explanation of a grammatical point in order to minimize the risk of not being understood by the students.

If a shy individual nurtures beliefs such as “my linguistic skills are not good enough”, “my shyness prevents me from being a good teacher” or “my students will judge me for my mistakes”, it is likely that his self-esteem will be affected, leading them to act in self-sabotaging ways and to create barriers to their own development. I suggest that, even in the presence of shyness, replacing such beliefs with alternatives like “my skills are good, and tend to improve because I also learn while teaching”, “my shyness does not prevent me from being a good teacher”, and “it is okay to make mistakes, my students will understand” may contribute to a more comfortable teaching experience and promote emotional well-being. This once again highlights the importance of addressing and transforming limiting beliefs (Barcelos, 2007).

Celani (2001) and Pontes (2021) agree that undergraduate education plays an important role in preparing future professionals; however, in addition to theoretical knowledge, it often fails to offer sufficient practical experience to enable teachers at the outset, with everyday challenges of the profession. Considering that beliefs are constructed and reconstructed primarily through experience (Barcelos, 2006; Coelho, 2005; Morelatto; Engelbert, 2024), pre-service contexts in language teacher education play an essential role in fostering reflection and challenging established paradigms among teachers in training.

Based on these considerations in this study, I seek to understand pre-service teachers who experience shyness by investigating the impacts of this phenomenon on their experiences in language teaching. More specifically, I aim to analyze their beliefs about these aspects, that is, how they perceive, describe, and relate them in their narratives, as well as their emotions, which, as I argue in the following section, are inseparable from these beliefs.

2.3. Emotions in language teaching and learning

This section is organized into two subsections. First, studies, definitions, and different perspectives on emotions in Applied Linguistics are presented, including theoretical approaches that help elucidate their nature, functioning, and influence on teaching and learning processes. Subsequently, the focus shifts to the interrelationship between emotions, shyness, and language teaching, examining how shyness may shape the emotional experiences of teachers and students, as well as influence their pedagogical practices.

2.3.1. Studies, definitions and perspectives about emotions in AL

Teaching is a journey marked by continuous movement between feeling emotions and being affected by them. According to Nias (1996), teachers experience intense emotions in relation to students, schools, colleagues, lessons, educational policies, working conditions, as well as their own abilities, performance. It is common to hear teachers comment on seemingly trivial situations in their work, such as praise from a student that makes them *happy*, an unforeseen event that generates *anxiety*, a new methodology that *excites* them, a mistake that *frustrates* them, a political decision that evokes *fear*, or a productive day that brings *satisfaction*. In other words, their emotions are always expressed when they share their professional narratives.

For Barcelos (2015) and Aragão (2011), emotions are intrinsically and complexly related to beliefs about language teaching and learning. As stated by Gill and Hardin (2014, p.232), “to ignore affective constructs such as emotions is to present an incomplete and even faulty understanding of teachers’ beliefs”. Despite their importance, affect was sidelined for a long time in Applied Linguistics, a field that traditionally privileged cognitive studies. According to Swain (2013), emotions began to receive greater attention in the 1970s. More than ten years ago, the author emphasized that “emotions are the elephants in the room – poorly studied, poorly understood, seen as inferior to rational thought” (p.205), arguing that such limiting perception overlooks opportunities that could enrich language teaching. Similarly, Richards (2020) notes that emotions were once considered too vague and abstract to be researched and, therefore, supposedly difficult to categorize across their multiple dimensions.

Aragão’s (2005, 2007, 2011) work pioneered emotion studies in Brazil, which gained greater visibility in the field following what Pavlenko (2013) termed the “affective turn” – or the “emotional turn”, as referred to by Barcelos (2015) and White (2018), beginning around 2010. According to Aragão and Barcelos (2018), emotions constitute a crucial element in teachers’ professional development and in processes of belief change. Barcelos (2015, p.308) further states that “color our perceptions and influence how we choose to act in the future [...]”. In this sense, emotions are essential, because they shape what we perceive as possible options at the moment they are experienced, and human actions, past and present, are deeply

motivated by them. Not by chance, the word emotion derives from the Latin *emovere* – “to move out” – and is linked to the idea of movement and motivation (Hansen, 1999).

Since emotions have been extensively studied across disciplines, Benesch (2017) acknowledges the challenge of defining emotion in a way that encompasses all its layers. The psychological function of emotion has been widely discussed and is understood as a force capable of influencing individuals’ perceptions, thoughts, and actions (Benesch, 2017).

Emotions also have a cognitive dimension, which concerns their role in value judgments and in the human capacity to reflect on and evaluate one’s own emotional experiences (Benesch, 2017). From a sociological perspective, emotion is conceived as a historical, cultural, and social product that intervenes in our relationship with the world (Barcelos et al., 2022). By contrast, within the framework of the *Biology of Knowing*, emotion is understood as ‘dynamic bodily dispositions’ (Aragão, 2011; based on Maturana, 1996), emphasizing physical and reactive functions as well as on the innate nature of emotions in human beings. These dispositions become evident through reactions, facial expressions, and body language.

In addition, So (2005, p.44) emphasizes that emotions are “a complex, multifaceted psychological phenomenon”, “constantly generated, unfolded, and changed through multiple recursive effects at any moment”. Returning to the etymological notion of emotion as movement, it is worth noting that emotions are processes rather than static states, and that they change as they interact in complex ways with other mental processes (Barcelos, 2015). Emotions, therefore, interact with beliefs in complex ways and likewise influence human action. As Maturana (2005, p.15) observes, “when we change emotion, we change our domain of action”. This idea may also be understood as suggesting that emotions perceived as positive tend to foster positive practices, and vice-versa.

Andrade Neta (2011) explores the responsive nature of emotions, drawing on contributions from Biology and Psychology, to argue that emotions arise in response to stimuli or events triggered by a provoking agent, which may be

[...] a person, an object, a situation or an event, which may be present or absent (in memory or imagination), external (an insult that triggers anger) or internal (a memory that produces sadness), real or unreal, perceived consciously and unconsciously, referring to the present, past or future¹⁷ (Andrade Neta, 2011, p.150).

¹⁷ [...] una persona, un objeto, una situación o un suceso, que pueden estar presentes o ausentes (en rememoración o imaginación), ser externos (un insulto que desencadena enfado) o internos (un recuerdo que produce tristeza),

When investigating emotions, one must be careful not to classify them simply as positive or negative (Pekrun et al., 2002). Emotions cannot be inherently categorized as one or the other, since their value can only be assigned by the person who experiences them. The very emergence of an emotion indicates that there has been an appraisal of the situation that triggered it, even if the subject is not conscious of the stimulus. Andrade Neta (2011), drawing on the work of the Portuguese neuroscientist Antonio Damásio, refers to affective derivation as the classification attributed to emotions based on individual emotional experiences. Thus, we may judge an emotion to be pleasant and, consequently, consider it positive, but another person may hold a negative view of the same emotion anchored in an unpleasant experience; pride or surprise are examples of emotions that I believe can often be ambiguous in this sense.

Despite debates surrounding emotional classifications, AL has, in recent years, moved beyond approaches centered on categorizing emotions, opening space for interpretive and critical investigations (Martins; Souza, 2015; Oliveira, 2021). Given their complex nature, emotions, like beliefs, are fundamentally social and historical constructs that cannot be dissociated from relations of power (Zembylas, 2005).

In this regard, Song (2016) discusses how educational institutions establish norms regarding which emotions teachers are expected to feel and display, and which are considered inappropriate. As a result, tensions often emerge between what teachers genuinely feel and what they attempt to feel or believe they should feel. *Emotion labor*, as discussed by Zembylas (2005), refers to teachers' efforts to manage their own emotions, particularly those perceived as uncomfortable, such as anxiety, fear, and nervousness, in order to evoke others that are more comfortable, such as calmness and satisfaction.

Emotions may therefore arise from multiple factors, including educational context, self-perceptions, and interpersonal relationships (Richards, 2020). I believe that repressing emotions often leads to suffering and stress among teachers. It is reasonable to suggest that, despite significant advances in the field, many teachers may still feel unprepared, or may not be adequately prepared, to deal with their emotions, let alone be encouraged to reflect on how their own pedagogical practices reflect their emotions and beliefs. In this sense, I agree with

reales o irreales, percibidos consciente o inconscientemente, referirse al presente, pasado o futuro. (Andrade Neta, 2011, p.150)

Barcelos and Ruohotie-Lythy (2018), who emphasize the reflective potential of emotions, when they state that:

Instead of seeing negatively experienced emotions as a hindrance for development, teacher education should also recognize their potential in helping pre-service teachers become aware of their relationships with beliefs and the need for reflecting on their actions (p.120).

The leading figure of Brazilian education, Paulo Freire, believes that “education cannot be understood as a cold experience, without soul, emotions or desires”¹⁸ (Freire, 1996, n.p). Therefore, it is essential that language education contexts become spaces in which professionals in training are encouraged to talk openly about their emotions, whether pleasant or unpleasant, and to reflect on these emotions related to their beliefs, identities, and pedagogical practices.

2.3.2. Emotions, shyness and language teaching

Shyness, whether understood as a personality trait or a transitory state, concerns how individuals perceive themselves and how they think they are perceived by others in situations of exposure. Shy individuals tend to feel more vulnerable during social interactions and generally feel judged for their behaviors. The discomfort caused in such interactions often experience a sense of being may trigger emotional responses, and emotions such as shame, embarrassment, guilt, fear, anxiety, frustration, and lack of confidence to manifest (some of these investigated by Hendin; Cheek, 1999; Sette et al., 2019). Moreover, some scholars argue that shyness itself constitutes an emotional state. Hendin and Cheek (1999, p.1), for instance, describe it as an anticipatory emotion, defined as “the emotional state of feeling anxious, awkward, and inhibited in social situations”, although this is not the perspective adopted in this study.

Among the emotions frequently expressed by shy individuals are those referred to as self-conscious emotions, such as shame, embarrassment, and guilt. These emotions are more complex than primary emotions such as joy, sadness, or fear, which accompany human beings from the early life and are elicited by specific situations. Self-conscious emotions involve appraisal, understanding, and interpretation of both the situation and of the self in relation to

¹⁸ “não se pode entender a educação como uma experiência fria, sem alma, emoções ou desejos” (Freire, 1996, n.p).

how one is perceived by others (Sette et al., 2019). For this reason, they develop only when self-awareness emerges (Lewis, 1993).

Although closely related, shame and embarrassment differ in terms of intensity and the contexts that elicit them. Both arise from social interactions and are related to others' perceptions. Embarrassment, in particular, is an emotion experienced universally and to varying degrees. According to Khajavy et al. (2025), it is commonly preceded by awkward situations, forgetfulness, poor performance, or criticism, although it may also arise from positive experiences, such as receiving compliments. Lewis (1993) adds that embarrassment results from a failure to present oneself adequately to others and gives rise to specific behavioral and physiological reactions, including blushing, clumsy movements, nervous smiling, and avoidance of eye contact. This emotion emerges from the conjunction of three factors: "the presence of another person, people becoming aware that they are the center of attention, and the people feeling that they are being judged" (Lewis, 1993, p.794).

Language teaching and learning involve communicative practices in which the development of interpersonal relationships is fundamental. Consequently, these contexts are particularly conducive to emotions of embarrassment when individuals use the language and interact with others, as highlighted by Khajavy et al. (2025). The teacher, in this sense, becomes the focal point of attention in the classroom. Lewis (1993) notes that embarrassment is closely related to the nature of shyness, not necessarily because of its self-evaluative and meta-evaluative dimensions¹⁹ – although these may indeed intersect, but primarily due to exposure and being the object of others' gaze and attention.

Shame, by contrast, is characterized as a more intense and enduring emotion than embarrassment. Whereas embarrassment is generally a private emotional experience, shame is public, which makes it more difficult to manage (Lewis, 1993). It is triggered not by minor slips, but by moral, social, or personal failures, and cannot easily be concealed by smiling. Individuals experiencing shame tend to withdraw or hide in order to prevent their perceived inadequacy from being exposed, as explained by Sette *et al.* (2019). Hopkyns and Dovchin (2024) argue that, in the context of language teaching and learning, shame is often associated with linguistic inferiority complexes. Thus, when teachers make mistakes while using the

¹⁹ "Unlike self-perceptions, which are speakers' beliefs about themselves, metaperceptions are speakers' beliefs about how other people perceive them. First language (L1) speakers often show biased metaperceptions (e.g., underestimating how they are perceived by their interlocutors), and such biases seem to have real-life consequences in the sense that speakers avoid asking for help or abstain from future interaction" (Boothby; Cooney; Sandstrom; Clark, 2018).

language they teach – sometimes intensified by shyness – they may experience shame, which can affect both their professional reputation and their sense of identity (Amini et al., 2024).

When “the person has done something that is inconsistent with the current norms and values and/or with his/her own expectations, and he/she believes that others will disapprove of this action and that its result will be rejection and losing face” (Muris; Meersters, 2013, p. 21), shame and guilt, also referred to as moral emotions, may arise (Amini *et al.*, 2024). These emotions are closely related, and guilt is usually accompanied by shame; however, guilt tends to be less intense, since it is directed not at the self but at the outcome of a failed action that the individual wishes had not occurred or could be repaired. As a result, guilt frequently motivated corrective actions (Lewis, 1992).

Despite being experienced as unpleasant, moral emotions play an important role in maintaining interpersonal relationships “by encouraging a balance between the individual’s urges and the rights and needs of others” (Bastin et al., 2016, p. 1). In contrast to these uncomfortable emotions, shy teachers may also experience positive self-conscious emotions toward their students, such as empathy, compassion, and gratitude. These emotions may lead them to be more understanding of students’ mistakes and more attentive, caring, and supportive during moments of interaction and feedback.

Fear and anxiety are emotional responses commonly associated with shyness. Many scholars define shyness as “fear of social situations” (Conkright; Carducci, 2020), “fear of negative evaluation” (Henderson, 1992), “fear of the new” (Henderson; Gilbert; Zimbardo, 2014), or “fear in the face of people – or, more precisely, fear related to the self in relation to others” (Wallon, 1938/1985 apud Vieira, 2017). Fear refers to a response to an immediate and recognizable threat, whereas anxiety involves anticipation of a potential threat, often in an irrational manner (Shin; Liberzon, 2010). When experienced intensely, both emotions may become paralyzing. From this perspective, shy teachers who perceive interaction and exposure as potential threats may experience persistent fear and anxiety in their teaching practice.

Contemporary discussions of anxiety often focus on pathological forms; however, anxiety is also a normal emotion that may have adaptive and even beneficial effects. Feeling anxious before speaking in front of a large audience, for instance, does not necessarily indicate a psychological disorder. Rather, it reflects a state of bodily alertness that helps

individuals prepare for and overcome challenges (Lúcio, 2019), besides being a common human experience. Finally, shyness may give rise to frustration, as it places individuals in a constant conflict between the desire for closeness and the tendency to avoid social interaction (Hendin; Cheek, 1999). In the case of language teachers, this emotion may emerge particularly in situations in which the profession demands assertiveness and sociability. Additionally, factors such as failing to meet students' expectations, doubts about one's own competence, and the accumulation of negative emotional experiences may intensify feelings of frustration.

It is therefore possible to suggest that shy teachers often carry a high emotional load and may, at times, be evaluated more negatively than their non-shy peers. Nevertheless, the emotions discussed here represent only a fraction of those involved in what can be described as the emotional "roller coaster" of teaching. In the following section, I examine how the emotional labor required of teaching professionals may become an important source of emotional vulnerability.

2.4. Emotional vulnerability in language teaching

This section first presents studies that investigate teachers' emotional vulnerability in a broad sense, taking into account affective, social, and institutional factors that impact their professional practice. It then turns to the specific relationship between EV and shyness in the context of language teaching, exploring how these dimensions interact and influence both teachers' professional development and students' learning experiences.

2.4.1. Studies about teachers' emotional vulnerability

As I have argued throughout this study, teachers experience intense emotions in their professional contexts, whether perceived as positive or negative, and these emotions are inseparable from their beliefs (Barcelos, 2015). Traditionally, emotions have been examined primarily from an individual perspective; however, with the rise of critical approaches, contextual, sociocultural, and political factors have also come to be taken into account (Song, 2018). Within this complex emotional landscape, several factors may lead them to experience emotional vulnerability.

The Cambridge Dictionary defines vulnerability as “the quality of being vulnerable” or able to be easily hurt, influenced, or attacked)²⁰. In relation to teaching, vulnerability has been described as “a complex, multidimensional, and multifaceted emotional experience,” as defined by Lasky (2005, p. 901), which may influence teachers’ effectiveness either positively or negatively. While I partially agree with Lasky’s definition, Kelchtermans (2005) considers this conceptualization too broad and argues that, in order to better understand vulnerability, it is necessary to move beyond emotion alone and take into account the structural conditions in which teachers work

In Applied Linguistics, discussions of teacher vulnerability have only recently gained prominence, following the emotional turn in language teaching and learning. This movement began with the pioneering works of Song (2016, 2019, 2023), who specifically addresses the emotional vulnerability of language teachers, emphasizing that emotion permeates and shapes their professional evaluations (Bacova; Turner, 2023). However, as a relatively recent topic in the field, there are, to date, no records of empirical studies on teacher emotional vulnerability conducted in Brazil.

Teacher vulnerability has been examined in broader educational research for approximately two decades (Kelchtermans, 1996, 2005, 2009, 2012; Lasky, 2004, 2006, 2007). The literature suggests that “vulnerability is a fundamental condition a teacher ‘finds himself/herself in’” (Kelchtermans, 2012, p. 266), and that while this condition cannot be eliminated, understanding it is essential for teachers’ personal and professional development. Cutri and Whiting (2015) note that similar concerns have been addressed through related concepts, such as Boler’s (1999) “pedagogy of discomfort” and Zembylas’s (2010) subsequent expansion into an “ethics of discomfort”, which emphasizes the transformative potential of discomfort. Although framed differently, these perspectives share principles closely aligned with the notion of vulnerability discussed in this study.

Kelchtermans (2005) argues that vulnerability should not be classified as an emotion, but rather understood as a *mood*. According to the author, emotions involve judgments or evaluations of specific situations, whereas mood is “born of a demanding and uncertain environment where teachers confront ever-present and constant reminders of their limitations” (Bullough, 2005, p. 23). Vulnerability thus emerges from teachers’ ongoing interactions with their work environments and with the individuals involved, such as school staff, students,

²⁰ Source: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/pt/dicionario/ingles/vulnerability>

parents, and the broader community, and is therefore closely connected to both cognitive and emotional processes (Kelchtermans, 2012).

Although vulnerability itself is not an emotion, experiencing vulnerability may give rise to emotions that teachers interpret as either positive or negative (Kelchtermans, 2005). While emotions of various kinds naturally emerge in educational contexts, not all of them are equally welcomed or legitimized. According to Zembylas (2002, 2003), the teaching profession requires educators to regulate their emotions, that is, to shape them in accordance with what is considered appropriate to display to students, often at the expense of spontaneity. This creates a gap between what teachers are expected to feel, what they attempt to feel, and what they actually feel, a phenomenon referred to by the author as “emotional rules”. In line with this perspective, Song (2016) explains that the wider this gap becomes, the more susceptible teachers are to experiencing emotional vulnerability.

According to Lasky (2005) and Song (2016), teachers inevitably experience different forms of vulnerability in their professional practice, including open vulnerability and protective vulnerability. Open vulnerability is described as an experience grounded in feelings of safety and trust, which enable teachers “to risk opening themselves to the possibility of embarrassment and emotional stress for the sake of relationship building and student learning” (Song, 2016, p. 634). This form of vulnerability tends to have a positive impact on teachers’ professional development, as it encourages constructive attitudes and reflective improvements in practice.

Protective vulnerability, by contrast, is associated with fear and anxiety and often results in withdrawal from situations perceived as threatening. In such contexts, “people may have no direct control, believe they have no direct control over factors that affect their immediate context, or feel they are being ‘forced’ to act in ways that are inconsistent with their core beliefs and values.” (Lasky, 2005, p. 901). As a result, teachers may withdraw due to insecurity and anxiety, which can hinder their professional development. These experiences are shaped not only by individuals’ beliefs and self-perceptions, but also by the environments in which they work (Song, 2016).

Finally, I emphasize that understanding the social, cultural, and structural dimensions surrounding vulnerability is essential for teachers to make sense of their emotional reactions and actions. I conclude this section with the inspiring words of Kelchtermans (2005, p. 999):

[...] the condition of vulnerability is at the same time that which constitutes the very possibility for the “pedagogical” to happen in the interpersonal relationship between teachers and pupils. The relationship of an ethical and thus vulnerable commitment opens up the chance that education (literally) “takes place”. Such encounter makes the teacher feel that he or she is really “making a difference as a person” in the student’s life. Joy, pride, existential personal fulfillment are the emotions that go with it. So vulnerability is not only a condition to be endured, but also to be acknowledged, cherished and embraced.

This perspective allows vulnerability to be understood not merely as a weakness, but as a space of possibility and ethical engagement in teaching practice.

2.4.2. Emotional vulnerability and shyness in language teaching

“To be vulnerable is to be *capable* of being hurt”, Bullough (2005, p. 23, my emphasis) states. Unlike dictionary definitions, the author draws attention not only to the condition of “being able to be hurt,” but also to the awareness of this condition and the willingness to allow it to occur. Vulnerability thus entails transformative potential: while many individuals recognize this and are willing to take risks, some teachers still attempt to protect themselves from vulnerability and make themselves immune to it (Bullough, 2005).

From this perspective, fostering openness to the vulnerabilities that emerge in language teaching contexts may represent a significant challenge for shy teachers, especially given the prescriptive discourses surrounding the role of teachers that are perpetuated within institutions and society; discourses that often fail to resonate with shy personalities. Drawing on Song (2016), Barcelos and Ruohotie-Lythy (2018, p. 120) argue that “in teacher education contexts, supporting open vulnerability would demand critical consideration of structural and pedagogical factors, such as assessment and student teachers’ and teacher educators’ roles”.

Based on these assumptions, I argue that shyness places teachers in a position of vulnerability, as it is a condition that naturally resists exposure and evokes psychological and physiological reactions largely rooted in fear. As Kelchtermans (2012, p. 265) notes, “teaching – because of its relational and ethical nature – is also, and in a significant way, characterized by passivity, exposure to the other and, therefore, vulnerability”. Language teachers, as knowers of the language from whom effective communication is expected (Etzold; Krüger, 2021), may have their performance affected by shyness or by the speaking anxiety that often accompanies it (Altun, 2023). Consequently, they may begin to doubt their competence and experience a weakening of their professional self-perceptions.

When shy teachers perceive their performance as neither effective nor efficient, their professional self-esteem may be undermined. According to Kelchtermans (2012, p. 138), self-esteem is constituted by the balance between self-image (“what am I doing?”) and task perception (“what ought I be doing?”), and it is affected when these dimensions diverge. When teachers are prevented from fulfilling certain professional responsibilities due to shyness, self-image and task perception may come into conflict. For Kelchtermans (2012), healthy self-esteem is fundamental for teachers’ well-being at work and is associated with positive emotions such as satisfaction.

However, the author also emphasizes that this sense of professional completeness and self-worth is fragile and requires continuous reinforcement; by contrast, negative self-evaluations tend to persist and exert a strong influence on teachers’ experiences. Shy teachers, who are often highly self-critical, may therefore experience greater difficulties related to self-esteem than their outgoing peers. It is important to note, however, that teachers’ self-perceptions do not stem solely from individual insecurity, since “the unique sense of self which every teacher has is socially grounded” (Nias, 1996, p. 294).

Bullough (2011, p. 16) observes that “the signs of ‘performativity’²¹ are increasingly evident across the educational landscape, as are signs of teaching becoming more stressful and, for many educators, much less satisfying”. Throughout their careers, teachers tend to construct a professional persona – the version of themselves displayed in their workplace – which involves a form of performance that may intensify emotional labor. This often entails masking unpleasant emotions in the name of efficiency and striving to create a positive learning environment.

