

**THE ROLE OF ARGUMENTATION AS DIALOG AMONG TEACHERS TO-BE:  
A CRITICAL-COLLABORATIVE DECISION MAKING IN TEACHER  
EDUCATION ON FACEBOOK**

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**RESUMO:** Este trabalho objetiva analisar como a argumentação se caracteriza no processo de construção de significados compartilhados dentro de um contexto crítico-colaborativo de cinco professores (alunos da graduação em Letras Língua Inglesa) e dois coordenadores (professores do Departamento de Letras – UFPE), que trabalham no NuLi-IsF UFPE (Núcleo de Línguas – Idiomas sem Fronteiras da UFPE). O contexto da análise se encontra na rede social Facebook, no qual os participantes interagem em um grupo chamado Grupo Acadêmico. Esse grupo baseia as suas perspectivas no conceito da TASHC (Teoria da Atividade Sócio-Histórico-Cultural) (ENGESTROM, 2001). Também orientam suas atividades na argumentação crítico-colaborativa (LIBERALI, 2013), na qual o processo de ensino/aprendizagem oferece aos professores em desenvolvimento chances para expor ideias, pontos de vista, suportes, contra-argumentos e novas posições (LIBERALI, 2013; MAGALHÃES, 2014). O foco de pesquisa consiste em investigar se foi possível tomar uma decisão comum sobre a escolha de um livro para cursos preparatórios TOEFL, mesmo que a partir de diferentes pontos de vistas diferentes. O conceito de argumentação como diálogo e as categorias de mecanismos argumentativos e linguísticas são aplicados sobre os dados da pesquisa (LIBERALI, 2013).

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Argumentação. Facebook. Tomada de decisão. Ensino de Inglês.

**ABSTRACT:** This paper aims at analyzing how argumentation is characterized in the process of a shared meaning construction within a critical-collaborative (MAGALHÃES, 2011) context among five teachers to-be (undergraduate students in Linguistics) and two coordinators (Professors of UFPE Letras Department), who work at NuLi-IsF UFPE (Languages Without Borders - UFPE). The context of analysis is in the social-network Facebook, where the participants interact in a group called *Grupo Acadêmico*. This group bases its perspectives on the concept TASHC (Social-Historical-Cultural Activity Theory) (ENGESTROM, 2001). They also guide their activities in the critical-collaborative argumentation (LIBERALI, 2013), in which the teaching-learning process offers teachers to-be chances to expose ideas, viewpoints, supports, counterarguments and new positions (LIBERALI, 2013; MAGALHÃES, 2011). This research focuses on investigating whether it was possible that these seven professionals,

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with different pedagogical views were able to make a common decision upon a choice of a book for TOEFL preparatory courses. The concept of Argumentation as Dialog (MATEUS, 2013) and the categories of argumentative mechanisms are applied to the research data (LIBERALI, 2013).

**KEYWORDS:** Argumentation. Facebook. Decision-making. English teaching.

## 1. Introduction

Saussure (1966) argues that the object does not create the viewpoint. He defends that “it is the viewpoint that creates the object” (p. 8). Engeström (2001) understands that meaning and sense are culturally determined in the process of activity when people work on a certain object. Liberali (2013) claims that an activity is actually a process of shared meaning construction. Individuals in activity expand their point of view on objects as they work together. Argumentation mediates this process and helps individuals work on their conflicts to come up with an outcome out of the activity. Their viewpoint can change as they change their social position in the whole process as well.

According to Freire (1987), there would not be any human action, without the objective reality of the world, where the individuals are capable of capturing and understanding that reality in order “to transform it<sup>3</sup>” (p. 22). Freire (1987) refers to a perspective of practice-reflection on any action, as individuals are critically inserted in the objective reality while they seek its transformation. It is utterly plausible to understand how teachers run