In contemporary educational contexts, such performativity is accompanied by increasingly high standards, which further contribute to teachers’ sense of vulnerability (Kelchtermans, 2012). I suggest that competitiveness within the field may privilege extroverted professionals, who are often more visible due to their communicative ease and greater willingness to expose themselves. Particularly in contexts where a culture of extroversion prevails, as is the case in many Western countries, shy teachers may feel judged, and such “judgmental relations enhance vulnerability” (Bullough, 2011, p. 16).

²¹ Here, performativity refers to the construction and enactment of a professional persona aligned with socially and institutionally valued expectations of teaching (Bullough, 2011).

It must also be acknowledged that shy individuals may experience particularly challenging emotions in their teaching practice, which can result in intensified emotional labor. Constant exposure and interaction, combined with expectations surrounding the ideal language teacher and feelings of inadequacy when such expectations are not met, may lead to heightened levels of stress. As Lasky (2005, p. 901) points out, “vulnerability can also develop due to feelings of powerlessness, betrayal, or defenselessness in situations of high anxiety or fear”.

Huberman’s (1992) studies demonstrate that different phases of teachers’ professional development are associated with distinct beliefs and emotions, with limiting beliefs and emotions tending to emerge more strongly in the early stages of a career. For this reason, it is particularly important to focus on the experiences of shy pre-service teachers, as I argue that this is the period in which they are most likely to struggle with emotional vulnerability. Lasky (2005) further shows that when vulnerability is not acknowledged or addressed, teachers may withdraw, experience burnout, or ultimately leave the profession.

I conclude this chapter with the words of Zembylas (2012, p. 41), who states that “teachers can be vastly empowered in their lives by developing accounts that recognize emotion as a site of personal transformation, professional development, and political resistance”. Shy teachers, especially those in initial teacher education, may be less inclined to embrace open vulnerability, partly due to structural, social, and discursive forces that discourage it. Nevertheless, I view open vulnerability as beneficial, as it enables teachers to transform interpersonal relationships, embrace the risks necessary for improving practice, foster professional growth, and experience greater satisfaction in their work. Therefore, pre-service teachers should be encouraged to reflect on their emotions and to identify the roots of their emotional vulnerability.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

3. Research Methodology

In this chapter, I describe the methodological procedures adopted in this research. First, I introduce the nature of the study. In the second section, I describe the context and the participants. In the third section, I present the data collection instruments employed. Finally, in the fourth section, I outline the data analysis procedures.

3.1. Research approach

This study adopts a qualitative approach, in line with Applied Linguistics' concern with addressing the social and human dimensions of language teaching and learning. Qualitative inquiry focuses on specific issues and seeks to uncover the "particular meaning" that individuals attribute to them within given contexts (Dörnyei, 2007). In this type of approach, statistical data do not occupy a central role; rather, openness and flexibility are emphasized in order to capture the multiple nuances of meaning that may emerge throughout the research process.

According to Richards (2003), qualitative research is particularly relevant for investigating issues related to language teaching and learning processes. Given its exploratory nature and the absence of rigid hypotheses, it allows complex situations, experiences, beliefs, and emotions to be studied and described in greater depth. The author also emphasizes that the researcher plays a central role in the production of knowledge, as their interpretations are decisive in establishing relationships among the data collected through different research instruments. From this perspective, it is important to acknowledge that qualitative research is not neutral.

When it comes to data collection, Cresswell (2013) emphasizes that qualitative methods offer multiple possibilities, including closed-ended and open-ended questionnaires, interviews, visual and written narratives, observations, field notes, among others. The author also outlines some characteristics of qualitative inquiry, among which I highlight: (1) data collection takes place in a specific setting; (2) multiple methods may be used; (3) the research

design is flexible and may be adjusted throughout the process; (4) the researcher is responsible for data analysis and interpretation; (5) “the personal self becomes inseparable from the researcher self” (p. 187); and (6) diverse research strategies are used.

In line with the authors cited, qualitative research offers methodological possibilities that are well suited for the purposes of this study, which seeks to investigate the relationship among complex phenomena such as shyness, beliefs, and the emotions of pre-service teachers. In addition, it constitutes a valuable approach for understanding participants’ perceptions of language teaching and the impacts of these phenomena on their professional development.

3.2. Context and participants of the study

This research was approved by the *Comitê de Ética em Pesquisa com Seres Humanos*²² (CEP) on March 21, 2025 (CAAE 84876924.0.0000.5153 / Parecer nº. 7,456,193), as indicated in Appendix 1, and is registered at *Plataforma Brasil*. The study was conducted at a federal university located in Minas Gerais and involved undergraduate students enrolled in Language and Literature programs – “*Letras*” in Brazil –, specifically those pursuing foreign language minors who already had some experience with language teaching and had completed at least the first year of the program.

The undergraduate *Letras* program at this university aims to prepare Portuguese language teachers with a double qualification in English, Spanish, or French, as well as in their respective literatures. In addition to foreign languages, students may also choose a Portuguese/Literature minor and specialize in Portuguese-language literatures. The curriculum is organized into nine semesters and includes courses in linguistics, language teaching and learning, literature, Brazilian Sign Language (*Libras*), among others. Moreover, all students are required to complete a teaching practicum in Portuguese and a second practicum related to their chosen area of specialization.

The university’s Department of *Letras* offers a Graduate Program in Language and Literature encompassing both literary and linguistic studies, with the latter divided into two main research lines: Discursive Studies and Applied Linguistics. Within this program,

²² Translates to “Research Ethics Committee involving Human Subjects”.

students conduct scientific research related to these areas under the supervision of faculty members from the department.

In addition, the department contributes to research and university extension through several initiatives, among which I highlight an extension project organized as a language course program. This educational space offers courses in English, French, Spanish, and *Libras*, open to the university community and the general public. It also functions as a practicum and professional development context for pre-service teachers, enabling them to put into practice the knowledge acquired during their undergraduate studies with the support of faculty members from the department. This project is particularly relevant because it provides many undergraduate Language and Literature students with their first experiences in language teaching; consequently, some of the participants in this study had already worked as teachers within this program.

For the purposes of this study, participation was not restricted to students who had taken part, or were currently taking part, in the aforementioned extension project; rather, any prior experience in language teaching was considered. Participants were selected on a voluntary basis and represented different language specializations. To be eligible, participants had to meet the following criteria: (a) self-identify as shy; (b) be enrolled in English, French, or Spanish specializations; (c) have prior experience in language teaching; and (d) have completed at least two years of the program. The final number of participants resulted from spontaneous interest and compliance with these criteria.

To reach potential participants from the fifth to the ninth semesters, instructors of language-related courses were contacted by email to request authorization to disseminate information about the study in their classes. Once permission was granted, I conducted in-person visits to the classrooms, during which interested students provided their contact information. This allowed me to communicate directly with them and to send detailed instructions regarding data collection procedures.

Initially, ten individuals agreed to participate in the study; however, only five met all the pre-established criteria aforementioned and remained until the end of the research process. To ensure confidentiality, participants were identified in the text through self-chosen pseudonyms. All participants also signed an informed consent form authorizing the use of their data. Table 2 presents the participants' profiles.

Table 2 - Participant profiles

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Minor	Semester	Teaching context
Lucinara	24	F	French	5°	Public school (teaching practicum)
Antônio Carlos	22	M	French	7°	Extension project Private classes
Marcelo	20	M	Spanish	5°	Extension project
Sandra	26	F	English	7°	Public school
Ju	21	M	English	7°	Public school

Source: the author

The five participants in this study entered the *Letras* program in 2022 and 2023 and, at the time of data collection, were enrolled in the fifth or seventh semesters. The group presents a relatively balanced composition, comprising two female and three male participants²³, whose ages range from twenty to twenty-six years. Two participants were enrolled in the English minor, two in French, and one in Spanish.

The participants' teaching contexts were diverse. Three of them had already worked as teachers in public schools, while the others had experience teaching in extension courses and through private lessons. Lucinara was the only participant who had not yet worked as a lead teacher in any educational context; her classroom experience was limited to activities carried out during the program's mandatory teaching practicum.

Data collection began in April 2025 with classroom visits and the administration of semi-open-ended questionnaires (Section 3.3.1 and Appendix 2). In May, participants produced their written narratives (Section 3.3.2 and Appendix 3). Finally, the data collection process was concluded in June with the conduction of semi-structured interviews. In the following section, I describe the data collection instruments.

²³ The genders listed in the participants' profiles were self-identified in the initial questionnaire (Section 3.3.1 and Appendix 2).

3.3. Data Collection Instruments

In this section, I present the three instruments used for data collection and guidance through the stages of the investigation. The first was a semi-open-ended questionnaire, administered with the aim of identifying the proportion of shy and non-shy students in the research context and, based on this, selecting participants who met the objectives of the study. Subsequently, the remaining instruments were applied only to the selected participants, namely a written narrative and a semi-structured interview, which are described in detail below.

3.3.1. Semi-open-ended Questionnaire

According to Dörnyei (2007), a closed-ended questionnaire is a highly structured data collection instrument that typically consists of questions with predetermined response options and does not require written elaboration, although it may also include such elements. One of its main advantages lies in its practicality, as it is relatively easy to design, administer, and analyze, while enabling the rapid and objective collection of information. However, Dörnyei cautions that excessively long or time-consuming questionnaires may compromise the quality of participants' responses. Moreover, due to their standardized nature, questionnaires may limit participants' expression, restricting the depth of the data and making it difficult to capture more subjective or complex aspects of the phenomenon under investigation.

Despite these limitations, a semi-open-ended questionnaire was selected for this study as the most appropriate instrument for an initial and broad mapping of shy and non-shy students in the research context. This stage aimed to identify and delineate the profiles of potential participants, specifically pre-service teachers who self-identified as shy, had prior experience teaching a foreign language, and agreed to participate voluntarily in the study. In addition, the questionnaire provided preliminary information about participants' beliefs and emotions related to shyness and language teaching, thereby guiding the subsequent application of more exploratory and in-depth instruments.

The questionnaire was administered online via the Google Forms platform. After completing the informed consent form and providing contact information, prospective

participants received the questionnaire link through the WhatsApp application. The instrument included both closed-ended and open-ended questions. The data collection period for this stage began on March 24, 2025, and ended on April 17, 2025.

3.3.2. Written narrative

According to Clandinin and Connelly (2015, p. 51), narrative research consists of “lived and told stories.”²⁴ This type of instrument enables the construction of understanding of meanings related to experiences through the interaction between researcher and researched (Aimi; Monteiro, 2020). In the written mode, participating teachers are able to retrieve, organize, and establish connections among their ideas, as well as articulate the beliefs and emotions associated with their experiences (Barcelos, 2019, 2020; Guedes et al., 2024). This process also fosters critical reflection on their own practice and enables the tracing of new paths based on their own narratives. According to Guedes et al. (2024):

The individual allows themselves a shift in their own emotional experience, as they may abandon their own certainties and permit themselves to act recursively, that is, opening a reflexive turn capable of attributing new meanings to a lived experience each time they describe it narratively (p. 5).²⁵

This perspective highlights the potential of narrative for the reflective appropriation of lived experiences, enabling new interpretations and understandings of past events.

Narratives are particularly suitable for research in language teacher education, as they allow teachers’ experiences to be examined in depth and enable the sharing of experiences that may enrich both teaching practice and the learning of other teachers and students. For Barcelos (2020), our stories construct us and make us who we are, and “there is a narrative being told all the time, made up of other small narratives, full of many emotions of love, frustration, joys, hopes and hopelessness, optimism, hurts and resentments” (p. 19).

In the present study, the written narrative was used to allow participants to share experiences in which shyness affected them in foreign language classrooms, reflecting on their emotions and vulnerabilities. This instrument complements the information collected through the questionnaire, enabling a more precise delineation of participants’ personal and

²⁴ “[...] histórias vividas e contadas” Clandinin and Connelly (2015, p. 51).

²⁵ “o indivíduo se permite um deslocamento no seu próprio emocionar, pois pode abandonar as próprias certezas, permitindo-se agir recursivamente, isto é, abrindo um giro reflexivo capaz de atribuir novos sentidos a uma experiência vivida, a cada vez que a descreve narrativamente. (Guedes et al., 2024, p.5)”

professional profiles. Moreover, through storytelling, teachers are able to express more fully the beliefs and emotions that shape their teaching trajectories.

After completing the questionnaire, participants received, via WhatsApp and email, a document in .docx format (see Appendix 3) containing a set of guiding questions designed to support the production of narratives related to the study's themes. Between April 21 and May 30, a period extended in relation to the initial planning, participants returned their texts through the same platforms.

3.3.3. Semi-structured Interview

Completing the sequence of narrative instruments, this study employed the semi-structured interview. The purpose of this instrument lies in an interest in the other, their experiences, reflections, and the ways in which events are organized and narrated (Miguel, 2010). Fraser and Gondim (2004, p. 140) refer to interviews as “negotiated texts,” consisting of a specific form of conversation that “facilitates direct or indirect access to people’s opinions, beliefs, values, and the meanings they attribute to themselves, to others, and to the surrounding world.”²⁶ Miguel (2010, n.p.) further emphasizes that the interview is “a technique of social interaction and informational interpenetration, capable of breaking down group, individual, and social isolation, and may also serve to pluralize voices and democratize the distribution of information.”²⁷

The semi-structured interview allows knowledge to be co-constructed by the researcher and the participant, enabling clarification, expansion, and deeper exploration of previous statements, particularly when themes emerge from earlier instruments, such as the written narratives. In addition, interviews make it possible to observe verbal and non-verbal aspects, including intonation, pauses, and voice volume, whether conducted face-to-face or via video calls. These elements contribute to a more nuanced interpretation of participants’ accounts (Fraser; Gondim, 2004).

²⁶ “[...] favorece o acesso direto ou indireto às opiniões, às crenças, aos valores e aos significados que as pessoas atribuem a si, aos outros e ao mundo circundante” (Fraser; Gondim, 2004, p.140).

²⁷ “uma técnica de interação social, interpenetração informativa, capaz de quebrar isolamentos grupais, individuais e sociais, podendo também servir à pluralização de vozes e à distribuição democrática da informação” (Miguel, 2010, n.p.).

For the purposes of this study, the interview was designed with open-ended questions aimed at expanding discussions of aspects already reported in previous instruments, as well as exploring new topics (see Appendix 4). As a semi-structured interview, the guiding questions were adapted according to each participant's responses, while maintaining a conversational, friendly, and informal tone (Richards, 2003). As previously mentioned, two participants chose to take part in face-to-face interviews held in university facilities, while the remaining participants opted for online interviews conducted via the Google Meet platform. The interviews took place between June 2 and June 24, 2025.

All interviews were recorded with participants' informed consent. Face-to-face interviews were audio-recorded using the standard recording tool on my mobile phone, whereas online interviews were recorded using the platform's built-in recording feature. The interview transcriptions were produced with the support of the artificial intelligence tool *Taqtic*, which allows audio and video files to be uploaded for automatic transcription. As the tool's output is not fully accurate, all transcriptions were carefully reviewed and revised by the researcher prior to data analysis.

3.4. Data Analysis Procedures

The data analysis phase in qualitative research, according to Creswell (2013, n.p.), involves “[...] organizing the data, conducting a preliminary read-through of the database, coding and organizing themes, representing the data, and forming an interpretation of them.” Similarly, Patton (2015) explains that analysis consists of reducing qualitative data in order to identify recurring themes that are relevant to the study. This entire process is interconnected in what Creswell (2013) refers to as the *data analysis spiral*; that is, rather than following a linear sequence, analysis unfolds as a dynamic movement in which “the researcher touches on several facets of analysis and circles around and around” (n.p.).

For content analysis, I followed the procedures proposed by Bardin (2016), which are fundamental for the triangulation of information. According to the author, analysis should be carried out in three methodological stages:

1. **Pre-analysis:** reviewing, selecting, organizing, and structuring all collected materials, thereby composing the research corpus;

2. Material exploration: identifying themes and patterns in the data, which are grouped into analytical categories;

3. Treatment of results: describing the selected and categorized content and aligning it with the researcher's interpretations and inferences, supported by the theoretical framework.

Based on the data collection instruments presented in the previous section and on the procedures described above, the final results were produced through participants' collaboration and my interpretations as a researcher, as proposed by Creswell (2013). Initially, careful and repeated readings of the records generated by the three instruments were conducted. During this stage, I annotated preliminary ideas and interpretations directly in the documents, seeking to identify manifestations of beliefs, emotions, and situations related to shyness and emotional vulnerability.

Subsequently, the content was categorized according to recurring patterns and themes identified in the participants' accounts. Finally, data triangulation was carried out by integrating information from all instruments and relating the emerging categories to the theoretical framework and to my own observations as a researcher. This procedure enabled a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under investigation and ensured greater consistency in the interpretation of the findings. In the following chapter, I discuss the results of this study.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

“No one is born complete; it is by experiencing ourselves in the world that we make ourselves.”

(Paulo Freire, *Política e Educação*)

4. Findings and discussions

In this chapter, I present and discuss the findings derived from the analysis of the records generated by the data collection instruments, namely the semi-open-ended questionnaire, the written narrative, and the semi-structured interview. The chapter is organized as follows: I begin by discussing the participants' more general aspects of shyness, their challenges, and coping strategies; next, I examine their beliefs and emotions; finally, I explore aspects related to emotional vulnerability.

4.1. Teachers' and students' shyness: definitions and personal perceptions

Shyness emerged as one of the central aspects of the participants' experiences in teacher education, manifesting itself both as a personality trait and as a factor that directly influences their teaching practices and beliefs. When experienced in situations involving exposure, classroom interaction, or contact with peers and students, shyness brought with it a series of challenges that shaped the trajectories of these future language teachers. In this section, I present participants' definitions of and beliefs about their own shyness, as well as discuss the main challenges they reported as resulting from this characteristic, highlighting its effects on participation, emotional security, and performance in learning contexts and in teaching practice.

4.1.1. Definitions and beliefs of language teachers in pre-service regarding shyness

Revisiting Zimbardo's (1982) ideas, shyness can be understood as a universal experience that may assume different meanings for different individuals. The participants'

accounts corroborate this perspective by revealing diverse ways of understanding and experiencing shyness, shaped by their personal trajectories. Participants such as Sandra and Lucinara – for instance, coincidentally the only two who identify as female – consider shyness to be a stable trait that constitutes part of their personalities and identities. Both report that this characteristic has accompanied them since childhood.

By contrast, Ju, Antônio Carlos, and Marcelo report perceiving themselves as shy only from adolescence onward. Their narratives suggest that shyness is situational: depending on the context, it may manifest with greater or lesser intensity or may even be absent altogether. In this sense, participants' accounts highlight not only different moments in which shyness emerged, but also distinct ways of conceptualizing and experiencing it. To illustrate this situational perception of shyness, I now present Antônio Carlos's account in greater detail.

Antônio Carlos acknowledges the existence of different forms of shyness and believes that his own experience differs from what he refers to as “classic shyness”, which he understands as a stable personality trait (Schmidt; Poole, 2020). “What I generally understand as shyness ends up not really being invested in me” (Antônio Carlos, ES-21jun2025), he states. Throughout the interview, he compares himself to shy individuals in his social circle, emphasizing that he does not perceive himself as being affected by shyness in the same way as those who experience it as a defining trait.

He further reports that behaviors associated with shyness emerged as a result of insecurities developed during adolescence: “It doesn't sound very nice to say that, but it's a system of inferiority that makes me very nervous. When we think we're bad, think we're less than others, we have to worry much more about what they're going to think” (Antônio Carlos, ES-21jun2025). His account reveals an understanding of shyness as a heightened concern with others' perceptions, particularly when self-image is negative (Carducci; Conkright, 2020). When evaluating his shyness in the questionnaire, he describes himself as “reasonably shy” and indicates that this characteristic has a stronger impact on his academic and professional performance, especially in workplace interactions. By contrast, he considers shyness to have little influence on his relationship with students.

Ju, in turn, describes himself as an extroverted person who nevertheless experiences shyness intensely in specific situations. According to him, “in my personality, I am very extroverted with people who are close to me, with people who already have a well-established

bond” (Ju, ES-10jun2025). In contrast, he reports difficulties interacting with unfamiliar individuals (Zimbardo, 1982). During his initial semesters in the *Letras* program, he states that he struggled to build social bonds with classmates and faced difficulties participating in classes due to shyness.

Additionally, Ju moved from a different state to attend university, which required him to step outside his comfort zone upon entering the program. This geographical and social displacement intensified the challenges of adapting to a new academic environment, particularly with regard to social interaction, thereby amplifying experiences of situational shyness (Zimbardo; Pilkonis; Norwood, 1975). A pivotal moment in his trajectory occurs when he reflects on his position as a teacher in training and recognizes the need to once again confront his comfort zone:

[...] from the fourth term onward I realized that: ‘I am in a teacher education program, I can’t have interaction problems like this. I need to get along more with my other classmates, I need to participate more in class, because I saw very interesting topics in class and I couldn’t comment because of shyness’. And then, from the fourth term onward, I started working on that. It was very difficult, but in the fifth term it was much calmer. Sixth term, which was the previous one, I was already super “*serelepe*” even in the group chats (Ju, ES-10jun2025).

Ju’s decision stems from the understanding that interaction is a fundamental aspect of language teaching and learning. From this perspective, more active participation in the academic environment comes to be perceived as essential to his teacher education. As noted by Ebrahimi and Souza (2010), stepping outside one’s comfort zone involves multiple factors, including the revision of beliefs and attitudes.

In Ju’s case, this movement appears to have required considerable effort to cope with shyness; a particularly demanding process for shy individuals, who tend to take longer to expand their comfort zones as Carducci (2002) claims. Despite the initial difficulties, Ju evaluates this process positively, stating that he currently feels more comfortable – or “*serelepe*” (similar meaning to *silly*), as he jokingly puts it – in the classroom as a student. This increased sense of comfort may also positively influence his future teaching practice, especially with regard to interaction with students and colleagues.

Marcelo, by contrast, does not significantly expand on the topic, limiting himself to reporting that he began to perceive shyness in himself during adolescence, without clarifying whether it may have manifested, albeit less intensely, during earlier periods. Among the participants, however, he was the one who assessed shyness as having the greatest impact across the three spheres addressed: the academic context, professional practice, and

interpersonal relationships more broadly. During the interview, conducted in person, I observed that Marcelo appeared to be a reserved individual, displaying restrained body language and a lower tone of voice, as well as expressing his ideas concisely and objectively. From this perspective, he may be readily perceived as a shy person when guided by stereotypical views of shyness, which often associate such characteristics with these observable behaviors as stated by Scott (2007).

In contrast to the profiles and experiences described thus far, Sandra stands out as a participant who considers herself very shy and reports having always been this way. She associates shyness with reserved behavior, characterized by speaking little and avoiding exposure, particularly in front of larger groups. This perception is illustrated in the following excerpt from her interview:

I have always been very quiet. It was only at the very end of high school that I started to develop more. But I was always very quiet in class, always kept to myself. [...] I feel a bit nervous when I have to assert myself, to be able to speak in front of other people. With just one person, it is fine, but when there are several other people, it becomes a bit more complicated. (Sandra, ES-14jun2025)

Sandra's narratives indicate that shyness manifests more intensely in social contexts characterized by a lack of familiarity, a recurrent aspect in the experiences of individuals who identify as shy as claimed by Zimbardo (1982). In environments perceived as safe, by contrast, there tends to be greater comfort in expressing oneself and taking communicative risks. Sandra notes, for example, that she feels comfortable in her English classes at the university due to the ongoing interaction with her classmates. However, when referring to unfamiliar contexts, she explains: "[...] if it is a class where I do not know anyone, I will keep quiet; I will hardly say anything; I will stay very quiet in my own corner" (Sandra, ES-14jun2025). This account illustrates what appears to be a consistent behavioral pattern in such situations.

Finally, Lucinara reports that shyness has been present throughout her life trajectory, although she became more consciously aware of it during school presentations, with this awareness intensifying in the university context. She states that she feels particularly affected by shyness when initiating conversations, especially with unfamiliar people. In addition, she comments:

[...] people always tell me that they had a totally different view of me: that I was a totally reserved person, quieter, the more serious person, but when there is greater familiarity, more contact, I become a completely different person, much more talkative and extroverted (Lucinara, ES-18jun2025).

In this excerpt, Lucinara demonstrates that shyness influences the image she conveys to others, generating a social perception that, according to her, does not correspond to her actual personality. This aspect, in resonance with Scott's (2007) studies, reveals that shyness operates not only in communicative interactions, but also in how she perceives herself as being socially perceived, which, in turn, affects the ways in which she positions herself in new contexts and interactions.

Based on these accounts, Sandra and Lucinara exemplify shyness understood as a temperamental characteristic, as defined by Schmidt and Poole (2020), generally present since childhood and consistently manifested across different spheres of their lives. The remaining participants, by contrast, appear to experience shyness predominantly in a situational manner. It is important to note, however, that regardless of this distinction, the intensity of the impact of shyness on their teaching practices is significant.

Overall, the accounts discussed in this subsection indicate that shyness is understood and experienced in multiple ways by pre-service teachers: at times as a trait perceived as constitutive of identity, and at other times as a situated experience whose intensity varies according to context and the relationships established.

4.1.2. Manifestations of shyness in the academic life and teaching practice

Among the challenges mentioned by the participants, several difficulties stand out that cut across different dimensions of teacher education. In the undergraduate context, many participants reported insecurity regarding classroom participation in class, which is linked to communicative limitations that affect both the clarity of explanations and public interaction when performing the teaching role. Obstacles also emerge in the implementation of communicative methodologies and in managing one's own vocal performance in the classroom, in addition to tensions related to professional posture. Finally, shyness affects relationships with students, making it difficult to build rapport and to conduct more participatory classroom dynamics.

4.1.2.1. Engagement in undergraduate classes

All five participants occupy the academic environment primarily as students and, according to their accounts, shyness limits oral expression and reduces active participation in class, including in their mother tongue. Sandra reports: “at several moments during the program, in presentations and seminars, shyness gets in my way, whether speaking in English or in Portuguese” (Sandra, NE-04mai2025).

Similarly, Ju reports feeling very shy whenever he is required to speak in class. He explains that he faced greater difficulties in the early years of the program, but that from the fourth term onward he began to take more risks in oral participation, which allowed him to partially overcome this blockage, at least in his mother tongue. However, this progress did not extend to English: “Although I overcame shyness in expression in my mother tongue, I was not able to do so with English. I still feel nervous and embarrassed about using the language in almost all contexts, if not all of them” (Ju, NE-16mai2025). According to the participant, shyness leads students to avoid using English in the classroom as a way of escaping the discomfort associated with oral exposure, which explains his preference to work primarily with the written mode of the language.

Lucinara also reports that for a long period she adopted a more passive stance in class, speaking very little, despite recognizing the importance of participation. When mentioning a teacher who frequently encouraged her to speak, she states: “but one thing I notice is that he had to ask me to speak up, that did not come from my own will” (Lucinara, ES-18jun2025). At another point of the interview, the participant recalls situations in which this behavior had negative effects on her linguistic development:

[...] because of being shy, many times I failed to clear up doubts with the teacher, I stopped asking things, sending emails, even asking questions during class or perhaps waiting until the end of class, or even when the teacher asked something, out of fear of asking a silly question or simply because we have a certain anxiety about speaking in public as well (Lucinara, ES-18jun2025).

Lucinara evaluates her experience as a French language student at the institution positively in this respect, since the groups in that minor were small, sometimes consisting of only three students. This context provided her with greater comfort to speak in class, an effort that was recognized by the teacher, who even praised her for the change in her behavior. The behaviors described by the participants as signs of reluctance to participate in class are also pointed out in studies in AL, such as Santos and Barcelos (2018) and Oflaz (2019), which

show that shyness can reduce oral participation in a foreign language even when there are no significant limitations in linguistic competence.

4.1.2.2. Difficulties in communication and content organization

One of the main characteristics attributed to shyness concerns the communicative constraints it may cause (Zimbardo, 1982). In everyday life, shy individuals frequently encounter interactional situations in which they experience difficulties in oral performance, ranging from simpler to more complex contexts. Antônio Carlos describes, for example, episodes in which he is unable even to verbalize a simple “good morning” when greeting someone, a response that, for most people in the Brazilian culture, occurs automatically. As Verztman (2014) explains, individuals experiencing shyness may feel momentarily “frozen” in unexpected social interactions. Antônio Carlos emphasizes that this lack of response is not intentional; rather, the sudden interaction temporarily inhibits his ability to speak.

In more complex contexts, such as language teaching, these communicative blocks translate into difficulties in maintaining clarity when explaining content, an aspect that emerged as one of the central themes in the participants’ accounts. Marcelo highlights this challenge by stating that clarity constitutes a fundamental element of teaching practice, as it ensures that students adequately understand what is being taught:

I feel that ensuring that students acquire systematized knowledge, skills and competences in the language being taught is challenging for a shy language teacher and I personally find it difficult to make my explanations clear, or even to realize whether they were clear (Marcelo, QS-04abr2025).

As the excerpt shows, Marcelo demonstrates insecurity both regarding his own explanatory performance and to his students’ learning. At another moment, when assessing the impact of shyness on his practice, he states: “I just feel that the impact is profound. If I am not very prepared, I forget a lot of things” (Marcelo, ES-10jun2025). Sandra expresses similar perceptions and adds that she could hardly remain relaxed enough to express herself fluently during explanations.

Similarly, Ju and Antônio Carlos also report difficulties in explaining content in the classroom. Antônio Carlos points out that even when he masters the content – something that would not pose a problem in informal contexts –, such as explaining something to a friend his classroom performance is impaired: “when it is time to explain, then even the issue of

performance in speech comes in, which I cannot manage, I get tangled up in something that I know very well” (Antônio Carlos, ES-21jun2025).

In this context, shyness appears to be associated with emotional experiences such as nervousness, anxiety and low self-esteem, which directly affect classroom performance. A lack of clarity in explanations can thus be understood as an outcome of these emotional experiences, corroborating the analyses of Crozier (1999) and Tangney and Fischer (1995), who associate emotions such as fear, shame, and embarrassment with the intensification of shyness and with impaired communication. Antônio Carlos, who describes himself as a very anxious person, exemplifies how this process occurs in practice: “[...] imagine someone who easily loses control of their speech when feeling nervous or anxious, starting to say disconnected things amid stammering and a pronunciation so fast that it becomes incomprehensible.” (Antônio Carlos, NE-03mai2025). Although not all shy individuals experience anxiety in this way, his account shows how, in his particular experience, oral performance is significantly compromised when shyness is combined with intense states of anxiety.

Finally, in her questionnaire responses, Lucinara identifies fear of speaking in public as one of the main challenges faced by shy individuals, highlighting that she considers this difficulty particularly hard to overcome. She also expresses insecurity regarding classroom management and the exercise of teaching authority. Despite already having experience with primary school groups, the participant believes that shyness undermines her ability to position herself firmly in front of younger and more restless students. In this sense, Lucinara’s experience resonates with Scott’s (2007) analysis, which points out that fear of exposure may be socially interpreted not only as withdrawal, but also as a lack of leadership.

4.1.2.3. Application of communicative methodologies and teacher vocal performance

Still with regard to the communicative issues reported by the participants, Antônio Carlos offers a particular perspective on his difficulties in distancing himself from more traditional teaching approaches and applying communicative methodologies, as encouraged in the extension program in which he works. According to him: “I wanted to apply that, to have a strong focus on grammar. That is not exactly what is expected there. We value activities that

invite fun and a way of learning that is enjoyable, dynamic and based on created situations” (Antônio Carlos, ES-21jun2025). He explains that this methodological proposal differs significantly from his own conception of language teaching, which was shaped by experiences grounded in more traditional, grammar-centered approaches. In addition to the tension between these pedagogical views, Antônio Carlos states that he does not consider himself a creative person and acknowledges that shyness constitutes a factor that further complicates his adaptation to this type of methodology:

I think there is something about our personality in relation to these activities that does not fit well; we kind of alienate ourselves from our own personality in order to try to fit into an activity like that. I am not that type of moving around a lot, of speaking loudly and laughing. I am really more of the quieter class type, because that is how I got used to it and it worked for me (Antônio Carlos, ES-21jun2025).

By stating that he feels the need to “alienate” himself from his own personality, the participant points to a perceived implicit pressure to adopt a teaching posture associated with extroversion, marked by enthusiasm, bodily expressiveness and greater vocal intensity (Agudo, 2018). This expectation, however, conflicts with his way of being and with the manner in which he has constructed his teaching identity. Although this aspect constitutes a challenge for Antônio Carlos, other participants demonstrate a different understanding of communicative methodologies, viewing them as possible strategies for pedagogical mediation, as will be discussed later in section 4.2.2.6.

When discussing teaching methodologies, Antônio Carlos also raises a relevant issue related to language teachers’ vocal performance, noting that “teachers who like activities like that [interactive] tend to speak louder, laugh more and move around” (Antônio Carlos, ES-21jun2025). This belief may be better understood in light of studies such as Gimenez et al. (2019), which identify shyness as a factor that may affect teachers’ vocal expressiveness. Ju, in turn, emphatically states that this issue represents a significant challenge for shy teachers:

[...] I definitely believe that shy teachers experience difficulties in the profession, both in relation to everyday work and to the presentation of content. They may be very organized, may have very good activity proposals, but shyness will influence the way they conduct the class, which involves interacting and using the voice.

Ju’s narrative highlights beliefs according to which voice use constitutes a central tool in teaching work, directly influencing classroom management and interaction with students. In line with Gimenez et al. (2019), the participant suggests that shy teachers may face difficulties in using their voices effectively, particularly with regard to vocal projection, assertiveness, and the use of a firm and confident tone.

4.1.2.4. Stance in professional environments

I believe that different professions are permeated by implicit behavioral norms that shape what is considered an appropriate professional stance. In language teaching, in my view, these expectations often align with ideals of extroversion, dynamism and assertiveness. In this subsection, I discuss participants' beliefs about how shyness affects their postures in the exercise of teaching.

This theme appears recurrently in Antônio Carlos's narratives, as he reflects on experiences during his supervised teaching practicum in the *Letras* program. In one class, while observing a presentation of a study on teacher posture, the participant drew attention to the way the teacher under analysis sat on the desk in front of the students while interacting with them. Although this may seem like a simple behavior, Antônio Carlos remarks: "it is something I would never do. It is very strange to me the idea of you being [sitting] on the desk in front of the students, which is quite a relaxed posture" (Antônio Carlos, ES-21jun2025).

He expresses the belief that he is unable to adopt a less rigid posture in the classroom, an aspect that directly influences his teaching behavior. According to him "[...] I cannot be like that. I spend a good part of the time standing, I start out sitting behind the desk, then I stand up in my little corner there, I do not move around much, I do not make many movements" (Antônio Carlos, ES-21jun2025). This account resonates with Scott's (2007) observations, which suggest that shy individuals often adopt, sometimes unintentionally, what she calls "safety behaviors", such as more restrained ways of speaking, reduced gestures and bodily choices that minimize exposure and attention to oneself.

Similar difficulties appear in Marcelo's account, who also considers himself very shy. This behavior was quite noticeable even during his interview, as he consistently maintained a lower tone of voice, which appeared to be his habitual speaking style. He describes his bodily and vocal posture in the classroom as follows:

I realize that I try to remain still. When I am standing, I usually stay static. I cannot... I even try to gesture a bit and move more freely, more comfortably, but I usually remain static. My voice becomes shakier, somewhat. I think my heart also beats faster. (Marcelo, ES-10jun2025)

The excerpt suggests that Marcelo recognizes the value of adopting a more spontaneous stance and deliberately attempts to move in that direction. However, his shyness – possibly intertwined with anxiety, as indicated by the physical symptoms he describes, such as a shaky voice and accelerated heartbeat (Shin; Liberzon, 2010) – continues to constrain his movements. Another factor mentioned by the participant concerns the difficulty of directing his gaze in the classroom, particularly when he is unfamiliar with the group: “It’s just a difficulty, mainly when I don’t know the group. And then I don’t know exactly where to look. And that makes me nervous at the time” (Marcelo, ES-10jun2025). In this sense, directing one’s gaze toward students appears to intensify the sense of exposure inherent to teaching, heightening feelings of vulnerability (Holappa et al., 2022).

These issues also emerge in Lucinara’s statements as she expresses the belief that shyness may affect teachers’ posture and professional credibility. For her, the “figure of the teacher who does not impose themselves, who is shy and everything else, does not bring a certain credibility to the students” (Lucinara, ES-18jun2025). She further questions whether she will be able to “lead, know how to balance [her] power among the students and not let them do whatever they want, but also not be that strict teacher” (Lucinara, ES-18jun2025). These concerns relate to her teaching practicum experience, during which she observed a cooperating teacher being frequently disrespected by students and responding by adopting an inflexible stance.

Lucinara’s concerns intensify when she recounts an episode in which the cooperating teacher had to act firmly in response to a student who openly disrespected her. Initially, the participant questioned whether her colleague had been excessively strict, but she later revised this interpretation upon recognizing that the student’s behavior constituted a direct affront. According to Lucinara, this is “a very difficult situation if we wonder how a shy person could deal with it” (Lucinara, ES-18jun2025). This reflection is supported by studies on shyness, which indicate that difficulty in positioning oneself and defending oneself in tense situations is a recurrent challenge for shy individuals (Zimbardo, 1982; Cain, 2012).

Lucinara also refers to a recurring stereotype according to which shy teachers, because they tend to avoid conflict, would be unable to position themselves adequately in complex situations, such as the one she described. In addition, she highlights the potential emotional and psychological consequences of this pattern: “sometimes you will keep that to yourself. And then it keeps building up, and there comes a moment when the person can even get sick”

(Lucinara, ES-18jun2025). Based on these experiences, Lucinara reflects on how she herself would deal with similar situations, expressing the concern that her shyness could make it difficult for her to impose limits effectively.

This concern also extends to relationships with parents and guardians. Lucinara imagines that her shy stance might be interpreted as a lack of professional competence, as illustrated by her supposition that they might think: “my child is having classes with this teacher, but she can’t even talk to me properly, all shy! Is she really teaching my child anything properly?” (Lucinara, ES-18jun2025). Her account highlights a strong association between communicative ease and professional recognition in schools, while also revealing the pressure and anticipatory concerns the shy participant harbors regarding her personality trait in this context.

With regard to unforeseen situations, Ju observes that although teachers seek to be prepared to present content, unexpected questions may intensify the effects of shyness: “Of course, we do everything we can to be prepared to present content. But when students ask a question, something that we did not plan in our heads, or what to say, then there is a bigger freeze” (Ju, NE-16mai2025). Although unpredictability is inherent to teaching, the participant emphasizes that, for shy teachers, such moments may generate more intense blocks, especially when accompanied by insecurity or low professional self-esteem.

Marcelo expresses a similar perception when he describes himself as a teacher who depends on favorable external conditions to conduct lessons smoothly: “I depend on a good relationship with the group, I depend on a day when I am calmer, when I am very prepared to do what I have to do. I don’t deal very well with adversity” (Marcelo, ES-10jun2025). Both accounts suggest that unforeseen situations may trigger anxious reactions, as noted by Lúcio (2019, thereby amplifying the sense of vulnerability in the face of uncertainty about how to act.

4.1.2.5. Relationship with students

Obstacles related to socialization tend to accompany shy individuals across different contexts of their lives (Almeida et al., 2019). Among the participants, Lucinara and Marcelo proved to be especially attentive to this aspect. While the former shares broader beliefs related

to her social life, the latter directs his account more specifically to experiences lived in the exercise of teaching.

Throughout the entire research period, Lucinara presented herself as an affectionate, approachable person with a strong desire to identify with and create bonds with those around her in the teaching and learning environments. However, she also reports some impediments that prevent her from interacting in the way she would like. According to the participant: “shyness is totally related to the difficulty I have in starting conversations with people. And sometimes I have a certain tendency not to want to talk much for fear of saying something really stupid, I think every shy person goes through that” (Lucinara, ES-18jun2025). The excerpt highlights difficulties both in initiating and sustaining conversations, an aspect that the participant revisits when stating that she also finds it challenging to prevent dialogues from ending quickly. The “fear of saying something stupid” seems to be associated with a heightened concern about one’s own social image, a characteristic frequently discussed in the literature on shyness (Zimbardo, 1982; Carducci; Conkright, 2020).

Marcelo, in turn, acknowledges that his students show openness to establishing a good relationship with him, but states that he struggles to reciprocate that disposition with the same level of ease. In the excerpt below, he assigns responsibility for this dynamic to himself: “I feel that sometimes the students’ reception is very good, that they want to welcome me well, but that I myself cannot get here and be 100% comfortable with what I am doing”.

The participant reports that, during his period as a volunteer in the extension course where he works, when alternating the conduction of activities with the scholarship-holding teacher, he perceived lower levels of student engagement in his proposals when compared to those of his colleague. He interprets this reaction as a reflection of a classroom climate marked by discomfort, which he associates with his more reserved personality and with difficulties in managing interpersonal interactions in teaching contexts.

Drawing on his experiences as a shy individual, Marcelo relates his personality to difficulties in understanding and connecting with others, which seems to constitute a barrier to identifying with his students. By stating that “sometimes I feel as if I were just talking, without any feedback”, the participant expresses his subjective perception of classroom interaction. This interpretation is mediated by his emotions and beliefs and may not accurately reflect the dynamics effectively established with the students.

Finally, Antônio Carlos's experience provides a counterpoint to the previous accounts. Unlike the other participants, he reports great satisfaction with the relationship built within his French class. He notes that the first meeting was marked by certain awkwardness, something he considers expected in initial encounters, but emphasizes that the small class size as well as identification through shared interests and cultural references favored the construction of bonds and a peaceful coexistence. Nevertheless, as this is his first teaching experience, Antônio Carlos attributes this outcome to luck and ponders that, in other contexts and with other groups, he may not find the same relational ease.

4.1.2.6. Strategies for coping with the effects of shyness in teaching

In the face of these challenges, participants also shared strategies they use to cope with shyness. Among the main strategies identified are: (a) lesson planning and rehearsal; (b) the use of interactive activities to shift attention away from shyness; (c) a preference for more lecture-based classes; (d) the use of AI as support in the formulation of didactic explanations; and (e) slow-breathing techniques to deal with anxiety.

The most frequently mentioned strategy was lesson planning and rehearsal. As discussed previously, shy teachers often report forgetting what they intend to say (the well-known experience of one's "mind going blank") or stuttering during explanations. To prevent these situations, participants reported engaging in careful lesson planning and, in some cases, rehearsing the classes in advance:

In the beginning, I rehearsed what I might say in class and had to resort to Portuguese frequently to explain something. (Antônio Carlos, NE-03mai2025)

I always prepare myself, through lesson plans, the preparation of my own materials and rehearsals, in order to have control over these emotions and over the fear of the unknown and/or of 'my mind going blank' in the classroom. (Marcelo, NE-03mai2025)

This tendency toward intense preparation can be understood in light of the "illusion of competence" described by Scott (2007), according to which shy individuals anticipate and strive beyond what is necessary in an attempt to approximate the naturalness and confidence they attribute to others. In this sense, planning and rehearsal function as self-protective strategies in the face of anxiety and emotional vulnerability (section 4.4) in teaching situations.

In addition to planning, some participants adopted different coping strategies. Antônio Carlos, for example, reported feeling uncomfortable implementing interactive activities, preferring more lecture-based classes due to his reserved personality (section 4.1.2.31). Sandra in contrast adopted the opposite approach, using interactive activities as a resource to shift attention away from herself and foster closer with students:

I tried not to think so much about my possible mistakes and my insecurity, I tried to concentrate on the present moment in the classroom and brought some more interactive activities so I could get closer to them, taking a bit of the focus off myself and distancing my insecurity and shyness. (Sandra, NE-04mai2025)

Sandra explains that she applied these strategies during the mandatory teaching practicum, which allowed her to feel less insecure and to establish greater proximity with the students by the end of her teaching period, overcoming a recurring challenge for her.

Another strategy mentioned by the participants is the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a support tool for organizing and formulating didactic explanations. Given that shy individuals frequently report difficulties related to clarity when presenting content, Ju found AI as a resource for structuring his ideas during lesson planning. He describes using prompts similar to the following:

‘Formulate an accessible, didactic explanation for a first-year class from a peripheral context, based on the rules below’. That is, I requested this reformulation, but including a rule, already understanding that AI could present some theoretical inconsistency. So, to avoid that, I included the rule from some book, from some material, there in full as well (Ju, ES-10jun2025).

From this perspective, AI may function not only as a support tool for shy teachers, but also as a broader pedagogical resource, potentially beneficial to teachers in general, provided if used critically. Ju emphasizes the importance of caution to avoid inaccuracies, noting that careful use of AI contributes to increasing his confidence regarding the content that will be addressed in the classroom.

Finally, Ju also reported using slow breathing techniques as a strategy to calm himself in moments of anxiety triggered by shyness, seeking to “inhale, control my breathing and then adjust my heart rate” (Ju, ES-10jun2025) during classroom activities. This practice can be understood as a form of emotional self-regulation (Meland; Brion-Meisels, 2024), as studies indicate that conscious breathing control contributes to reducing stress and anxiety by decreasing physiological agitation and fostering a state of greater calm (Zaccaro et al., 2018).

According to the authors, this effect occurs because slow breathing stimulates the parasympathetic nervous system, which is responsible for promoting relaxation and internal balance. In teaching contexts, this search for internal regulation resonates with the concept of “emotion labor” discussed by Zembylas (2005), whereby teachers manage uncomfortable feelings in order to sustain their pedagogical practice.

In addition, Marcelo introduces an important dimension by reflecting on his personal limits and on the need to avoid imposing unattainable standards on himself. For him, coping with shyness also involves developing attitudes of self-acceptance and self-understanding:

To look more at what they [teachers] feel during classes and understand one's own limits, or even not limits, but characteristics and specificities, and not demand from oneself things that other types of people in the same position do. Because we have to... I think it is more a matter of accepting oneself (Marcelo, ES-10jun2025).

These statements indicate that, alongside practical strategies, there is also a reflective dimension involved in managing and accepting shyness, revealing a positive openness to the vulnerabilities intrinsic to teaching (section 4.4.5.2).

The strategies mobilized by the participants, summarized in Table 3, can be understood both as mechanisms of anticipation and control and as forms of situated emotional regulation. They highlight different ways of coping with the vulnerability associated with shyness in teaching. At the same time, it is important to reflect on the ambiguous nature of these strategies: although they function as forms of self-protection, they may also be mentally demanding, as they keep teachers in a constant state of vigilance regarding perceived shortcomings.

Table 3 - Challenges and strategies reported by shy language teachers

Reported Challenges	Perceived effects	Strategies adopted
Reduced oral participation and academic interaction	Reduced participation; avoidance of questions; discomfort during presentations; greater withdrawal in larger classes	Not explicitly reported by participants

Interference with explanatory clarity and oral performance	Lack of fluency; forgetting content; accelerated speech; stuttering; freezing in front of the class; difficulty managing the class and exercising authority	Detailed lesson planning; rehearsal of explanations; use of AI to paraphrase content in a didactic manner; slow breathing to regulate anxiety; self-acceptance and adjustment of personal expectations
Conflict between a shy profile and communicative methodologies	Difficulty projecting the voice, maintaining energy, and improvising; feeling of not matching the “ideal model” of a communicative teacher	Integration of communicative and traditional methods in the classroom (in Antônio Carlos’s case)
Influence on body posture, credibility, and classroom management	Rigid posture; low or shaky voice; difficulty dealing with unforeseen events; feeling of low authority; emotional exhaustion	Slow-breathing to maintain bodily and vocal stability; use of interactive activities to shift the focus away from the teacher (in Sandra’s case)
Impact on building bonds and interactions with students	Barriers to initiating and sustaining conversations; social anxiety; fear of judgment; difficulty establishing closeness	Use of activities that foster interaction; self-acceptance of one’s own personal characteristics

Source: The author

In summary, the findings indicate that although shyness poses different challenges to the participants’ performance, they mobilize coping strategies that combine technical preparation, emotional regulation, and methodological adjustments. These strategies vary according to their personal experiences, beliefs about teaching, teaching styles, and the emotional demands of the teacher education context.

While this section focused on the challenges imposed by shyness and the strategies mobilized to cope with its effects, the participants’ accounts also reveal that shyness is not experienced solely as a limitation. Rather, it may function as a source of sensitivity, reflection, and pedagogical investment. In this sense, shyness emerges as a constitutive element of teaching practice, capable of fostering attentiveness, empathy, and a heightened awareness of classroom dynamics. Building on this perspective, the following section explores the potentials in teaching constructed with shyness, examining how this characteristic may

contribute positively to teachers' professional development and to their relationships with students.

4.1.2. Potentials in teaching constructed with shyness

As Coplan and Xiao (2016) argue, shyness may provide those who experience it with distinctive qualities that can be pedagogically meaningful. In the participants' accounts, shyness is not portrayed exclusively as limitation but also as a characteristic that generates positive effects in teaching practice. In this sense, shyness emerges as a mobilizing element that encourages teachers to invest more carefully in aspects of teaching they perceive as open to improvement, while also fostering moments of mutual understanding between teachers and students.

When recognizing their limitations in certain areas of language teaching, the participating teachers reported seeking to compensate for these difficulties by strengthening competencies they believe are within their reach. As Marcelo notes: "I believe that the insecurities of a shy language teacher spur them to do their best in the face of their own difficulties." (Marcelo, QS-04apr2025). Antônio Carlos expresses a similar belief, stating that the need to "compensate" for his shyness functioned as a "driving force," leading him to devote himself intensely to learning French and to achieve a high level of proficiency in a relatively short period of time. Sandra also points out that shy individuals tend to "monitor themselves more closely" and to constantly seek new ways to improve classroom interaction, acknowledging that:

As shyer people, we tend to monitor ourselves more, look for ways to improve, seek new content to improve interaction with students. I think it does get in the way at first, but over time it ends up being a helper (Sandra, ES-14jun2025).

Ju, in particular, reports that he seeks to "put extra care into the materials" and into written explanations in order to make the content more didactic and accessible to students. He further explains that, in his case, this compensatory stance is adopted so that his difficulties with oral expression do not negatively affect content delivery and his overall performance. In this sense, he emphasizes that "someone can be shy, but one should not discredit that person's teaching practice without paying attention to how they plan and prepare" (Ju, QS-16apr2025).

Beyond investment in planning, shyness is also associated with the development of a more empathetic and welcoming stance toward students. As Marcelo observes, “I think we try to understand students better, especially those who are also shy” (Marcelo, QS-04apr2025). In this way, personal experience with shyness may foster greater sensitivity and attentiveness to the needs of students who face similar challenges (Höl; Küçük, 2023).

Antônio Carlos illustrates this point by recounting moments of closeness with students made possible by shyness. He explains that, because he is a smoker, he often remains outside the building before classes begin, and his students, rather than going into the classroom, choose to sit nearby and talk:

And I think there is mutual understanding there – everyone knows who is shyer, who is more reserved, who is calmer. That, I think, really helps their interaction. I don’t feel bad in that sense; with them I already have quite a bit of freedom to that extent (Antônio Carlos, ES-21jun2025).

The participant emphasizes that this mutual understanding is especially evident among students who are themselves more reserved, as they recognize shared difficulties. Antônio Carlos also demonstrates a caring stance toward students who are experiencing emotional distress, showing willingness to listen and offer support, often while sharing a warm cup of coffee. Similarly, Sandra and Ju draw attention to shy students in their reflections:

There are students who are like us, shy, and they also don’t open up that easily. So it’s hard both for us and for them. It’s a two-way street (Sandra, ES-14jun2025).

[...] the shy teacher may be attentive to that little student sitting at the back of the classroom, quiet (Ju, ES-10jun2025).

These narratives suggest that sensitivity, patience, and caring interactions constitute salient qualities for shy teachers (Cain, 2012; Vieira, 2019). In this study, not only do teachers express understanding and affection in these relationships; participants also reported – often with smiles – feeling welcomed by their own students, particularly those who recognize their shyness. Marcelo describes his class in the extension project as receptive and supportive, while Ju reports that some students seek him out precisely because they identify with this trait, sometimes even writing him small letters as expressions of affection.

Unlike the others, Lucinara brings a distinct perception on the potential of shy teachers. She argues that shy individuals value peaceful coexistence with their peers, avoiding conflicts or even resolving them calmly (Cain, 2012), and this disposition may be reflected in their language teaching practices. Somewhat humorously, she reflects: “[...] before I used to judge myself for being a very quiet person, but then I thought: ‘wow, but there are also people

who talk too much’. Sometimes that’s not a good thing either” (Lucinara, ES-18jun2025). Particularly in academic contexts, she highlights the importance of balance in self-expression with professors and classmates and, jokingly adds that, because she is more reserved, others sometimes perceive her as intelligent – “but one thing has nothing to do with the other [laughs]” (Lucinara, ES-18jun2025).

As Lucinara emphasizes – and with whom I fully agree – it is necessary to “start working on the idea that each person is different and that each personality trait makes them a unique person” (Lucinara, ES-18jun2025). Although shyness may trigger experiences which are perceived negatively, the participants’ accounts also reveal a positive perspective in which shyness is configured as a distinctive strength. These potentialities therefore need to be recognized, valued, and disseminated, particularly within teacher education. Table 4 summarizes the main potentials of teaching constructed from shyness as they emerge from the participants’ narratives, organizing the aspects discussed in this section.

Table 4 - Potentials of awareness constructed from shyness

Theme	Main Aspects Identified
Investment in lesson planning and teacher preparation	Shyness functions as a driving force that prompts teachers to prepare lessons more thoroughly, carefully design instructional materials, and develop strategies that help them manage their insecurities more effectively.
Empathy with students facing similar challenges	Personal experiences with shyness foster identification with students who are also more reserved, enabling greater sensitivity to the emotional difficulties involved in the language learning process.
A welcoming stance and emotional availability	Shy teachers demonstrate care, attentive listening, and openness, offering emotional support to students facing challenges and thereby building relationships of trust.
Harmonious coexistence and peaceful conflict management	A tendency toward moderation, balance, and the pursuit of peaceful interactions contributes to a more harmonious classroom climate and healthier academic relationships
Valuing teacher singularity and diversity	A shy personality may constitute a distinctive strength in the construction of teacher identity, highlighting the importance of recognizing and legitimizing diverse ways of being a teacher.

Source: the author

As summarized in Table 4, shyness may constitute a characteristic capable of generating different advantages for language teachers, encompassing both practical aspects, such as greater dedication to lesson and materials planning, and emotional aspects, related to empathy, care, and the construction of a more peaceful classroom environment. These potentialities reveal identity-related nuances that remain little visible in the field of teacher education, contributing to broadening the understanding of what it means to be a shy teacher. In order to further explore the foundations underlying these challenges and possibilities, the next section presents the participants' beliefs about shyness and its role in teaching.

4.2. Beliefs about language teaching

From the analysis of the records, it was possible to identify different beliefs held by the participants regarding shyness, language teaching and learning, as well as their own capacity as future teachers. These beliefs reveal not only perceptions of the difficulties and potentialities associated with shyness, but also broader conceptions of the role of the language teacher and of practices considered central to this process, such as the use of the target language in the classroom. In dialogue with the experiences discussed in the previous section, this section focuses on the meanings attributed by the participants to shyness and to its implications for teaching. For organizational purposes, the discussion is structured around three main axes: beliefs about shyness, beliefs about language teaching and learning and the role of shyness in the teaching context and teacher self-image and shyness. These axes are explored in the subsections that follow, highlighting nuances and implications of each perspective.

4.2.1. Beliefs about the nature of shyness

In Chapter II of this study, I presented the theoretical framework that underpins the analyses developed here. Starting from the assumption that shyness is a phenomenon with a complex definition, given its subjective and multifaceted nature, I consider it essential to attend to the definitions constructed by the participants themselves regarding shyness and the shy person, grounded in their personal experiences. Table 5 presents a compilation of the participants' beliefs about the phenomenon of shyness.

Table 5 - Beliefs about shyness constructed by the participants

Participant	Representative excerpts	Beliefs about shyness (organized by axis)
Antônio Carlos	“[...] someone who feels particularly pressured when doing anything in front of others, who is much more concerned with what is thought about them, what the people around them think, and who needs to perform well at something... the fear of doing something ridiculous that might cause embarrassment is much greater in these people. Shyness is this heightened awareness of oneself being seen, being heard.”	Affective-emotional axis: - Shyness understood as a fear of negative evaluation; - Shyness associated with social anxiety Relational/contextual axis: - Shyness understood as an experience situated in interaction with others
Ju	“[...] a person who feels uncomfortable in a certain environment because they are embarrassed about not having a particular attribute that may be expected.”	Relational/contextual axis: - Shyness understood as a situational, rather than permanent, phenomenon Identity Axis: - Shyness perceived as a partial, non-fixed characteristic
Lucinara	“What I used to think was that a person who didn’t know... had difficulty expressing their ideas and had difficulty speaking, couldn’t present their opinion clearly. But today I think it is no longer limited to that [...] I think that shyness can be just an extension of an introverted person.”	Behavioral Axis: - Shyness associated with difficulty expressing oneself orally - Shyness associated with avoidance of public speaking Identity Axis: - Shyness understood as an extension of an introverted personality
Marcelo	“It is someone who hides a lot. [...] unlike an introverted person, I think that introspection and being more alone are more connected to discomfort, because it is not necessarily a preference.”	Identity Axis: - Shyness understood as an extension of introversion Behavioral Axis: - Shyness associated with a preference for observing rather than participating
Sandra	“For me, it would be someone who	Affective-emotional axis:

	knows all the content but cannot express themselves well in front of other people, because all those people looking at you cause nervousness, cause panic.”	- Shyness understood as fear of making mistakes - Shyness associated with fear of social judgment Behavioral axis: - Shyness associated with avoidance of public exposure
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Source: the author

The data presented in Table 5 show that the participants’ beliefs about shyness are organized in multiple and interrelated ways, cutting across affective-emotional, identity-related, behavioral, and contextual dimensions. While some participants associate shyness with relatively stable traits, such as introversion or social withdrawal, others understand it as a situated experience, whose intensity varies according to the context, the sense of belonging, and the relationships established. Recurrently, shyness is understood as an experience marked by fear of social evaluation, heightened self-consciousness, and anxiety in situations of exposure, characterizing it as a profoundly relational and emotional phenomenon (Zimbardo, 1982; Carducci; Conkright, 2020).

In addition, the participants’ statements indicate that shyness is not perceived merely as a communication difficulty, but as an element that shapes how they believe they are seen and interpreted by others. As Barcelos (2015) argues, beliefs are closely connected to individuals’ identities and influence how they understand themselves and their experiences. In this sense, shyness directly affects the participants’ identities in their process of becoming language teachers. These beliefs, therefore, constitute the interpretive framework through which participants attribute meaning to their academic and teaching experiences, guiding both their practices and their expectations regarding language teaching and learning.

The participants’ beliefs about shyness, however, are not constituted solely through individual experiences or personal dispositions; they are also permeated by socially constructed values, expectations, and norms (Barcelos, 2004). In this sense, understanding how shyness is perceived and evaluated in the social imaginary becomes fundamental for analyzing how these beliefs impact both the choice of the teaching profession and the exercise of teaching in school contexts.

4.2.1.1. Shyness as socially perceived and its impact on professional choice

During the study, the participants shared beliefs related to how shyness is socially perceived²⁸ and to the impacts of these beliefs on schooling and on the exercise of teaching. Recurrently, an understanding emerged that shyness does not correspond to the set of traits that are socially valued, especially when contrasted with extroversion, which is often associated with professional success and communicative competence. As Antonio Carlos points out, “there is a standard, a set of virtues and values that are valued in someone” (Antônio Carlos, ES-21jun2025), within which shyness tends to be interpreted negatively.

Sandra reinforces this belief by reporting how shyness can become an obstacle in selection processes, especially in job interviews. According to her, shy people need to “work around” this trait, since “shyness is not seen very positively in the eyes of other people” (ES-14jun2025). Her account evidences the internalization of a socially shared belief that teaching and, language teaching, in particular, requires stances associated with extroversion, assertiveness, and constant performance.

This belief resonates with experiences I lived through as a teacher at the beginning of my career. In job interviews, I felt the need to conceal traits of shyness because I believed I did not match the profile sought by language schools, generally associated with extroverted, spontaneous, and highly energetic teachers. Assuming my identity as a shy English teacher was a gradual process, that demanded time and reflection, but which proved fundamental to my professional development. This alignment between my trajectory and the participants’ accounts reinforces the socially constructed nature of these beliefs.

Among the participants, there are also cases in which shyness was explicitly questioned by people close to them. Lucinara reports having been challenged by a family member about her professional choice, under the argument that, because she was shy, she would not know how to deal with a classroom composed of adolescents. In addition, she expresses concern about the image that her shyness may convey to students, fearing being perceived as unfriendly, untrustworthy, or disrespected. This account reveals the belief that teaching authority and professional credibility are directly associated with expansive and communicatively dominant behaviors.

²⁸ It is necessary to emphasize that this research was conducted at a university in Brazil, and all the participants are Brazilian. Therefore, the experiences reported here can hardly be generalized, given that shyness is a construction that can be social, cultural, historical, and also personal. I imagine that if the research were conducted in a context more distant from our own, the results could be quite varied.

Marcelo expresses a similar belief by stating that many people who know him personally would hardly imagine him as a teacher. For him, there is an apparent conflict between his personality and the socially expected profile of the teaching professional. These accounts indicate that shyness, more than an individual trait, becomes the target of social evaluations and judgments that permeate the construction of professional identity.

Although this prejudice against shy teachers is described as subtle, I sought to understand whether concrete experiences had reinforced this belief among the participants. Two responses stand out: Marcelo mentions having received, still during his undergraduate studies, negative and insensitive feedback from a professor, who criticized his presentation because he had appeared shy (see section 4.4.2.1). Sandra, in turn, reports observing a shy colleague who was frequently excluded from interactions in the workplace. Such experiences corroborate discussions such as those presented by Almeida et al. (2019) regarding the challenges of professional socialization and the risks of developing insecurities, or even abandoning the teaching career amongst shy teachers.

Despite this, the data also reveal beliefs that challenge the negative view of shyness. Marcelo, for example, highlights the welcoming response he received from his classes and states that he did not experience rejection from students, suggesting a reframing of earlier beliefs based on positive teaching experiences. Ju, in turn, criticizes stereotypical views that associate shyness with a lack of professional preparation, recognizing the need to question such discourses in favor of broader changes.

Finally, Antônio Carlos adopts a more optimistic perspective by suggesting that there is currently greater social sensitivity toward individual differences – although I partially disagree with the claim that we have fully overcome normative discourses –, especially in the university context.

We no longer have that idea/discourse of praising standards, and there is much more diversity at the university in several respects. Any more timid behavior is no longer viewed as negatively as it used to be. Even Rousseau himself, who was a very, very shy person and lived very poorly with that, had many problems with shyness despite being Rousseau. So those of us who are just ordinary people [laughter]... I think that today we even have more sensitivity toward this; it is not so bad anymore (Antônio Carlos, ES-21jun2025).

By mentioning Rousseau as a historically recognized figure who faced difficulties related to shyness, the participant problematizes the stigmas associated with more reserved behaviors and defends the legitimacy of shyness as a human characteristic. If even historically

recognized figures faced difficulties for being shy, what is the logic of treating shyness as something unusual or undesirable? His statement, therefore, reinforces the need to reconsider shyness not as a deviation, but as a legitimate human characteristic, present in different profiles of teachers.

In this subsection, I analyzed individual and socially shared beliefs about shyness and its relationship to language teaching. The accounts show that although discourses associating shyness with professional inadequacy still persist, there are also movements of questioning and reframing these beliefs, especially based on the experiences lived by the teachers themselves.

4.2.2. Beliefs about foreign language teaching and learning and the role of shyness in the classroom

In this section, I present, across three subsections, the beliefs identified in the participants' accounts that relate shyness to the teaching and learning of foreign languages. In the first subsection, I discuss beliefs associated with the use of the target language in the classroom. Next, I analyze beliefs about what it means to be a foreign language teacher. Finally, I examine the belief that non-shy teachers have more advantages in language teaching.

4.2.2.1. Concerning the use of the target language in the classroom

In foreign language teaching, there is a recurrent belief that classes should be conducted entirely in the target language. This practice is often presented as pedagogically effective and, in many contexts, constitutes an explicit institutional requirement (Pontes, 2021; Larsen-Freeman, 2000). However, for teachers in initial training, especially those who identify as shy, this expectation can become a source of insecurity, stress, and emotional exposure. While some participants report not feeling sufficiently proficient in the target language, others emphasize the discomfort of continuous oral exposure.

Antônio Carlos's account illustrates this belief, which appears to be shared and reinforced in the context of the extension course where he works. According to him, there is

an expectation that the entire class be taught in the foreign language, which intensifies the challenges faced by shy teachers:

Of course, since we are expected to teach the entire class in the language being taught, having to suddenly always speak in French is a challenge intensified by shyness. It is something I often hear when I talk to beginning foreign language teachers. (Antônio Carlos, NE-03mai2025)

For the participant, this requirement adds an additional layer of pressure to teaching practice, intensifying personal and emotional insecurities. By stating that he observes similar concerns among colleagues who work in the same context, Antônio Carlos suggests that this belief is not restricted to his individual experience, but circulates collectively, shaping expectations and affecting the emotional experiences of teachers in initial training within the same community of practice.

Sandra's statement directly engages with this perspective. She highlights that her experience up to that point had taken place exclusively in public schools, a context in which there is no requirement for continuous use of the target language in the classroom. When considering the possibility of working in language schools or similar contexts, she states that she does not feel capable of meeting this demand: "but if it has to be like in English language schools, where they have to speak entirely in English, I think I wouldn't be able to. [...] I would feel insecure, because I'm still not very confident about my English." This excerpt evidences not only a belief about her own linguistic ability, discussed later in subsection 4.2.3, but also reveals how this belief intersects with shyness, intensifying emotions of insecurity in the face of the requirement to speak exclusively in the target language.

A similar belief emerges in Ju's account, although articulated in a different way. He states that he feels more confident and, consequently, less shy in public school contexts. In this case, his sense of security is not directly associated with the choice of the language of instruction, but with the belief that students in this context have lower proficiency in English and, therefore, a more limited capacity to critically evaluate his oral performance. As he states: "[...] in a public school classroom context, I would no longer feel so shy." Ju contrasts this experience with contexts such as undergraduate courses or private schools, in which he believes his performance would be more readily judged, which would increase his shyness and insecurity.

Overall, the accounts show that the belief in the exclusive use of the target language in the classroom does not operate in isolation, but in interaction with shyness, perceived proficiency, and the institutional context. These beliefs contribute to the construction of distinct emotional experiences and reinforce the idea that shyness in the classroom is deeply situated and mediated by the social and pedagogical expectations surrounding foreign language teaching.

4.2.2.2. Beliefs about the foreign language teacher

The participants' beliefs about what characterizes a good foreign language teacher are multiple and permeated by different dimensions of teaching practice. In general, these beliefs are associated not only with communicative and pedagogical skills, often treated as almost consensual, but also with affective and relational aspects that influence the teaching and learning process.

With regard to the didactic-linguistic dimension, Antônio Carlos highlights that a good teacher must possess “competence in their language and clarity in the way they explain the content” (Q-03abr2025). This statement synthesizes the importance attributed to linguistic proficiency articulated with effective pedagogy, suggesting that teaching performance depends on the ability to transform technical knowledge into explanations accessible to students (Etzold; Krüger, 2021; Pontes, 2021). In the same vein, Ju emphasizes the need for “mastery of the language in the four skills,” as well as the use of “methodologies that address students' needs” and the adaptation of teaching materials (Q-16abr2025). His statement reinforces the belief that methodological flexibility and responsiveness to different learner profiles are essential components of teaching practice.

Still within the pedagogical dimension, Lucinara believes that the teacher should “use some interactive games, as this facilitates learning and creates connections with students” (Q-26mar2025). As Leffa (2020) points out, the use of games can foster learning and interaction in the classroom, promoting greater involvement between teacher and students, as well as among the students themselves. Marcelo, in turn, stresses that the teacher should be “communicative, didactic, proficient in the language they teach, and able to understand their students well” (Q-04abr2025), integrating linguistic competence, didactic clarity, and sensitivity to learners' needs.

Beyond these dimensions, the participants also attribute centrality to affective and relational aspects of teaching. Antônio Carlos, for example, emphasizes the importance of informal interactions in everyday school life: “because I stay outside, welcome them, we talk a bit before class, that brings us closer. This identification with the teacher is important” (ES-21jun2025). His statement suggests that small gestures of closeness contribute to the construction of bonds, creating a more welcoming environment conducive to learning.

In this sense, Marcelo acknowledges the importance of attending to students but admits difficulty in doing so in the way he considers appropriate, which indicates the pressure generated by emotional expectations (Zembylas, 2007). Similarly, Lucinara states that “to have a relationship of respect and reciprocity we must have connections” (NE-09mai2025). Reflecting on her practicum experience, she recognizes that she did not invest sufficiently in creating such connections, expresses regret, and projects that, in future experiences, she intends to devote greater effort to informal interactions with students, believing that this may benefit both her relationship with the class and her performance during teaching.

In sum, the participants’ beliefs about the foreign language teacher reveal a field of tensions between institutional expectations and beliefs about teaching practice. Although they recognize the importance of linguistic proficiency, didactic clarity, and methodological flexibility, the accounts indicate that such demands, when intersecting with shyness and insecurity, can intensify insecurity and vulnerability. At the same time, the valorization of affective aspects, such as empathy, closeness, and the construction of bonds, points to a conception of language teaching that goes beyond content transmission and is configured as a relational practice, sensitive to learners’ experiences and needs.

4.2.2.3. The perceived advantages of non-shy teachers in foreign language teaching

The beliefs presented in the previous subsection about what characterizes a good foreign language teacher lead almost immediately to a comparison between shy and non-shy teachers. Based on the valued qualities, such as ease, clarity, confidence, and facility of interaction, the participants express the belief that extroversion constitutes a significant advantage in foreign language teaching. For them, non-shy teachers tend to stand out in the classroom, while shyness appears associated with communicative and emotional difficulties.

In the justifications presented, participants relate the more positively evaluated performance of non-shy teachers to calmness, fluency in presenting content, and lower anxiety in the face of the need to speak in public. Lucinara and Antônio Carlos, for example, state that extroverted people deal with teaching situations with less embarrassment:

It's because they have more ease than shy people. They don't get as worried or anxious when they have to teach the content to the students (Lucinara, QS-26mar2025).

Naturally extroverted people generally do not feel as much embarrassment, which helps them keep their thinking clearer and maintain a calmer demeanor (Antônio Carlos, QS-03abr2025).

Marcelo reinforces this belief by drawing a direct contrast between shy and non-shy teachers. According to him, while the latter teach with greater fluency, the former experience difficulty in organizing their thoughts due to shyness and nervousness, which may result in lapses and mistakes during class:

Compared to me, I feel that it is easier to teach when one is a teacher whose shyness is not an obstacle to presenting content and interacting with students in the classroom, because, since I am shy and introverted, nervousness always takes my focus away from the lesson plan and the teaching and learning process (Marcelo, QS-04abr2025).

Other participants extend this belief beyond the classroom. Sandra states that non-shy teachers communicate better in academic contexts in general, such as in meetings, interactions with colleagues, and presentations. Ju adds that, being more uninhibited, these teachers take greater advantage of opportunities to practice the language during their undergraduate studies, actively participating in classes and interacting without embarrassment.

Among the reported beliefs, the idea that shy individuals communicate with greater difficulty than non-shy peers stands out. These beliefs are linked both to personal learning experiences and to teaching practice, given that oral communication occupies a central place in foreign language teaching (Zimbardo, 1982; Etzold; Krüger, 2021). Complementing this perspective, some participants argue that speaking a foreign language while being shy is particularly challenging, as Ju expresses: “shyness impacts considerably, because if I weren't so shy, if it didn't affect me so much, I wouldn't have resistance to using the language, even if I made some slips, some mistakes, sometimes” (Ju, ES-10jun2025). In this sense, shyness is conceived as a factor that inhibits spontaneous use of the target language.

Antônio Carlos and Sandra also mention nervousness, difficulty asserting oneself, and constant comparison with other speakers as elements that reinforce this resistance. Sandra even reports that, for a long time, she dismissed the possibility of becoming an English teacher because of her shyness:

However, I never imagined that I would become an English teacher at any point in my life, because I have always been very shy in the classroom, spoke little, and didn't socialize much, given that speaking in public was one of my greatest difficulties (Sandra, NE-04mai2025).

The excerpt suggests that, by associating language teaching with a communicative, outgoing, and confident profile, Sandra did not see herself as someone capable of pursuing this profession. Similarly, Marcelo links shyness to difficulties interacting with students, stating that it compromises his attention to the class's needs and the teaching–learning process as a whole: “Shyness makes it more difficult to pay attention to my students and, consequently, also hinders our interaction and the teaching and learning processes” (Marcelo, NE-03mai2025). This account indicates that, beyond limiting oral expression, shyness can lead to a movement of self-focus, in which the teacher directs attention to their own reactions and insecurities, to the detriment of pedagogical interaction.

Overall, these beliefs suggest that, for the participants, non-shy teachers accumulate advantages both in initial training and in teaching practice, which tends to strengthen their professional confidence (see section 4.3.2). At the same time, constant comparison with non-shy colleagues can reinforce insecurities and negatively impact the self-esteem and emotional experiences of shy teachers. Scott (2007) discusses how the so-called “illusion of competence” influences the beliefs and actions of shy individuals, who frequently perceive others as naturally more communicative and confident. In response to this perception, many shy teachers report investing greater effort into lesson preparation, seeking to compensate for their insecurities and achieve a greater sense of control (see section 4.1.1).

4.2.3. Teacher self-image and shyness

The beliefs discussed in the previous sections about foreign language teaching and learning, as well as the profile of the ideal teacher, directly influence the ways in which participants construct their teacher self-image. In this section, the focus shifts to the self-referential beliefs developed by the pre-service teachers about their own capacities,

particularly regarding the limitations, possibilities, and challenges associated with shyness. By analyzing these beliefs, I seek to understand how shyness permeates the construction of teacher identity and shapes perceptions of competence, adequacy, and professional belonging.

4.2.3.1. Beliefs about limitations in working as a shy language teacher

Up to this point, the results indicate that shyness is perceived by the participants as a factor that generates various obstacles to teaching practice. Beyond the description of concrete classroom difficulties, the data reveal self-referential beliefs according to which being a shy teacher involves facing more challenges than benefits, even though some participants acknowledge possible positive aspects associated with this trait, as discussed previously. As Ju states categorically: “I definitely believe that shy teachers face difficulties in the profession” (ES-10jun2025). His statement suggests that, at the time of the interview, his own experiences did not allow him to envision situations in which shyness could favor teaching practice.

Similarly, Antônio Carlos uses the term “deficit” when describing shyness in teaching, indicating a belief that it is an undesirable characteristic that must be compensated for. This lexical choice reveals an internalized negative evaluation, in which shyness is conceived as a lack or insufficiency, rather than as a legitimate variation of professional style.

The participants’ accounts indicate that this perception of limitation spans different dimensions of language teaching. Marcelo synthesizes this self-assessment by stating: “I see myself as a limited language teacher, both because of the difficulty in focusing on interaction with students and because I depend on various favorable circumstances to feel secure in my professional practice” (NE-03mai2025). His statement shows that the belief in limitation is not restricted to linguistic competence, but also involves emotional and pedagogical aspects, affecting how he perceives himself as a professional.

Among the difficulties mentioned, classroom interaction, insecurity regarding mastery of the foreign language, and dependence on external conditions to feel confident stand out. These elements reveal a sense of insufficiency that goes beyond technical knowledge, reflecting the tension between the idealized teacher profile that participants believe is expected of them and the reality of their formative experiences. This contrast appears similarly in Antônio Carlos’s statement: “I really enjoy being a teacher, but I realize there is

much I cannot do because of who I am and that, nevertheless, would be beneficial to do” (NE-03mai2025).

In Antônio Carlos’s case, this tension becomes particularly evident in the context of the extension course where he works as a French teacher. He reports that the program values interactive methodologies and more informal approaches, distinct from the traditional method with which he feels more comfortable. Although he recognizes the benefits of these practices, he believes he is unable to implement them, especially because he associates them with spontaneity and ease; qualities he sees as incompatible with his shy personality. The following excerpt illustrates this belief:

I commented on how I found it unusual that the teacher would sit on the desk and said it was something I never did. The teacher and colleagues mentioned that this is well regarded for promoting closeness between teacher and student (...). Although I completely agree, I simply cannot behave that way, and I believe this is due to something I cannot change (Antônio Carlos, NE-03mai2025).

By justifying this “I can’t” as something intrinsic to his personality, the participant reinforces the belief that certain teaching behaviors are beyond his reach. “It would really mean changing the way I am” (ES-21jun2025), he comments, indicating a perception of identity rigidity. Frequent comparisons with colleagues described as more creative and spontaneous intensify emotional experiences of inadequacy and impact his professional self-esteem. Consequently, these beliefs are reflected in his pedagogical choices, leading him to opt for more traditional lessons, associated with greater security and predictability (Barcelos, 2006).

This belief in limitation is also linked to insecurity regarding mastery of the foreign language. At another point, Antônio Carlos recalls: “something still bothered me; the question of whether I would really be able to teach that language, which I felt I knew so little. This questioning heightened my natural insecurity and made me fear for the future” (NE-03mai2025). The account shows how the belief of insufficient language mastery impacts perceptions of professional capability. Situations like this are recurrent in initial teacher education for language teachers, as confidence in one’s linguistic knowledge is deeply intertwined with the construction of teacher identity and the development of self-efficacy.

4.2.3.2. Beliefs of inferiority in relation to peers

Another aspect intertwined with beliefs about one's own teaching ability is the belief of inferiority in relation to classmates or colleagues. Comparison with peers perceived as more confident, extroverted, or linguistically competent emerges as a central element in the construction of the participants' self-image, intensifying feelings of insecurity and inadequacy.

As discussed previously, Antônio Carlos reports frequently comparing himself to colleagues in the extension course where he works, believing he is not as capable as they are. This constant comparison reinforces his sense of limitation and fuels an emotional experience marked by insufficiency. Similarly, Ju shares his insecurity in relation to his peers in the Language Studies program, especially after entering higher education:

But I think I became even shyer after entering higher education, because I used to feel very inhibited in a classroom of 60 people, many of whom spoke very confidently. I think I felt that I wasn't as capable or intelligent as they were. (Ju, NE-16mai2025)

Ju's belief that his peers were superior seems to have intensified in the university context, where linguistic performance – especially speaking – becomes more visible and subject to comparison. These comparisons are not neutral; rather they appear to be sustained by beliefs and discourses that confer oral fluency, extroversion, and confidence the status of symbolic capital in the field of language education, insofar as these traits operate as socially valued forms of recognition and academic legitimacy (Darvin; Norton, 2015).

By mentioning the large number of students in the classroom, the participant emphasizes the sense of exposure, which amplifies his shyness and fosters constant comparisons with those who express themselves more confidently. This scenario contributes to the construction of a fragile self-image, marked by the perception of academic and linguistic insufficiency. Ju deepens this reflection by contrasting his experience as a student with that as a teacher:

However, I feel much more nervous as a student than as a teacher. As a student, I am surrounded by people who have a strong command of English, and this makes me feel inhibited (I think because I feel inferior to them in the oral dimension of the language) (Ju, NE-16mai2025).

This statement highlights the strength of the belief in inferiority in relation to peers, especially regarding English speaking skills. By perceiving himself surrounded by students

who, in his assessment, have greater mastery of this skill, Ju constructs a self-image marked by inhibition and anxiety (see section 4.3.1.2). This represents a subjective position of disadvantage that does not necessarily depend on external evaluations but is sustained by internal comparisons and socially constructed beliefs about linguistic competence.

Although the accounts are individual, they point to a recurring pattern among pre-service teachers, in which comparison with peers perceived as more competent operates as a central factor in the formation of beliefs of inadequacy. The beliefs analyzed in this section – about personal limitations, professional inadequacy, and inferiority in relation to peers – are not confined to the cognitive domain. They produce and are produced by intense emotional experiences that traverse participants' initial training and teaching practice. It is from this interplay between beliefs, emotions, and identity that the next section unfolds.

4.3. Emotions experienced in the classroom

The teaching experience, especially in initial language teacher education, is marked by a wide range of emotions that influence how teachers perceive themselves and interact with students (Nias, 1996; Barcelos, 2015). In this section, I discuss both emotions considered challenging, those that may compromise classroom performance, and those that function as motivating and strengthening elements in the professional trajectory. By organizing the analysis into two main categories – negatively experienced emotions (fear, anxiety, and shame) and positively experienced emotions (passion, gratitude, and confidence) –, I seek to understand how these emotional experiences are articulated with the beliefs previously analyzed and with the construction of teaching identity among pre-service teachers.

4.3.1. Negatively experienced emotions

In the literature on shyness, emphasis is often placed on emotions of a negative nature, describing them as intrinsic to the experiences of shy individuals (Zimbardo, 1982). In the following subsections, I discuss the emotions of fear, anxiety, and shame, not to reinforce stigmatized views, but to understand how they manifest, what they mobilize, and in what ways they may impact shy pre-service teachers in the exercise of teaching.

4.3.1.1. Fear

The accounts of all participants indicate that shyness is strongly associated with the emotion of fear, especially in situations that require exposure, such as teaching, speaking in public, or using the target language. The literature on shyness highlights the central role of fear in the experiences of shy people, frequently relating it to fear of others' judgment and the anticipation of negative evaluations (Sette et al., 2019; Conkright; Carducci, 2020). In the context of language teaching, this fear significantly affects pre-service teachers' performance, both in their relationships with students and with colleagues and evaluators.

Marcelo clearly expresses this relationship by stating that “being in the position of a shy teacher always comes accompanied by fear and anxiety” (Marcelo, NE-03mai2025), showing how such emotions intertwine and generate a constant burden in the exercise of the profession. He mentions several situations in language teaching that make him afraid:

[I feel] afraid of speaking in public and of looking at the students. I am very afraid of forgetting what I had prepared to discuss, of asking students to interact with the content and them not feeling comfortable or not understanding how to participate. (Marcelo, QS-04abr2025)

In addition to fear, Marcelo mentions anxiety (section 4.3.1.2) as a recurring emotion in these situations. By stating that “in the face of these emotions, these bad scenarios end up happening” and that he feels “the classroom atmosphere weigh down” (QS-04abr2025, emphasis mine), he reveals not only the impact of these emotions on his performance, but also the attribution of personal responsibility for the possible negative developments in the class. This statement suggests the presence of an implicit belief in an “ideal classroom atmosphere” to which the shy teacher perceives himself as insufficiently contributing, coming to see himself as a burden to the group.

Similarly, Antônio Carlos and Lucinara report fear of being judged and of receiving negative evaluations of their teaching practices. Lucinara expresses insecurity about not being able to convey the content effectively, while Antônio Carlos, particularly in relation to more interactive methodologies (section 4.1.2.3), fears that his proposals may be perceived as inappropriate. By stating, “I am afraid of proposing an activity that seems too far-fetched” (ES-21jun2025), he demonstrates the constant anticipation of negative judgment, even in the absence of concrete evidence of rejection by students.

In the academic context, Sandra also reports experiencing fear in situations involving public speaking or oral production practices with university peers. Perceiving her peers as having greater command of the language, she states that shyness became an obstacle to her oral participation: “shyness was often one of my hindrances in speaking, for being afraid/scared of making mistakes in front of my colleagues” (NE-04mai2025). Her narrative shows how fear of exposure can limit opportunities to use the language, directly impacting learning.

Convergently, Ju and Lucinara express fear of making mistakes when using the target language, English and French, respectively. This fear appears associated with insecurity regarding their linguistic knowledge and acts as an inhibiting factor in their development both as speakers and as future language teachers. Ju reports that fear intensifies in situations requiring prolonged exposure, such as extended readings or oral explanations in university classes. Lucinara, in turn, highlights the difficulty of dealing with the possibility of making mistakes:

Because we have this difficulty of thinking ‘Okay, in undergraduate studies, we are here to learn and it is okay to make mistakes, because nobody was born knowing everything, right?’ Especially for a foreign language. But as a student my shyness gets in my way, in the matter of being afraid to express my opinion and be wrong. (Lucinara, ES-18jun2025)

Although this fear may manifest itself in different spheres of life, in the context of initial teacher education it tends to intensify, given the evaluative nature of the academic environment and the constant comparison among peers. In these spaces, pre-service teachers do not always feel sufficiently safe to allow themselves the vulnerability of making mistakes before an audience they perceive as evaluative. While it is not possible to generalize this experience to all shy individuals, studies such as that of Zheng et al. (2024) indicate that these dynamics are recurrent in experiences associated with shyness.

Finally, Lucinara reports that fear had been present in her trajectory long before she decided to pursue a teaching career. When narrating her professional choice, she states: “despite fear and insecurity, I understood that I should try and follow my dream, after all what would be the point of pursuing another career and being frustrated?” (Lucinara, NE-09mai2025). This account is particularly significant, as it reveals that, although she recognizes the limiting effects of shyness, she chose to confront fear in pursuit of personal fulfillment. Her statement reflects a stance of resilience, in which an emotion socially

perceived as negative comes to be re-signified as motivation to persist in the teaching profession.

Part of the participants' accounts address fear as an emotion closely intertwined with anxiety, which will be discussed next.

4.3.1.2. Anxiety

Anxiety, as discussed by Conkright and Carducci (2020), accompanies fear as one of the most recurrent emotions in the experiences of shy people. All participants in this study report experiencing anxiety, which emerges in their accounts as a factor that compromises their performance both as teachers and as students, affecting focus, speech fluency, and the management of classes, presentations, and pedagogical interactions.

Anxiety associated with the academic presentations appears recurrently in the participants' narratives, frequently linked to shyness and the anticipation of others' judgment. Sandra reports experiencing this feeling from an early age, stating that it persists to this day, especially in situations requiring oral exposure. She highlights the physical manifestations such as cold sweat, a symptom also mentioned by Ju, who refers to trembling. As Pilkonis (1977) points out, shyness may trigger emotional and physiological reactions that reinforce one another: anxiety intensifies bodily symptoms, which, in turn, amplify the experience of shyness. This dynamic is clearly expressed by Sandra: "I feel anxious, nervous, I start to stutter, my hands start to sweat and I forget words." (Sandra, QS-16abr2025). Her account shows how anxiety materializes in the body and becomes an obstacle to maintaining calm and adopting a confident posture in contexts of public speaking and teaching performance.

Antônio Carlos also emphasizes the relationship between anxiety and shyness in presentation situations, describing his reaction as disproportionate when compared to that of his colleagues, who, according to him, do not display the same level of emotional disturbance. Interestingly, he recognizes that, despite intense anxious anticipation, his presentations usually turn out better than expected, suggesting a dissociation between negative expectation and actual performance.

Marcelo reports experiencing feels anxiety in virtually all teaching and learning contexts. In his work as a teacher, he states that this emotional state compromises his focus on

the lesson plan, even when he carefully prepares and rehearses each step. According to him, anxiety hinders his ability to perceive students' needs and organize his thoughts, making it more difficult to distinguish ideas and make decisions during class. On some occasions, he reports forgetting previously planned activities, overtaken by the desire for that moment to end as quickly as possible.

The participants' narratives indicate that anxiety and shyness intensify particularly in situations of prolonged exposure, such as explaining content, reading aloud, or occupying the center of attention. Antônio Carlos describes this process as a state in which he “gets tangled up,” “gets confused,” and “becomes anxious,” suggesting that the anticipation of speaking is sufficient to trigger an intense emotional response. Ju complements this perception by noting that tasks involving less-mastered content provoke anxiety and fear (section 4.3.1.1), especially when associated with shyness and linguistic insecurity.

Sandra's account strikingly exemplifies anticipatory anxiety at the beginning of her teaching practice:

As a teacher, in the first days of class, when I went to teach at the school, I did not sleep properly. I was very anxious. Entering the classroom and talking to the students was very difficult. I kept pondering for a long time. During those poorly slept nights, I kept thinking about how I would talk to them, how I would enter the classroom, how I would behave in front of them. [...] I was very afraid. Later I began to see that it was not such a big bad wolf, but I still have this fear. If someone tells me “you are going to go there and give a lecture to the students at the school,” I will not sleep properly. I will feel sick, but I will do whatever is necessary. (Sandra, ES-14jun2025)

The poorly slept nights, recurring thoughts, and intense fear reveal the difficulty of occupying the teaching role in the first encounters with students. Although she acknowledges progress over time, Sandra reports that situations of exposure continue to provoke strong physical and emotional reactions. She also clarifies that, unlike the other participants, she experiences a clinically monitored anxiety condition and undergoes psychological follow-up as a form of mental and emotional care.

Anxiety also manifests in micro-gestures of teaching practice that often go unnoticed. Marcelo illustrates this dimension by reporting his difficulty in establishing eye contact with students: “I do not know exactly where to look. And that makes me nervous at the time. [...] I also consider it very important to look at the students, but I cannot always...” (Marcelo, ES-10jun2025). The discomfort in deciding “where to look,” combined with uncertainty

about whether he is “doing it right,” suggests that anxiety associated with shyness is not limited to public speaking, but permeates subtle aspects of pedagogical interaction.

In contexts prior to teaching practice, selection processes also emerge as highly anxiety-provoking situations. Antônio Carlos recounts his experience in a teacher selection process, in which anxiety compromised his performance:

Like anyone else, I prepared my lesson and rehearsed, but being in front of the examiners is always a great challenge for me. The selection proposal was simple; the candidate should prepare a 10-minute mini-lesson on any topic whatsoever. During my presentation, I was physically trembling from being so disturbed. The worst, however, was forgetting some of the things I had prepared, rushing the explanation... in short, not being able to do what I had prepared because of my restlessness and inability to deal with that situation in which I was being judged.” (Antônio Carlos, NE-03mai2025)

This account illustrates how anxiety can manifest itself intensely in evaluative contexts, both psychologically and physically, directly interfering with the ability to conduct the lesson as planned and reinforcing feelings of professional inadequacy.

The experiences reported in this section demonstrate that anxiety does not manifest itself homogeneously or in isolation, but in a situated manner in contexts of training and teaching practice. It is also a relational experience, emerging and intensifying in situations of interaction, and often expressed physically while affecting participation in classes and performance. In many cases, anxiety arises as an anticipatory response to situations perceived as threatening to participants’ emotional well-being and sense of teaching self-efficacy. Consequently, its manifestation is closely articulated with the beliefs participants hold about their own competence (see section 4.2.3).

4.3.1.3. Shame/embarrassment

Shame, understood as a self-conscious emotion, also a recurring emotion in the experiences of shy people, appears in the accounts of this study as a direct reaction to social exposure and to the feeling of being observed, evaluated, or compared, being grounded mainly in self-judgment (Sette et al., 2019). Among the participants, Ju describes particularly intense situations in which he felt ashamed or embarrassed when using the foreign language. According to him, nervousness and shame accompany almost all contexts in which he needs to use the target language: “I still feel nervous and ashamed to use the language in almost all

contexts, if not all.” (Ju, NE-16mai2025). Although he works as a teacher, Ju reports feeling shame more acutely in the academic environment, where he perceives himself as being evaluated by professors and peers whom he considers more proficient. This emotion is aggravated by beliefs of inferiority, as he himself acknowledges: “I think I also feel a feeling of inferiority, of underestimation” (ES-10jun2025). In these contexts, shame emerges not only from exposure, but also from internal comparisons that undermine his self-esteem and intensify emotional discomfort.

In English language teaching, Ju emphasizes that shyness directly impacts his interaction with the class, especially in moments of orality. As he reports, the situations in which he needs to use the language are precisely those that cause him the most embarrassment: “the moments in which I needed to use the language were the ones that made me feel the most embarrassed” (NE-16mai2025). Shame becomes even more intense in critical moments, when the class’s attention turns to him:

I was very embarrassed at that moment, perhaps because the eyes of the class turned to me and also because she said a bunch of things and I could not understand anything. I froze: I could not process it, although I normally could, even if I did not understand everything. That was one of the times I turned the most red. It was awful. (Ju, NE-16mai2025).

Blushing, as discussed by Lewis (1993), is a bodily reaction characteristic of shame, making emotional discomfort visible to interlocutors. In the context of teaching, such physical manifestation can intensify the suffering of the shy teacher, as the emotion becomes publicly perceptible, reinforcing feelings of inadequacy and self-judgment.

Antônio Carlos also associates certain forms of interaction with embarrassment, stating that “too much interaction is something that embarrasses me a little” (ES-21jun2025). His statement indicates that, for some shy teachers, the very interactional demands of teaching, often valued as natural or desirable in language teaching, may become sources of discomfort and withdrawal. This discomfort can emerge in response to a range of classroom experiences – whether challenging or awkward (Khajavy et al.,2025) – highlighting how the dynamics of self/social evaluation and performance can make seemingly ordinary interactions emotionally demanding for these teachers.

In summary, fear, anxiety, and shame emerge as central emotions in the experience of shy teachers, permeating both classroom practice and the ways they perceive themselves as professionals. When manifested bodily and behaviorally, these emotions may compromise

pedagogical interaction and classroom management, highlighting the need to understand not only their limiting effects, but also the conditions that may favor the development of greater emotional security in teaching practice – an issue explored in the following section, devoted to positively experienced emotions

4.3.2. Positively experienced emotions

Despite the challenging emotions discussed in the previous section, the data also reveal the presence of positively experienced emotions that play a fundamental role in the participants' formative trajectories. Emotions such as passion, happiness, confidence, and gratitude emerge as forces that sustain their permanence in the profession and give meaning to their choice to teach foreign languages. These experiences do not eliminate the difficulties associated with shyness; rather, they function as emotional counterpoints that enable resistance, engagement, and continuity.

In the field of teacher education, positively experienced emotions should not be understood merely as pleasant affective states, but as fundamental resources for the construction of agency, engagement, and professional persistence, especially in trajectories marked by insecurity and vulnerability. In this sense, emotions such as passion, happiness, confidence, and gratitude function as affective forces that do not cancel out experiences of shyness or anxiety, but make possible resistance, reinterpretation of difficulties, and continuity in the profession.

4.3.2.1. Passion and happiness

Even in the face of the difficult emotions that have marked and still continue to mark the participants' formative trajectories, interest and passion for the foreign language emerge as motivating forces and mobilizing elements. They influence both the choice of the program and permanence in the profession, functioning as affective resources that sustain the teaching trajectory. When addressing passion, I distance myself from the often romanticized interpretation and instead draw on Day's (2004) understanding of passion as a source of motivation, energy and commitment. In the accounts of Lucinara, Antônio Carlos, and Ju, it can be observed that the affective bond, whether with the language or with the idea of

teaching, acts as a significant counterpoint to the emotional and pedagogical challenges experienced during training.

Ju, for example, recognizes that his shyness preceded his entry into higher education, yet states that the desire to become a teacher was decisive for his professional choice: “the desire to become a teacher was stronger and motivated me to invest in this career” (NE-16mai2025). In this sense, the project of being a teacher functions as a mobilizing element and an affective resource for persistence, sustaining his trajectory despite insecurities associated with shyness.

Lucinara reports that she did not initially intend to work as a foreign language teacher, but that this decision changed after her first contact with French. As she states: “I entered the Letters program, I planned to major in Portuguese/Literature, but I simply fell in love with the French language and decided to become a foreign language teacher” (NE-09mai2025). Passion for the language redirected her professional plans and began to guide her investment in learning and teaching.

Similarly, Antônio Carlos recounts that he initially intended to pursue a specialization in Literature, but gradually developed an affective bond with the French language: “as I continued my studies, I was increasingly drawn to the language and little by little the idea of teaching it gained ground” (NE-03mai2025). This passion not only sustained his choice throughout the program, but also translated into professional satisfaction and symbolic validation of his teaching identity, as evidenced when he states: “I am very happy to be a French teacher today” (ES-21jun2025).

In addition, Antônio Carlos highlights that the happiness associated with teaching is nourished by the perception of his own professional development. Observing that his pedagogical proposals start to work better, especially activities that previously caused insecurity, and receiving praise for his work constitute forms of symbolic recognition that reinforces identity confirmation and professional satisfaction: “sometimes I show something that is praised and I feel very happy” (ES-21jun2025). These positive experiences function as emotional forces capable of counterbalancing the shyness, anxiety, and fear of evaluation present in his trajectory (Silva; Barcelos, 2021).

4.3.2.2. Confidence and security

Although shy teachers face specific challenges in their initial education, entering the language teaching profession constitutes a vulnerable process for all teachers in training. Studies indicate that insecurity and lack of confidence are recurrent in this period, regardless of personality profile (Silva, 2019), an aspect that is reflected in the participants' accounts.

Even so, some participants indicate that they are in a gradual process of building greater confidence in their professional practice and in their linguistic abilities, an expected movement in the trajectory of beginning teacher education (Marcelo, 2009). Marcelo, for example, states that he has gradually adapted to classroom dynamics, which softens the impact of negatively experienced emotions. Antônio Carlos reports a similar process when stating: “from the second semester onward things improved. I already felt more confident, that first experience had taught me many things” (Marcelo, NE-03mai2025). In these accounts, confidence emerges as a result of accumulated experience and the continuous engagement with pedagogical challenges, constituting a process of gradual construction of teaching agency.

Beyond experience, other factors contribute to strengthening confidence. Antônio Carlos highlights the closeness built with students as an important source of this emotion. By sharing simple aspects of his everyday life, he perceived the development of a relationship of affection and mutual identification, which reduced his shame and favored a security situated in the pedagogical relationship, expanding his confidence in the classroom: “with that I have no shame, with these students” (Antônio Carlos, ES-21jun2025). This experience reinforces the idea that positive bonds can lessen shyness and foster greater security in teaching practice (Scott, 2007).

Institutional support also proves to be central. Antônio Carlos emphasizes that close contact with professors in the French minor created an environment of welcome and validation, fostering his confidence. By stating that “support, encouragement and approval help a lot” (Antônio Carlos, ES-21jun2025), he demonstrates that confidence is not constructed solely at the individual level, but is constituted relationally and institutionally, through bonds of support, encouragement, and validation.

Other participants associate confidence with content mastery and teaching context. Ju reports feeling more secure when he has strong command of the content and when working

with students with lower proficiency, as he perceives that his knowledge as useful and effective. Sandra, in turn, states that she would feel more confident teaching English than Portuguese, due to her longer trajectory of foreign language learning.

Overall the accounts suggest that teacher education unfolds within a network of emotions that simultaneously generate difficulties and provide support. The relationships built with students and professors, the recognition received, and the growing mastery of the language reinforce confidence and a sense of security. Within this framework, gratitude also emerges as a significant emotion, associated with the welcome and support received throughout training.

4.3.2.3. Gratitude

Gratitude, another emotion present in the participants' narratives, is described in the literature as a morally grounded emotion that contributes to teachers' well-being and is associated with positive outcomes, such as the reduction of burnout symptoms (Chan, 2010; Wilang, 2022). Although participants recognize that shyness may place them in uncomfortable classroom situations, all report positive experiences related to the understanding shown by students.

When asked about the advantages of being a shy teacher, Antônio Carlos states: "I do not know about the content, but being a teacher as a shy person is gratifying because of the students' affection and understanding" (Antônio Carlos, QS-03abr2025). This recognition suggests that the relationship established with students may function as an important emotional buffer, capable of counterbalancing emotionally draining experiences (Wilang, 2022).

Returning to Antônio Carlos's initial experience with teaching discussed earlier (subsection 4.2.3), his trajectory appears initially marked by fear of not meeting teaching expectations. In his written narrative, he reinforces the central role played by students in his professional development:

Fortunately, the students were very understanding toward me and, at the end of the semester, everyone seemed quite satisfied with the semester. From the second semester onward things improved. I already felt more confident; that first experience had taught me many things (Antônio Carlos, NE-03mai2025).

The use of the adverb “fortunately” expresses both relief and gratitude for the welcome received, which shows growing confidence. Students’ positive feedback emerges as a form of symbolic recognition, reducing initial insecurity and fostering greater confidence in his teaching practice, particularly as experience accumulates over time.

Other participants similarly report that students’ support, manifested through smiles, words of encouragement, or demonstrations of understanding, contributed to them feeling more comfortable (see section 4.1.2). In some cases, students who also identified as shy demonstrated empathy toward teachers, reinforcing affective bonds and evoking gratitude. These accounts suggest that gratitude operates as a relational emotion, constructed through pedagogical interaction and mutual recognition between teachers and students. At the same time, it signals a perception of affective reciprocity that softens, or even repositions, the concerns previously expressed about difficulties in establishing meaningful interactions and with the class (section 4.1.2.5).

The positively experienced emotions discussed in this section do not eliminate experiences of fear, anxiety, and shame, but coexist with them, forming a complex and at times ambivalent emotional landscape. It is precisely within this coexistence, between fragility and strengthening, that the notion of emotional vulnerability in teacher education emerges, the topic of the next section.

4.4. Emotional vulnerability

Emotional vulnerability (EV) refers to the experience of feeling exposed, insecure, or susceptible to judgment in different contexts, constituting a particularly relevant dimension in the language teacher education (Kelchtermans, 2012; Lasky, 2005; Song, 2016). This emotional experience may emerge in situations of novelty, evaluation, the possibility of error, or oral exposure, directly influencing the confidence and performance of both pre-service teachers and students.

The participants’ accounts indicate that EV is predominantly understood as exposure to emotions perceived as negative, especially in contexts marked by evaluation, unpredictability, and the risk of failure, elements recurrent in teaching practice. For Marcelo, vulnerability manifests when an uncomfortable emotion surfaces during class, generating a

sense of exposure. According to him, it arises particularly when something escapes his control and places him face to face with feelings he would prefer to conceal.

Ju shares a similar perception when defining vulnerability as “being exposed to those bad feelings that bring me down” (Ju, ES-10jun2025). His understanding emphasizes the relationship between EV and threats to self-esteem, particularly in situations in which he feels insufficient in relation to pedagogical demands. Lucinara broadens this notion by situating vulnerability in the very act of teaching. For her, even while occupying a position of authority in the classroom, the teacher is the most exposed figure, since any mistake, whether related to content, methodology, or posture, may trigger criticism that “can sometimes be very malicious” (Lucinara, ES-18jun2025). Her statement suggests that vulnerability is intrinsically linked to the possibility of failing publicly and facing judgments that are not always constructive.

Finally, Marcelo highlights how emotional vulnerability directly influences teaching practice, especially in situations of misalignment between expectations and reality: “I think it influences when this clash of expectations comes, of thinking that I am well prepared and that things will flow well, and arriving here and the circumstances are completely different” (Marcelo, ES-10jun2025). This account reinforces that EV is not confined to the internal processes, but is constructed in relationally and situationally, shaped by contextual factors that often escape the teacher’s control (Lasky, 2005).

Overall, the records suggest that participants perceive EV as an inherent dimension of teaching and teacher education (Kelchtermans, 2012). In this section, I have presented the main elements that constitute their experiences of emotional vulnerability as shy pre-service foreign language teachers, including estrangement in the face of unfamiliar teaching environments, a sense of exposure, and feelings of professional inadequacy. In the following subsections, I discuss two facets of vulnerability, open and protective, analyzing how they manifest in participants’ experiences and how teaching experience may contribute to easing the discomfort associated with them.

4.4.1. Being in new environments

Some of the moments in which shyness and emotional vulnerability manifest themselves most intensely are those in which individuals are required to expose themselves in unfamiliar contexts, as Bullough (2011) points out. Being in a new environment tends to evoke fragility, insecurity and, in some cases, fear, both in the position of student and that of language teacher. Below, I present how these experiences permeate the training trajectories of the student-teachers participating in this research.

In the position of student, Marcelo, who is enrolled in the Spanish track, recalls his experience attending a course in English at his university:

As a student in English I, I was in a class where I did not know anyone and from which I left without having made any friends. There, the teacher often asked us to interact and comment on our lives so that we could practice oral use of the language, and, as the environment was different from that of Spanish classes, where I made friends over time, I almost never felt as comfortable when I did so. (Marcelo, NE-03mai2025)

Marcelo, who describes himself as a very shy person, reports that the absence of bonds with classmates intensified his inhibition to participate in oral activities. It is also noteworthy that pedagogical proposals centered on sharing personal experiences or opinions may function as an additional blocking factor, particularly for more reserved individuals. Exposing aspects of one's own life in an environment where a sense of safety or belonging has not been established can be particularly challenging. As Carducci (2002) observes, shy individuals tend to require more time to expand their comfort zone and, until this occurs, may demonstrate greater resistance to exposure. In this sense, the presence of friends or trusted peers can encourage participation, making it feel lighter and more natural.

Beyond his experience as a student, Marcelo reports that this discomfort does not entirely disappear when acting as a volunteer teacher in the Spanish extension course, even though he is already somewhat familiar with the class: "Nor did I feel at ease interacting in the position of volunteer teacher in the [extension project], although I already knew the class a little better" (NE-03mai2025). In this case, vulnerability does not appear to stem solely from unfamiliarity with students, but also from the symbolic weight attributed to the teaching role – a central position in the teaching-learning process and one often associated with high expectations of performance.

Similarly, Sandra describes in detail her first day of teaching during her practicum: “As a teacher I felt very shy, especially on my first day of teaching, in May 2024; I could not feel at ease either in the classroom or in the teachers’ room, because I felt lost and out of place” (NE-04mai2025). Her account illustrates that vulnerability is not limited to interaction with students, but also extends to relationships with fellow teachers. The beginning of teaching thus takes shape as a period of estrangement and adaptation, in which the teacher in training may still associate the school space with prior experiences as a student. In this process, recognizing experienced teachers as professional colleagues can be particularly challenging, since teaching identity is still under construction (Huberman, 1992).

4.4.2. Feeling of exposure and being judged

While student-teachers and teachers of languages in training, the participants report situations in which they feel exposed and judged in teaching and learning environments, which favors the manifestation of emotional vulnerability. Below, I present the perceptions and analyses related to this theme.

4.4.2.1. In the experiences of shy students

Shyness tends to intensify the subject’s self-consciousness, leading them to recurrently question how they are perceived by others in different situations. In addition, shy people are usually highly self-critical regarding their own insecurities, which can reinforce the belief that such fragilities are constantly noticed and judged by others (Zheng et al., 2024). This dynamic is clearly manifested in the narratives of the participants in this research.

Ju, for example, describes how class size directly impacted his emotional experience. In the early years of the program, it was common for some courses to bring together around sixty students, a circumstance that left him deeply inhibited: “I still feel nervous and embarrassed to use the language in almost all contexts, if not all” (Ju, ES-10jun2025). According to the participant, in the face of a large number of classmates, many of whom he perceived as more competent, the feeling of being watched and evaluated intensified. The mere anticipation of multiple attentive gazes directed at every word, gesture or possible mistake thus became a significant source of emotional discomfort. This experience dialogues with Verztman’s (2014) reflection on the suffering of the shy subject in the face of the

imagined perception of the other's gaze on their performance, a perception that can take on a paralyzing character.

The expansion of awareness of the other's gaze is also evident in accounts such as that of Antônio Carlos, who began his undergraduate studies shortly after the period of social isolation resulting from the pandemic. The participant reports: "I already started my undergraduate program in 2022, right after that experience of isolation, and then sometimes I had to leave class, because I could not stay there. Many people... we become much more conscious of the other's gaze, don't we?" (Antônio Carlos, ES-21jun2025). His testimony suggests that the return to in-person social interaction, after a prolonged period of withdrawal, intensified self-consciousness and discomfort in contexts with large numbers of people. For him, smaller classes, such as those in French in his program, constitute emotionally less threatening environments: "when it is French, there are four, five people [...] that has less impact. In large classes, with people I do not know, it is different" (Antônio Carlos, ES-21jun2025).

Marcelo also reports experiences in which shyness was directly associated with explicit judgments, affecting his professional self-perception. He describes a striking episode from his first teaching experience, in which an evaluative practice resulted in highly negative feedback: "the feedback he [the teacher] gave me was very negative, like, basically destroying me for having been shy in class" (Marcelo, ES-10jun2025). Although he recognizes it as an isolated case, "several teachers are positive about that" (Marcelo, ES-10jun2025), the emotional impact of the episode highlights the weight that negative evaluations can assume in the education of shy teachers. Situations of explicit judgment tend to intensify emotions of insecurity and fears of others' evaluation, opening space for EV, especially when interpersonal relations are structured around evaluative practices that lack sensitivity (Bullough, 2011).

4.4.2.2. In the experiences of shy teachers

Ju had already introduced in subsection 4.4.2.1 the vulnerability associated with the feeling of being under the constant gaze of classmates. In a similar way, although in different contexts, Marcelo shows that he remains highly self-conscious of this gaze in the position of teacher:

Applying my first activity, I looked into the students' eyes and felt that they were not understanding my explanations; I did not know where to look while speaking and wanted to finish that activity as quickly as possible, to the point of forgetting to present 1/3 of it, telling everyone that we had finished it and then reappearing apologizing for having forgotten to show them that part. (Marcelo, NE-03mai2025)

Similarly, Sandra comments on noticing the students' gaze directed at her, which, according to her, "causes a bit of panic [...] that little tightness in the stomach" (Sandra, ES-14jun2025), by arousing the fear of making mistakes in front of everyone. This perception of the other's gaze as potentially evaluative also manifests itself in Ju's experience. The participant reports that, when carrying out a reading in class, he pronounced parts of the text hesitantly, which, according to his interpretation, did not go unnoticed by the students, as inferred from their expressions and looks. For him, this episode became a cause for concern, because it "could give them room to question my abilities, my authority" (Ju, ES-10jun2025).

Although the student's gaze can function, in many contexts, as a pedagogical resource for the teacher to assess the class's understanding, in Marcelo's and Sandra's accounts it emerges as a trigger of EV. Marcelo, for example, interprets certain looks as indications that the students were not understanding his explanations, an interpretation possibly shaped by his insecurity or by the belief that he is not capable of expressing himself clearly. In these situations, vulnerability is experienced as threatening, leading the teacher, at times, to adopt avoidance strategies, such as rushing activities or reducing moments of exposure.

Antônio Carlos describes a situation in which the perception of being judged by students becomes particularly explicit: "Once I proposed an activity that did not work very well, they [the students] were kind of frozen, they did not want to get up" (Antônio Carlos, ES-21jun2025). The students' unexpected reaction generated in him the feeling that his ideas were being negatively evaluated, intensifying emotional vulnerability. As a consequence, the participant reports a preference for activities considered "basic," which, according to him, tend to work better. Such a choice can be understood both as a mechanism of emotional self-protection and as a potentially limiting factor for pedagogical creativity.

Despite this, Antônio Carlos observes that, from the students' point of view, expectations regarding teaching methodologies seem to be less rigid, as long as language learning occurs. In contrast, the greater weight of judgment falls, according to him, on the institution, represented by the coordination of the extension project, responsible for evaluating and monitoring his work. When reporting the need to expose his pedagogical proposals in collective meetings, the participant expresses the impact of this process:

It is mainly this idea that there is an expectation and I am not able to meet it. Showing the activities to others, having these meetings in which you present what you did... all of that has a big impact. Sometimes, I feel that others do things so much better, prepare activities closer to what is expected, and I feel embarrassed to show mine. (Antônio Carlos, ES-21jun2025)

His statement highlights the intensity of the processes of comparison with colleagues and how they fuel feelings of inadequacy, especially in contexts that value creativity, communicativeness and confidence – attributes often associated with a normative ideal of the teacher. A similar dynamic appears in Ju's account, who states that he feels less intimidated when teaching elementary school students, but felt "paralyzed" when answering in English to a more experienced fellow teacher, perceived by him as someone who "knows a lot about the language" (Ju, ES-10jun2025), and who, therefore, would have parameters to judge him in case of error.

Beyond the actors directly involved in everyday school life, such as students and colleagues, the participants also mention the influence of external agents, such as parents and guardians. Lucinara observes that these figures can become particularly intimidating for shy teachers, when reporting aggressive criticism and demands:

I think everyone is subject to bad days, everyone is affected when they hear negative words directed at them. This can increase the teacher's emotional vulnerability. I have seen cases of parents complaining about teachers, arguing with them, involving the administration or supervision, making excessive demands... all of that can trigger emotional vulnerability. (Lucinara, ES-18jun2025)

These accounts indicate that the growing presence of families in monitoring the educational process can broaden the field of the teacher's emotional exposure, especially when demands take on disproportionate, delegitimizing forms or approach moral harassment. Such external pressures intensify teachers' EV, who come to deal not only with institutional and student expectations, but also with judgments coming from external instances (Bullough, 2011).

Returning to subsection 4.3.1.2, the vulnerability associated with the feeling of being evaluated was already present in Antônio Carlos's experience during the selection process for admission to the extension course. Continuing this narrative, he reports: "The worst was forgetting some of the things I had prepared, rushing the explanation, in short, not being able to do what I had planned because of my restlessness and the inability to deal with that situation in which I was being judged" (Antônio Carlos, NE-03mai2025). This episode

reinforces how contexts of explicit evaluation tend to intensify EV, especially for shy teachers in training.

The episodes presented show that the EV associated with the evaluative gaze consistently cuts across the participants' practice, influencing their interpretations of performance, pedagogical choices and ability to deal with unforeseen events. These elements, reiterated in different contexts, not only intensify insecurities, but also reinforce negative self-perceptions as teachers. Next, I explore how this set of experiences contributes to the construction of a broader and more persistent feeling of inadequacy among shy teachers in training.

4.4.3. Feeling inadequate as a shy teacher

Feeling inadequate as a foreign language teacher is not a strictly individual experience, but rather results from the circulation of beliefs, discourses, and normative expectations about teaching performance, especially with regard to communicativeness and emotional confidence (Barcelos, 2015). Based on the beliefs identified in the participants' accounts (section 4.2), it can be observed that these beliefs articulate with and reinforce one another in the construction of an idealized teaching profile, which comes to function as a parameter of comparison for teachers in training.

This perception is evidenced in Sandra's statement, who says: "I feel that maybe I will not be able to do well professionally. If I cannot deal with shyness, I will not be able to move forward in my career" (Sandra, ES-14jun2025). The participant seems to assume, albeit implicitly, the belief that there would be no place for her in the teaching profession, conditioning her permanence in the career on overcoming shyness, and not on the possibility of shy individuals adapting to educational contexts.

As discussed in section 4.2.1.2, Sandra understands that shyness represents an obstacle to her entry into the job market, especially in selection processes, stating that "when you do a job interview, you have to not show so much that you are shy" (Sandra, ES-14jun2025). From this perspective, shyness ceases to be understood solely as an emotional characteristic and comes to operate as an implicit criterion of professional exclusion in a competitive job market.

Experiences of conflict and insecurity also manifest themselves in Antônio Carlos's account regarding the environment of the extension course in which he works (subsection 4.1.2.3). This experience cuts across his beliefs and emotions about what it means to be a "good teacher" in his teaching context, producing a feeling of non-belonging. The participant expresses this belief by stating: "it is a group in which you feel that you do not fit in, that you do not do well what is expected there" (Antônio Carlos, ES-21jun2025). It is important to note that such emotion does not stem from a lack of welcoming on the part of the group, as the participant himself clarifies, but from his belief that he is not capable of meeting the expectations associated with the ideal of a communicative and spontaneous teacher.

This feeling of inadequacy is intensified by the socially constructed ideal of the foreign language teacher (subsection 4.2.1.2), which, according to the participants, is distant from a shy personality. Antônio Carlos describes this ideal as composed of "almost mythological virtues," marked by a level of confidence and performance perceived as nearly unattainable. The distance between this "ideal teacher" and the "teacher self" can generate significant emotional stain, especially for shy teachers in training.

Errors, failures and unforeseen events in the classroom also appear as central elements in the construction of the feeling of inadequacy. Some participants attribute considerable emotional weight to these episodes, which contributes to their not perceiving themselves as fully fit for teaching. Associated with a high degree of self-criticism, shyness tends to intensify the emotional impact of errors, producing discomfort, and expanding emotional vulnerability (Verztman, 2014).

Ju reports, for example, an episode that occurred during his work as a teacher: "I remember one time I was with a 3rd grade class, I had to read a question and made many pronunciation mistakes, which made me uncomfortable and shy" (Ju, NE-16mai2025). Although the desire to act confidently and avoid errors is common to professionals in different areas, in the case of foreign language teachers, failures in orality may compromise the sense of professional competence, since language constitutes their main instrument of work.

Orality thus proves to be a sensitive domain for the participants, because it is the space in which their linguistic competencies become more visible and subject to evaluation. In addition to functioning as an indicator of proficiency, orality contributes to the construction of

professional credibility before students, colleagues, and other actors in the school context (Etzold; Krüger, 2021).

When comparing his experiences as a student and as a teacher, Ju observes that he feels more anxious in the position of student. According to him, “as a student, I am surrounded by people who master English a lot, and that causes me inhibition (I think because I think I am inferior to them in the oral dimension of the language)” (Ju, NE-16mai2025). In contrast, as a teacher, he reports feeling relatively more comfortable, because he believes that elementary school students do not master English to the point of identifying his mistakes. Even so, the participant recognizes that his insecurity regarding the foreign language exposes him to recurring situations of EV.

In his interview, Ju states that he does not intend to continue as an English teacher, because he does not feel as comfortable teaching that language as Portuguese, especially due to his low confidence in orality: “I chose the English track because of opportunities in the job market, but I do not have genuine interest in working with FL” (Ju, NE-16mai2025). Although this decision is not explained exclusively by shyness, but by a set of factors – among them the devaluation of the teaching profession in Brazil –, the account dialogues with Lasky’s (2005) discussion, according to which protective emotional vulnerability tends to be more intense at the beginning of the career, influencing both professional choices and retention in teaching.

4.4.4. The dual nature of emotional vulnerability: protective and open dimensions

Throughout this analysis, it has become evident that the participants share the belief that shyness can act as a limiting factor in certain dimensions of language teaching. These beliefs, beyond the limitations themselves, constitute sources of uncomfortable emotions, such as fear and anxiety (Barcelos, 2015; Aragão, 2011), as well as experiences of emotional vulnerability that accompany them. As discussed by Lasky (2005) and Song (2016), EV has two facets: open and protective. The former refers to the willingness to take risks and experience situations of vulnerability in favor of pedagogical engagement in language teaching, while the latter implies a stance of resistance and avoidance of this condition.

Considering this distinction, most of the participants adopted positions that approximate the concept of open vulnerability. This finding proved unexpected, since it was initially assumed that vulnerability of a protective nature would be more recurrent among individuals who identify as shy. However, with the exception of Ju, who demonstrated a predominantly protective stance toward his emotional vulnerabilities, the other participants reported experiences and beliefs that indicate a willingness to take emotional risks for the sake of pedagogical engagement and the formative process itself.

Although protective vulnerability can be understood as a limiting factor, it is important to recognize it as a legitimate response to uncomfortable emotions. The experiences shared by Ju evidence this stance in his work as an English teacher. For him, the negative effects of shyness “can prevent me, even when I have the opportunity, from taking advantage of it. So, between a Portuguese and an English position, I would always choose the Portuguese one” (Ju, ES-10jun2025). This choice is strongly associated with difficulties with orality, intensified by shyness, which make him feel insecure and with low self-esteem. Ju also shows difficulty in recognizing potential positive aspects in shyness, conceiving it as a flaw: “I can be flawed in the sense that I blush a lot, I get very red... so they will notice. That is why I try to run away from what is making me like that” (Ju, ES-10jun2025). In this way, the participant adopts avoidance strategies, such as controlling his breathing or modifying activities, seeking to hide the signs of emotional vulnerability.

A relevant aspect of Ju’s account is his decision not to continue in the teaching profession. This choice is related, initially, to the precarious conditions experienced in his early experience as a teacher, but also to the constant exposure to situations of social evaluation. In this context, shyness and EV seem to play a significant role in his decision not to work as an English teacher: “I cannot welcome these feelings and try to reframe them” (Ju, ES-10jun2025). As pointed out by Lasky (2005) and Song (2016), when vulnerability is experienced predominantly in a protective way in language teaching and learning, it can contribute to processes of dropout in teacher education and, in some cases, to leaving the profession.

In contrast, open emotional vulnerability implies the willingness to open oneself to the pedagogical experience, even in the face of initial discomfort (Lasky, 2005; Song, 2016). In opposition to discourses that position shyness as inadequacy, the participants demonstrate movements of openness to vulnerability, in which this trait is negotiated and reframed.

Marcelo, for example, states that demonstrating vulnerability is fundamental for the humanization of the teacher figure: “shyness is a vulnerability that is part of me and that I think it is important for the teacher to show themselves more human in front of the students” (Marcelo, ES-10jun2025). In this excerpt, the participant recognizes shyness as an identity trait inseparable from his teaching practice, arguing that it should be welcomed rather than hidden.

Marcelo also reflects on the positive effects of this stance, reporting that he feels more warmly received by classes when he is transparent about his difficulties. Although his classroom experiences are still limited, he states that “the best ones were the ones in which I managed to open myself up more and even feel comfortable being shy sometimes” (Marcelo, ES-10jun2025). Even when critically evaluating a recent lesson, “it was a complete disaster, but I taught it until the end” (Marcelo, ES-10jun2025), the participant recognizes the importance of having faced the discomfort and sustained his teaching practice.

Sandra also presents a more open perspective regarding EV. Although she acknowledges her fear of speaking in public in the school context, she states that she would not refuse academic or professional opportunities, even anticipating difficulties: “I will stutter a lot, I will get very nervous, but something will come out” (Sandra, ES-14jun2025). For the participant, leaving the comfort zone and facing one’s own fears is fundamental for academic and professional development. Based on Marcelo’s and Sandra’s accounts, emotional vulnerability is configured as an intrinsic component of the formative process of shy teachers, which persists throughout the teaching trajectory (Kelchtermans, 2012).

Lucinara, in turn – the only participant who had not yet worked as the lead teacher of a foreign language class – already shows that she has taken risks by opening herself to her own vulnerabilities as an undergraduate student of French. According to her, avoiding exposure would have made her learning unviable. When reflecting on shyness as a source of EV, the participant proposes a reframing of this trait: “I think the person should not get upset about shyness, nor repress it, but try to work with it. Not see it as a villain, but perhaps as an ally” (Lucinara, ES-18jun2025). This positioning evidences a movement of emotional maturity and reflexivity in the management of her emotions throughout teacher education.

4.4.5. Vulnerability attenuated over time and through experience

In section 4.1, strategies that the participants used, and still use, to face the challenges associated with shyness were presented, such as lesson preparation and prior rehearsals. Many of these strategies were developed as ways to mitigate the effects of shyness and to promote greater emotional comfort in teaching practice. Even so, the situations of vulnerability discussed throughout this chapter indicate that this condition is rarely completely overcome over time, since, as Kelchtermans (2012) states, vulnerability is inherent to the teaching profession.

Among the participants, those with longer teaching experience are those linked to the university's extension courses, Marcelo and Antônio Carlos, both with at least two semesters of experience. These participants report that teaching has gradually become more comfortable as they accumulate classroom experiences. Marcelo, for example, reports that, throughout his trajectory, he has sought to familiarize himself with situations of exposure, resorting to strategies such as careful lesson planning, the preparation of his own materials, and prior rehearsals. Such strategies help him maintain greater control over his emotions and over the fear of the unknown or of "blacking out" during lessons. Despite these strategies, the participant acknowledges that he continues to feel vulnerable in the face of unforeseen events that escape his control (Marcelo, NE-03mai2025).

Despite this, accumulated experience and prior preparation act as factors that attenuate the intensity of EV, making the exercise of teaching gradually more comfortable. Marcelo's accounts indicate that, although he still shows some resistance in certain aspects, he recognizes his vulnerability and demonstrates greater openness to dealing with it, which favors his professional and personal growth (Lasky, 2005). Antônio Carlos reports a similar movement, by stating that he has been feeling progressively more confident in presenting his ideas in the context of the extension course, gradually adapting to communicative methods that previously caused him intense anxiety.

Even within a relatively short period of teaching, it is already possible to identify significant differences between these participants' initial experiences and their current practices, evidencing the role of professional maturation in the construction of self-confidence and in strengthening teacher well-being. Emotional vulnerability remains a constant aspect of teaching, but teachers in training learn to live with it and to mitigate its effects through

experience, reflection and the development of coping strategies. In this way, professional maturation, combined with pedagogical preparation, contributes to reducing the intensity of vulnerability, promoting greater confidence, and emotional well-being.

In this chapter, I analyzed the beliefs and emotions associated with shyness in the education of foreign language teachers, showing how these dimensions articulate in the construction of teaching identity. The data reveal that shyness, far from constituting merely an individual trait, is shaped by discourses, expectations and social norms that influence the participants' emotional experiences. Throughout the analysis, it was observed that emotions considered negative, such as fear, anxiety, and shame, coexist with positive emotions, such as passion, confidence, and gratitude, composing a complex and ambivalent emotional landscape. In this context, EV emerges as a constitutive dimension of teaching, manifesting itself in open and protective forms, and being gradually attenuated – although not eliminated – by experience and professional maturation. Understanding these dynamics proves fundamental for rethinking teacher education, in ways that recognize shyness and vulnerability not as flaws to be overcome, but as legitimate human dimensions that can contribute to more reflective, sensitive and sustainable professional trajectories.

CHAPTER V

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

“But in the long run, staying true to your temperament is the key to finding work you love and work that matters.”

(Cain, 2012)

5. Final considerations

This chapter presents the final considerations of the study and is organized into four main parts. In the first section, I address the research questions initially proposed. Next, I discuss the implications of this study for the field of Applied Linguistics and outline its limitations. The chapter concludes with proposals and possible directions for further research and, finally, my closing remarks.

5.1. Revisiting the research questions

This study aimed to investigate the beliefs, emotions, and manifestations of emotional vulnerability in the experiences of shy pre-service teachers. In order to address the research questions, I briefly revisit the results presented in Chapter IV.

5.1.1. What are the beliefs and emotions of pre-service teachers regarding shyness?

The participants express multiple beliefs about shyness, shaped by their own experiences and by observing the people with whom they interact daily. These beliefs interrelate emotional, identity-related, and contextual dimensions in complex ways. Overall, shyness is associated with disproportionate internal pressure, marked by heightened levels of self-awareness and vigilance over one's actions and perceived limitations, which may compromise how individuals perceive themselves in social situations. Such beliefs resonate with the ideas of Verztman (2014) and Carducci and Conkright (2020), who discuss, respectively, the sense of hypervisibility, characterized by a constant perception of being observed, and heightened sensitivity to how one is perceived by others.

This excessive self-awareness is directly reflected in individuals' relationship with their environment. According to the participants, shy individuals experience difficulties in dealing with the gaze of their peers, as the recurring sense of being watched or judged turns social contexts into spaces perceived as threatening (Klein; Câmara; Herzog, 2014). These experiences are identified as triggers of anxiety, an emotion considered central to the experience of shyness, especially in situations of exposure (Henderson; Gilbert; Zimbardo, 2014).

The participants also stress the impact of this dynamic on their social and communicative performance. For them, shyness undermines social interaction and creates barriers to oral expression, affecting speech fluency, especially in contexts of public exposure (Zimbardo, 1982). One of the most significant findings concerns the understanding of shyness as a mismatch between teachers' linguistic and pedagogical knowledge and their ability to mobilize such knowledge effectively in interactional situations.

Beyond the individual sphere, the participants mobilize socially shared beliefs about shyness, related to the way it is perceived in society and within their social circles. In this context, the view of shyness as a negative trait prevails. Nevertheless, some participants recognize the ongoing changes in this scenario, suggesting that this negative evaluation is no longer widely accepted as it was some in previous decades (Cain, 2012).

5.1.2. What are the beliefs and emotions of shy pre-service teachers about language teaching?

With regard to beliefs about language teaching, four central issues emerge in the participants' narratives. The first one concerns the beliefs about the use of the target language in the classroom, an aspect considered essential in foreign language teaching, most notably because it is often established as a recurring requirement in language schools. Such beliefs directly affect the confidence and self-esteem of the teacher participants, since many still feel insecure about their language proficiency. This lack of confidence revisits the discussion proposed by Barcelos (2015), according to which beliefs and emotions are constituted in an interdependent manner, exerting mutual and complex influences on one another. It also relates to beliefs about a presumed communicative barrier associated with shyness, as well as to the

challenges experienced by the participants throughout their formative trajectories in language teaching.

In projecting the image of a competent foreign language teacher, the participants draw on beliefs related to oral expressiveness, understood as the ability to mobilize linguistic knowledge clearly and effectively in content explanations. In addition, they believe that a teacher should be didactic, flexible regarding the methodologies employed, and capable of proposing activities with a playful dimension.

Beliefs related to affective and relational dimensions of teaching have appeared as common. The participants value establishing proximity with their students, mutual respect and visual contact during classes as essential elements for creating a more welcoming and meaningful teaching and learning environment. Within this context, emotions perceived as pleasant, like gratitude and confidence, emerge. However, Lucinara expresses concern about not being able to develop connections with her students, describing feelings of regret for not having taken opportunities to engage more closely with them.

Finally, based on the beliefs already presented regarding the qualities of language teachers and the relational aspects of teaching, the participants tend to attribute advantages to non-shy teachers in these domains. This understanding affects the self-image they construct as language teachers, generating the belief that shyness constitutes a limiting factor for their professional performance and development, as well as feelings of inferiority arising from comparisons with their peers in both the course and the profession.

5.1.3. How does teachers' shyness contribute to or shape their emotional vulnerability?

Based on the previous analysis, vulnerability arises as a subjectively mediated phenomenon, in alignment with Song's work (2016, 2022), which conceptualizes it as situated within institutional and structural contexts. In this sense, a significant portion of the pressure reported is internalized by the teachers themselves, in articulation with beliefs, emotions, and socially constructed norms developed throughout their experiences as shy individuals.

Drawing on the concept of emotion labor discussed by Zembylas (2005), I observed that some teachers seek to mask the effects of shyness through the self-regulation of emotions such as fear and anxiety (Meland; Brion-Meisels, 2024), with the aim of not appearing vulnerable in front of their students. On the other hand, the same participants reported experiences of well-being when adopting a more transparent stance, acknowledging and sharing their vulnerabilities in the classroom.

Among the experiences of EV described by the participants, the sense of exposure and being judged, as both teachers and students, as well as the sense of inadequacy as shy language teachers are noteworthy. The first refers to the exposure to new environments and people, besides feeling like they are being judged by their peers. As shy students, the reports indicate that classrooms with a high number of students may negatively impact on their emotional well-being and participation. As teachers, aspects such as the students' gaze directed at them, proposing new and dynamic activities, going through selective processes, and even interacting with colleagues in the profession while using a foreign language can trigger EV.

Finally, except for Ju's case, whose trajectory aligns more closely with what is described in the literature as protective vulnerability, most of the participants were identified with what was termed open vulnerability, by showing willingness to embrace difficult emotions without being immobilized by them (Lasky, 2005; Song, 2016). This movement contributes to preventing them from remaining in comfort zones that could limit their development as language teachers (Carducci, 2002). This stance can be interpreted as reflecting the presence of attitudes of management, coping and persistence amid challenges imposed by shyness, as evidenced in the trajectories of Lucinara, Antônio Carlos, and Marcelo. Similarly, Ju and Sandra, although expressing at certain moments the desire to pursue other paths, also demonstrate engagement with their teaching practice by showing concern for their performance and by seeking to address personal difficulties while working in the profession.

5.1.4. What challenges do shy pre-service teachers face? How do they attempt to overcome these challenges?

Over the course of data collection, the participants reported frequent challenges in their initial teacher education in foreign languages. Such challenges emerge from the articulation between emotions, beliefs, and contextual demands inherent to initial teacher education and teaching practice, especially in situations involving exposure, assessment, and target language use. In line with the literature on shyness (Zimbardo, 1982), the participants describe experiences marked by high levels of tension, difficulties in clear expression and restricted social interactions – features that, in the context of this study, are situated within the teaching and learning environments in which they operate.

In undergraduate teacher education, these participants report feeling insecure or anxious about taking part in classes, which include delivering assessed presentations and interacting with their colleagues, due to the pressure of being evaluated and judged by their peers, combined with a lack of confidence in using the target language. These experiences indicate that the lack of confidence and anxiety reported are not merely as internal states, but are directly related to assessment practices, public exposure, and target language use in specific institutional contexts.

In the teaching context, one of the primary challenges concerns language teachers' oral performance. At certain moments, shy teachers' communication may become less fluent, with episodes of cognitive blocking and difficulty articulating ideas as intended (Zimbardo; Pilkonis; Norwood, 1975). In language teaching, this may compromise the clarity of content explanations – not due to a lack of mastery, but rather because of the operation of the emotional filter, which plays a central role in this process. Anxiety, combined with fear of public speaking, intensifies such difficulties. In this sense, oral performance emerges as a situated challenge, produced at the intersection of the communicative demands of language teaching, normative expectations regarding fluency and expressiveness, and the emotions experienced by shy teachers. This dynamic also appears in Antônio Carlos's account, in which he shares difficulties in implementing communicative methodologies, as he considers them to conflict with his personality and more reserved demeanor.

Among other challenges, emphasis is placed on the negotiation between the beliefs about teacher authority and the social expectations associated with teachers' demeanor in the

language classroom, generating insecurity regarding the credibility perceived by the students, as noted by Lucinara. Hence the participants report difficulties in asserting themselves at crucial moments of pedagogical practice, in adopting a stance perceived as relaxed and confident, and even in maintaining a consistent tone of voice (Gimenez et al., 2019). This ambiguity in relation to how to act in the social environment of the classroom translates into obstacles in teacher-student relationship for some participants. Although they describe themselves as open, welcoming, and good-humored people, the participants report that shyness seems to create a mental block in this aspect, associated with the apprehension of saying something that may not be well received, especially by the students. Therefore, some participants express the belief that they are not capable of carrying out the same level of energy and enthusiasm as their students during interactions, despite later reporting experiences of significant and positive interactions with the students.

Among the strategies developed to cope with these challenges, the participants mention planning and preparatory practices prior to classes, including the use of tools such as AI to structure content, as a way of enhancing their confidence and reducing the occurrence of cognitive blocks during explanations. Divergent positions regarding the use of interactive activities also emerged: while Sandra perceives them as a form of support that facilitates mediation in class, Antônio Carlos prefers the sense of security provided by more expository and structured lessons. Moreover, Ju reports using breathing techniques as a strategy to manage the effects of anxiety. Each of these practices constitutes a form of emotional regulation that, according to Gross (2014), can assume a preventive function when mobilized prior to stressful situations, such as planning and rehearsing, or a responsive function when activated during episodes of anxiety, as in the case of breathing techniques used in moments of heightened tension.

5.2. Implications of the study for the field of Applied Linguistics

The relevance of the implications of this study for the field of AL is initially evidenced through my own experience as an undergraduate language student, during which I encountered instances in which shyness was addressed and, at times, problematized within the classroom context. These experiences not only inspired a deeper engagement with the topic during my Master's program, but also allowed me to understand that shyness does not

constitute an individual flaw, but rather a relatively common condition with which one can live more comfortably and even harness productively. Such understanding reinforces the transformative potential of teacher education approaches that recognize shyness as a legitimate part of the teaching experience, reaching individuals such as the participants in this study, many of whom, at different moments in their trajectories, were told that “teaching is not for them,” and potentially preventing them to become competent and committed foreign language teachers.

From this perspective, the first implication of this study concerns language teacher education by reinforcing the need to value diverse teaching profiles, including those who identify as shy. The results indicate that, as occurs with teachers in different contexts, identities and trajectories, there are specific challenges involved in entering and remaining in the teaching profession when one is a shy individual. Still, the study reveals the existence of positive and beneficial attributes associated with shyness, which may contribute significantly to the professional development of these pre-service teachers and for the relationships they establish with their students. In this manner, shyness should cease to be conceived exclusively as an obstacle in the teaching and learning process and instead be understood as a constitutive characteristic of singular teaching identities.

Secondly, studies that thematize shyness within the educational system can promote and encourage processes of reflection, self-knowledge and self-acceptance among language teachers who identify as shy, especially those who are in the early stages of their professional trajectories. Scientific research thus constitutes a legitimate space for amplifying voices and legitimizing experiences that have historically tended to be silenced or pathologized. By enabling such experiences to be narrated and analyzed, these studies may assist not only the participants directly involved but also other teachers who recognize themselves in similar situations, fostering reflection on their own practice and the reconfiguration of limiting beliefs, as well as a broader understanding of emotions and vulnerabilities as constitutive dimensions of teachers’ professional development.

In this respect, the dissemination of studies such as this one makes accessible the coping and negotiation strategies regarding shyness shared by the participants, which may be valuable for foreign language teachers who experience similar situations and seek to make their professional practice more comfortable and sustainable. Beyond the individual access to

the research findings, this study may also serve as a training material to be explored in Language and Literature programs, such as the one in which this research was conducted, whether as required reading in Applied Linguistics courses or as a resource for lectures, study groups, and other institutional spaces for discussion on teacher education, emotions, and the diversity of professional profiles.

5.3. Limitations of the study

In this section, I discuss the limitations of the study. Initially, the use of an additional data collection instrument, a visual narrative, had been planned. However, due to the time available to conduct the research and the period in which it was carried out, I chose not to implement this instrument so as not to overburden the participants. Even so, I acknowledge that the visual narrative constitutes a relevant methodological resource that could have contributed significantly to deepening the analyses and enriching the results presented.

In addition, the data in this study were constructed from narratives and interviews, that is, from accounts produced by the participants themselves. In this way, experiences of shyness were accessed through memory and through the interpretations that they construct of their own experiences. Although this approach is consistent with the aims of the study and appropriate within qualitative research, it has inherent limitations, since the effects of shyness are not directly observable in this type of data. For a broader understanding of the phenomenon, it would be necessary to employ other methodological procedures, such as classroom observation, which would make it possible to analyze in a more situated manner how pre-service teachers behave and interact with students in real teaching contexts.

5.4. Suggestions for future research

Considering that the shyness of language teachers is still a topic that has been little explored in the field of Applied Linguistics, future research may expand and deepen the discussions initiated in this study by investigating beliefs, emotions, and emotional vulnerabilities across different contexts and research settings. This study constitutes one of

the few pieces of research that specifically address teacher shyness, highlighting the existence of a field that is still in the process of consolidation.

Future research can contemplate shy language teachers enrolled in pre-service programs in different universities, as well as in-service, and more experienced, teachers working in public and private schools. Studies including teachers from other countries also appear promising, enabling comparative analyses across different sociocultural contexts, as well as studies that contrast the experiences of shy and non-shy teachers. Longitudinal approaches that follow one or more teachers over time may contribute to understanding how beliefs, emotions, and teaching practices evolve throughout the professional trajectory. In addition, there is room for studies that explore other aspects of teachers' personalities and their possible influences on teaching practices, as well as investigations focused on the well-being of language teachers who identify as shy.

With regard to methodological procedures, future research may adopt different qualitative approaches, such as action research, with the aim of following shy language teachers through processes of reflection and professional development. The use of instruments such as visual narratives and classroom observation also appears relevant for broadening a situated understanding of experiences of shyness in real teaching contexts. Finally, autoethnographic studies conducted by language teachers who identify as shy may offer valuable contributions by highlighting, in depth, the intersections among subjectivity, teaching practice, and institutional context.

These possibilities signal fertile paths for advancing with studies on teacher shyness in AL, contributing to reducing existing gaps in the field and strengthening formative approaches that are more sensitive to emotional and identity-related dimensions in language teaching.

5.6. Closing remarks

To conclude this study, I return to the personal relevance of the theme, as I recognize aspects of my own lived experiences at the beginning of my journey as a shy English teacher in the narratives of these five pre-service teachers. Amid beliefs that might discourage shy

individuals from becoming foreign language teachers, this work, from its theoretical foundations to its findings, reaffirms the idea that our personalities should not be regarded as obstacles to teaching languages. By deepening the understanding of shyness beyond superficial perspectives, this study seeks to promote awareness that personality constitutes an inseparable part of teaching practices. Accordingly, I acknowledge the contribution of this work to the field of Applied Linguistics by helping to problematize and amplify teachers' voices that have historically been less visible.

Shyness is understood as a characteristic that carries a significant emotional load which, when articulated with the teaching profession, recognized as an emotionally intensive space (Nias, 1996; Gil; Hardin, 2014; Aragão; Barcelos, 2018), tends to become even more complex. Shyness and emotional vulnerability share the potential to constitute, when positively reinterpreted, sources of personal and professional development and growth (Poole; Schmidt, 2020; Lasky, 2005; Song, 2016). In an ideal teaching and learning context, I hope that shy language teachers feel comfortable being fully who they are. This perspective entails rethinking limiting beliefs deeply rooted in society and within individuals themselves, as well as recognizing that being emotional and vulnerable, although it may seem paradoxical, can represent a strength rather than a weakness.

Statement on the use of Artificial Intelligence

For the preparation of this dissertation, the generative artificial intelligence tool ChatGPT was used ethically and responsibly as support for the academic writing process. The use of this tool was intended to assist with linguistic revision, the enhancement of textual clarity, argumentative organization, and the adaptation of the text to the conventions of academic genres, as well as to provide reflective support for the formulation and explicit articulation of the analyses and interpretations developed.

Artificial intelligence was not used for data generation, the definition of the research objectives, the construction of the theoretical framework, analytical decision-making, autonomous interpretation of the data, or the development of the conclusions. All theoretical, methodological, analytical, and interpretative choices are the responsibility of the author and the supervisor, who maintained critical oversight throughout the entire research process and over the suggestions offered by the tool.

The content presented in this dissertation fully reflects the intellectual work of the author, developed under academic supervision, with continuous critical guidance from the supervisor. All suggestions resulting from the use of artificial intelligence were carefully evaluated, revised, and incorporated judiciously prior to the submission of the final version of the text.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1 - Parecer Consubstanciado do CEP

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PARECER CONSUBSTANCIADO DO CEP

DADOS DO PROJETO DE PESQUISA

Título da Pesquisa: TIMIDEZ E VULNERABILIDADE EMOCIONAL NO ENSINO DE LÍNGUAS: CRENÇAS, EMOÇÕES E DESAFIOS DE PROFESSORES EM FORMAÇÃO INICIAL

Pesquisador: Ana Maria Ferreira Barcelos

Área Temática:

Versão: 2

CAAE: 84876924.0.0000.5153

Instituição Proponente: Departamento de Letras

Patrocinador Principal: Financiamento Próprio

DADOS DO PARECER

Número do Parecer: 7.456.193

Apresentação do Projeto:

O presente protocolo foi enquadrado como pertencente às Grandes Áreas Linguística, Letras e Artes. As informações elencadas nos campos *Apresentação do Projeto*, *Objetivo da Pesquisa* e *Avaliação dos Riscos e Benefícios* foram retiradas do arquivo Informações Básicas da Pesquisa e Carta Resposta relativa ao Parecer 7.295.643

A Linguística Aplicada (LA) carece de trabalhos relacionados à timidez de professores de línguas. Apesar da existência de alguns poucos trabalhos sobre a timidez dos estudantes em relação a sua produção oral (Santos & Barcelos, 2018; Bashosh et al., 2013), os docentes ainda não foram investigados, tanto no Brasil quanto no exterior. Pilkonis (1977) afirma que a timidez é uma experiência universal, tratando-se de um fator psicológico que dificulta interações sociais e a comunicação, cujo medo e ansiedade são sintomas comuns e suas reações manifestam-se mental e fisicamente. Sugere-se que os professores tímidos podem se deparar com situações mais desafiadoras em sua função, se sentirem desconfortáveis ou mesmo vulneráveis emocionalmente (Song, 2016, 2022) em seu ambiente profissional. Além disso, diversos estudos em LA evidenciam que as crenças e emoções têm um papel fundamental no ensino e na aprendizagem de línguas (Aragão, 2005, 2011; Barcelos, 2006, 2007, 2015), influenciando como os professores percebem e experienciam sua profissão. Esses fatores são, portanto, essenciais para entender os múltiplos aspectos envolvidos na prática docente, como

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Bairro: Campus Universitário **CEP:** 36.570-977
UF: MG **Município:** VICOSA
Telefone: (31)3612-2316 **E-mail:** cep@ufv.br

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a timidez. Dessa maneira, esta pesquisa busca investigar os fatores timidez e vulnerabilidade emocional em professores de línguas estrangeiras em formação inicial na Universidade Federal de Viçosa, através de suas crenças e emoções quanto à profissão e suas experiências. Sendo um estudo de cunho qualitativo, busca-se, através da pesquisa com narrativas, analisar os relatos dos participantes quanto às suas vivências profissionais e acadêmicas relacionadas à timidez, de modo a gerar reflexões que podem ser de grande importância para compreender esse fenômeno na área do ensino de línguas. As questões apresentadas são: 1. Quais são as crenças e emoções de professores em formação inicial sobre a timidez? 2. Quais são as crenças e emoções de professores tímidos em relação ao ensino de línguas? 3. Esses professores tímidos se sentem emocionalmente vulneráveis no ambiente de ensino e aprendizagem? Como é construída essa vulnerabilidade emocional? 4. Quais são os desafios enfrentados por professores em formação inicial que são tímidos? O que eles fazem para superar esses desafios? Os resultados esperados para esta pesquisa abrangem uma compreensão aprofundada dos efeitos da timidez e vulnerabilidade emocional em professores de línguas estrangeiras, além de suas crenças e emoções quanto a esses aspectos. O estudo busca contribuir com mais informações sobre o papel das emoções no ensino de línguas e como esse fator pode exercer influência na prática e bem-estar dos profissionais. Por fim, espera-se trazer reflexões sobre o lugar que ocupam os professores tímidos na profissão e identificar possíveis estratégias que eles adotam para lidar com as demandas profissionais, considerando essas características.

Objetivo da Pesquisa:

Objetivo Primário:

Esta pesquisa tem como objetivo geral identificar as crenças e emoções de professores de línguas em formação inicial que se consideram tímidos quanto à timidez e o ensino de línguas, além de verificar se e como essas condições contribuem para que se sintam emocionalmente vulneráveis nos ambientes de ensino-aprendizagem.

Objetivo Secundário:

Identificar e compreender as crenças e emoções de professores em formação inicial quanto ao ensino de línguas;

Identificar e compreender as crenças e emoções de professores em formação inicial quanto a timidez;

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UF: MG **Município:** VICOSA
Telefone: (31)3612-2316 **E-mail:** cep@ufv.br

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Verificar se e por quais motivos esses professores tímidos se sentem vulneráveis emocionalmente no ambiente de ensino aprendizagem;

Descobrir quais são os desafios enfrentados por professores tímidos durante sua formação inicial e como lidam com esses desafios;

Avaliação dos Riscos e Benefícios:

Os pesquisadores apresentam no formulário online da Plataforma os seguintes Riscos e Benefícios no PB Informações básicas do projeto:

Riscos:

Por se tratar de uma pesquisa envolvendo seres humanos, é possível que haja alguns riscos como cansaço, desconforto ou constrangimento ao responder o questionário, produzir narrativas e participar da entrevista. Além disso, visto que os participantes alvo são pessoas tímidas, há chances de terem medo de se expor, bem como se sentirem envergonhadas ou estressadas durante sua participação, principalmente ao interagir com a pesquisadora. Portanto, os riscos envolvendo esta pesquisa são mínimos. Para que eles sejam evitados, deve-se prezar pela transparência quanto a sensibilidade do estudo, flexibilidade e cuidado durante a condução da pesquisa. De modo a minimizar o possível sentimento de cansaço e estresse durante a aplicação dos instrumentos narrativos, eles devem ser distribuídos de forma espaçada durante o período da pesquisa e não demandarem mais que trinta minutos para que sejam finalizados. Logo, para a entrevista, o participante poderá escolher como se sente mais confortável em realizá-la, em um ambiente online ou presencial, e será esclarecido que não há necessidade de compartilhar informações caso não se sinta bem em fazê-lo. Caso aconteça em uma plataforma online, o participante receberá explicações sobre como proceder em casos de problemas técnicos ou de rede, sendo guiados a aguardar e tentar conectar caso seja possível. É importante que as explicações sobre os requisitos dos instrumentos sejam claras, que seja criado um ambiente seguro e acolhedor para a condução das entrevistas, evitar perguntas invasivas, e sempre reforçar que o participante pode interromper sua contribuição caso queira sem nenhuma penalização. Além disso, o participante terá acesso às informações de contato da pesquisadora, como Whatsapp e e-mail, para garantir a eficiência da comunicação e assistência a quaisquer eventuais problemas. Assim, os envolvidos podem dar continuidade à

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participação/estudo de forma mais confortável e íntegra.

Benefícios:

Os benefícios deste estudo são significativos. Os participantes terão a oportunidade de compartilhar e refletir sobre suas experiências e desafios para com o ensino de línguas como professores tímidos, além de falar de suas emoções e crenças. Nota-se que, neste tipo de pesquisa, os participantes geralmente se sentem bem por poderem falar sobre suas vivências e serem ouvidos. Os instrumentos narrativos e entrevistas são meios importantes e seguros para que esses indivíduos possam expressar suas emoções, dificuldades, satisfações ou insatisfações, entre outros. Sua contribuição é valiosa para o aprofundamento e compreensão deste tema tão complexo e ainda inexplorado, e suas informações trarão aprimoramentos ao campo de estudos para se pensar práticas de formação de professores de línguas mais humanizadas.

Comentários e Considerações sobre a Pesquisa:

Os pesquisadores propõem estudo unicêntrico, no país e exploratório. Esta pesquisa trata-se de uma dissertação de mestrado, de natureza qualitativa. O objetivo é investigar as crenças, emoções e vulnerabilidade emocional de professores de línguas em formação que se autodeclaram como tímidos. Para que esses aspectos sejam explorados com profundidade, serão utilizados instrumentos de coleta de dados variados. O estudo será realizado na Universidade Federal de Viçosa (UFV), com estudantes do curso de licenciatura em Letras de habilitações em línguas estrangeiras: inglês, francês, espanhol. Os critérios para seleção de participantes são, primeiramente, se declarar tímido, ter tido experiências prévias com ensino de línguas estrangeiras, e ter cursado pelo menos o primeiro ano da graduação. Para a coleta de dados serão utilizados quatro instrumentos: primeiro, o questionário semiaberto, para coletar informações pessoais sobre os participantes e selecioná-los; em seguida, será solicitado que os participantes produzam narrativas escritas e visuais, para então finalizar com uma entrevista. Os três últimos instrumentos são essenciais para que os professores-estudantes possam compartilhar e refletir sobre suas vivências no meio do ensino de línguas, além de identificar suas crenças e emoções. A partir do momento em que o participante aceitar contribuir para a pesquisa e assinar o termo de consentimento, ele será acompanhado durante o período da coleta de dados, cujos instrumentos serão aplicados com uma folga de tempo entre um e outro, para evitar que se sinta sobrecarregado ou estressado durante sua

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participação. Este estudo é importante pois busca preencher a lacuna existente na Linguística Aplicada quanto a timidez de professores de línguas, tanto no meio nacional quanto internacional. Como a profissão de professores de línguas, lida com seres humanos e requer um bom desempenho oral, esses professores podem ter seu bem-estar e desempenho profissional afetados pela timidez, principalmente nos anos iniciais. A vulnerabilidade emocional é um tema em destaque na área, embora ainda não explorado em pesquisas nacionais. A docência é uma profissão exposta a muitos fatores que podem provocar vulnerabilidades emocionais em seus profissionais. Portanto, é fundamental que se desenvolvam estudos sobre o tema no Brasil, especialmente ao considerar professores de línguas tímidos. A timidez pode intensificar essa posição de vulnerabilidade, trazendo desafios adicionais para quem a experiencia na prática docente. Por fim, considero que possam haver preconceitos relacionados à pessoas tímidas escolherem a profissão. Com este estudo, busco dar visibilidade aos desafios enfrentados por professores tímidos através de suas narrativas e trazer reflexões sobre o lugar da timidez no ensino de línguas.

A fase de análise de dados na pesquisa qualitativa, segundo Creswell (2013) envolve "organizar os dados, realizar uma leitura preliminar do banco de dados, codificar e organizar os temas, representar os dados e formar uma interpretação deles." (n.p). Para a análise do conteúdo, me apoio dos procedimentos sugeridos por Bardin (2016) para a triangulação das informações. A autora propõe que a análise seja realizada em três etapas metodológicas, que são: Pré-análise: etapa em que todos os materiais obtidos são revistos, selecionados, organizados e estruturados para a composição do corpus; Exploração do material: momento em que são estabelecidos temas e padrões a partir dos dados, que logo devem ser agrupados em diferentes categorias a serem analisadas; Tratamento dos resultados: passo último que consiste em descrever todo o conteúdo selecionado e categorizado, alinhando-o com as interpretações e inferências do pesquisador com apoio do material teórico. Por fim, com base nos instrumentos de coleta de dados apresentados na seção anterior e nos procedimentos descritos, os resultados finais serão elaborados a partir da colaboração dos participantes e minhas interpretações enquanto pesquisadora, conforme proposto por Creswell (2013).

O número de participantes está estimado em 10 Professores-estudantes que se autodeclaram tímidos.

A coleta de dados por entrevistas será iniciada em março de 2025 e o término está programado para junho de 2025.

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Considerações sobre os Termos de apresentação obrigatória:

Os pesquisadores acostaram no formulário online:

1. Termo de Sigilo e Confidencialidade
2. Roteiro para narrativa escrita
3. Roteiro narrativa visual
4. Roteiro para entrevista
5. Roteiro para questionário
6. Cronograma (pendência)
7. Projeto de pesquisa
8. TCLE (pendência)
9. Folha de Rosto
10. PB_INFORMAÇÕES_BÁSICAS_DO_PROJETO
11. Carta resposta às pendências
12. Cronograma modificado
13. TCLE modificado
14. Orçamento

Recomendações:

1) Embora a carta resposta indique que a pendência sobre o tempo em que os dados estarão em guarda dos/as pesquisadores foi inserido no TCLE modificado, essa informação não consta no mesmo. Portanto solicitamos que o mesmo seja incluído antes de iniciar a coleta de dados e que essa informação conste no relatório da pesquisa a ser encaminhada ao CEP/Conep.

2) Outra pendência listada foi inserir os riscos e os meios de mitigar os riscos no TCLE como o mesmo conteúdo que consta no documento o PB Informações básicas do projeto. Identificamos que os benefícios foram inseridos no TCLE modificado conforme o que foi indicado nas pendências mas, os riscos não foram inseridos. Os riscos descritos no TCLE modificado devem conter todas as informações que estão no texto do o PB Informações básicas do projeto.

3) As duas recomendações deverão constar no relatório final a ser encaminhado ao CEP/Conep.

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Conclusões ou Pendências e Lista de Inadequações:

Aprovado.

Considerações Finais a critério do CEP:

Ao término da pesquisa é necessário apresentar, via notificação, o Relatório Final (modelo disponível no site www.cep.ufv.br). Após ser emitido o Parecer Consubstanciado de aprovação do Relatório Final, deve ser encaminhado, via notificação, o Comunicado de Término dos Estudos para encerramento de todo o protocolo na Plataforma Brasil.

Projeto aprovado autorizando o início da coleta de dados com os seres humanos a partir da data de emissão deste parecer.

Este parecer foi elaborado baseado nos documentos abaixo relacionados:

Tipo Documento	Arquivo	Postagem	Autor	Situação
Informações Básicas do Projeto	PB_INFORMAÇÕES_BÁSICAS_DO_PROJETO_2446913.pdf	10/01/2025 15:54:33		Aceito
Outros	CARTA_RESPOSTA_AS_PENDENCIA S.pdf	10/01/2025 15:46:11	PAMELA RABELO DIAS	Aceito
Outros	TermoSigilo.pdf	10/01/2025 12:52:24	PAMELA RABELO DIAS	Aceito
Outros	ROTEIROQUESTIONARIO.pdf	10/01/2025 12:52:12	PAMELA RABELO DIAS	Aceito
Outros	ROTEIROENTREVISTA.pdf	10/01/2025 12:51:59	PAMELA RABELO DIAS	Aceito
Outros	ROTEIRONARRATIVAVISUAL.pdf	10/01/2025 12:51:45	PAMELA RABELO DIAS	Aceito
Outros	ROTEIRONARRATIVAESCRITA.pdf	10/01/2025 12:51:29	PAMELA RABELO DIAS	Aceito
TCLE / Termos de Assentimento / Justificativa de Ausência	TCLE.pdf	10/01/2025 12:50:54	PAMELA RABELO DIAS	Aceito
Cronograma	CRONOGRAMA.pdf	10/01/2025 12:50:06	PAMELA RABELO DIAS	Aceito
Orçamento	ORCAMENTO.pdf	10/01/2025 12:31:21	PAMELA RABELO DIAS	Aceito
Cronograma	CRONOGRAMA_modificado.pdf	10/01/2025 11:49:23	PAMELA RABELO DIAS	Aceito
TCLE / Termos de Assentimento / Justificativa de	TCLE_modificado.pdf	10/01/2025 11:48:11	PAMELA RABELO DIAS	Aceito

Endereço: Universidade Federal de Viçosa, Avenida PH Rolfs s/n, Edifício Arthur Bernardes

Bairro: Campus Universitário

CEP: 36.570-977

UF: MG

Município: VICOSA

Telefone: (31)3612-2316

E-mail: cep@ufv.br

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Continuação do Parecer: 7.456.193

Ausência	TCLE_modificado.pdf	10/01/2025 11:48:11	PAMELA RABELO DIAS	Aceito
Folha de Rosto	folhaderostopb.pdf	13/11/2024 20:23:43	PAMELA RABELO DIAS	Aceito
Projeto Detalhado / Brochura Investigador	ProjetodePesquisa.pdf	13/11/2024 20:23:28	PAMELA RABELO DIAS	Aceito

Situação do Parecer:

Aprovado

Necessita Apreciação da CONEP:

Não

VICOSA, 21 de Março de 2025

Assinado por:
Guilherme de Azambuja Pussieldi
(Coordenador(a))

Endereço: Universidade Federal de Viçosa, Avenida PH Rolfs s/n, Edifício Arthur Bernardes
Bairro: Campus Universitário **CEP:** 36.570-977
UF: MG **Município:** VICOSA
Telefone: (31)3612-2316 **E-mail:** cep@ufv.br

Appendix 2 - Questionnaire**ROTEIRO PARA O QUESTIONÁRIO**

Querido(a) participante, obrigada por aceitar contribuir para esta pesquisa. Sua participação é valiosa para o estudo da timidez de professores de línguas em formação! Nesta primeira etapa, peço que, por gentileza, responda este questionário com sinceridade. Reforço que sua identidade não será divulgada. Obrigada!

1. Informações pessoais

1.1. Nome: _____

1.2. Pseudônimo: _____

1.3. Idade: _____

1.4. Gênero com o qual se identifica:

() Feminino

() Masculino

() Não binário

() Prefiro não dizer

() Outro: _____

1.5. E-mail: _____

1.6. Telefone: _____

2. Informações acadêmicas e profissionais

2.1. Ano de ingresso no curso de Letras: _____

2.2. Período atual: _____

2.3. Habilitação: _____

2.4. Há quanto tempo atua como professor(a)?

2.5. Em qual contexto você atua/já atuou?

() Escola pública

() Escola particular

() Cursinho de idiomas

() Projeto de extensão

() Aulas particulares

() Outro. Qual? _____

2.6. quais línguas você aprende/ensina? _____

Nesta etapa do questionário, sinta-se livre para se expressar da forma que se sentir mais à vontade.

3. Timidez de professores de línguas

3.1. Você se considera tímido(a)? () Sim () Não () Às vezes

3.2. Em uma escala de 1 a 5, o quão tímido(a) você se considera?

(1) Pouco tímido

(2) Levemente tímido

(3) Moderadamente tímido

(4) Bastante tímido

(5) Muito tímido

3.3. Em uma escala de 0 a 10, quanto a timidez te impacta como professor(a)/estudante:

a) em relação à exposição do conteúdo? (1) (2) (3) (4) (5)

b) em suas relações com os alunos? (1) (2) (3) (4) (5)

c) em seu ambiente de trabalho? (1) (2) (3) (4) (5)

d) em seu desempenho profissional? (1) (2) (3) (4) (5)

e) no ambiente acadêmico? (1) (2) (3) (4) (5)

3.4. Você acredita que os professores não-tímidos/extrovertidos têm mais facilidade e se destacam mais ao ensinar línguas estrangeiras em comparação com os que são tímidos?

Sim () Não () Não sei ()

3.5. Comente sobre sua resposta na pergunta anterior

3.6. Quais emoções você geralmente sente ao experienciar timidez em situações como as da questão 3.3?

3.7. Quais você acredita que sejam os desafios de ser um(a) professor(a) de línguas com timidez?

3.8. Quais você acredita que sejam as vantagens de ser um(a) professor(a) de línguas tímido(a)?

3.9. Quais qualidades você atribui a um(a) bom(a) professor(a) de língua estrangeira?

Agradeço pela sua colaboração até aqui. Um abraço!

Pâmela Rabelo Dias | E-mail: pamela.dias@ufv.br

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Appendix 3 - Written narrative

ROTEIRO PARA A NARRATIVA ESCRITA

Caro(a) participante, para esta etapa da pesquisa, gostaria de conhecer um pouco mais sobre sua trajetória como professor(a). Para isso, solicito sua colaboração novamente para descrever suas experiências para com o ensino de línguas estrangeiras como um(a) professor(a) tímido(a).

Você irá encontrar abaixo alguns pontos que recomendo serem abordados em seu relato, eles irão te auxiliar a refletir e a estruturar seu texto. Sinta-se à vontade para compartilhar também outros aspectos que você considere importantes para sua narrativa, mesmo que não constem nas questões.

Peço que redija sua resposta em um texto corrido e tente detalhar e oferecer o máximo de informações possíveis em seu relato. Organizar os fatos em ordem cronológica também é aconselhável. Assim, você contribui com informações importantes para este estudo e possibilita que eu compreenda bem a história que você irá contar! Obrigada 😊

1. Relate sobre sua decisão de se tornar professor(a) de língua estrangeira. Você imaginava que seria professor(a) antes de começar o curso de Letras?
2. Quando você se percebeu tímido(a)? Como a sua timidez impactou sua escolha ou sua trajetória no curso.
3. Descreva um momento em que você se sentiu especialmente tímido durante uma aula de línguas (como estudante e professor). Relate o que aconteceu e como você se sentiu.
4. Relate como sua timidez influencia em sua interação com seus alunos. Dê um exemplo de uma situação em que isso afeta a dinâmica de sala de aula.
5. Fale sobre quais emoções você associa à sua timidez e se/como elas afetam sua autoconfiança e práticas como educador(a). Você se sente vulnerável emocionalmente ao ensinar línguas? Por quais razões?
6. Fale sobre as estratégias que você já tentou para lidar com a timidez ou mascarar seus efeitos. Alguma delas foi eficaz? Em caso afirmativo, relate como isso te impactou e mudou sua prática de ensino.
7. Por fim, como você se vê profissionalmente atualmente?

**Pâmela Rabelo Dias | E-mail: pamela.dias@ufv.br
Mestranda em Estudos Linguísticos – UFV**

Appendix 4 - Interview

ROTEIRO PARA A ENTREVISTA

ENTREVISTA

Querido(a) participante, nesta etapa, será realizada uma entrevista. Peço que reflita sobre os pontos já levantados nas narrativas e outras questões também relacionadas à timidez de professores(as) de línguas estrangeiras, sua trajetória acadêmica e profissional, a vulnerabilidade emocional de professores de línguas, bem como suas crenças e emoções em relação a todos esses aspectos.

Sua entrevista será gravada e, posteriormente, transcrita e analisada. Reforço que sua identidade será mantida em sigilo. Agradeço por chegar até aqui, sua contribuição é muito importante para esta pesquisa! 😊

1. Você sempre foi uma pessoa tímida?
2. O que você entende que seja a timidez?
3. O que o(a) fez escolher ser professor(a)?
4. Qual visão você tinha sobre a profissão antes? Essa visão mudou?
5. Você acha que existe algum preconceito ou problema em relação a uma pessoa tímida escolher essa profissão? Por favor, explique.
6. Você considera que a timidez prejudica ou beneficia seu desempenho como professor(a) de línguas? Como?
7. Você pode falar um pouco sobre as suas respostas 3.2 e 3.3 do questionário em que você avaliou diferentes aspectos de 1 a 5? Poderia explicar suas avaliações?

3.2. Em uma escala de 1 a 5, o quão tímido(a) você se considera?

(1) Pouco tímido(a)

(2) Levemente tímido(a)

(3) Moderadamente tímido(a)

(4) Muito tímido(a)

(5) Extremamente tímido(a)

3.3. Em uma escala de 1 a 5, quanto a timidez te impacta como professor(a)/estudante:

Sendo (1) impacta pouco e (5) impacta muito.

a) em relação à exposição do conteúdo? (1) (2) (3) (4) (5)

b) em suas relações com os alunos? (1) (2) (3) (4) (5)

c) em seu ambiente de trabalho? (1) (2) (3) (4) (5)

d) em seu desempenho profissional? (1) (2) (3) (4) (5)

e) no ambiente acadêmico? (1) (2) (3) (4) (5)

8. Quais desafios você enfrenta em sua atuação como um professor(a) tímido? Comente sobre esse(s) desafios e como se sentiu/sente em relação a eles.
9. Ainda sobre a pergunta anterior, como você lidou/lida com esses desafios? Você acha que os desafios que você teve no início ainda permanecem os mesmos?
10. Como você acha que a timidez pode afetar a maneira como os alunos se conectam com você? Você já percebeu alguma reação deles em relação à sua timidez?
11. Você já experienciou algum evento em que sua timidez te ajudou a se relacionar com algum aluno ou lidar com alguma situação específica em sala de aula? Se sim, comente sobre esse(s) momento(s) e como se sentiu.
12. Em sua narrativa, foi solicitado que falasse sobre a vulnerabilidade emocional. O que você entende que seja se sentir vulnerável emocionalmente no ensino de línguas? Como você acha que esse fator pode influenciar suas experiências ao ensinar língua estrangeira?
13. Caso tenha se sentido vulnerável emocionalmente, em algum momento, você já tentou encobrir essa vulnerabilidade para que as pessoas ao seu redor não percebessem?
14. Muito se fala dos problemas ocasionados pela timidez, mas como podemos desconstruir esse pensamento e passar a enxergar a timidez de forma mais positiva?
15. O que você acha que os professores de línguas tímidos devem fazer para se sentirem mais confortáveis ao ensinar?
16. Como seria, para você, um ambiente formativo ideal para que professores tímidos se desenvolvam com mais segurança?

Pâmela Rabelo Dias | E-mail: pamela.dias@ufv.br
Mestranda em Estudos Linguísticos – UFV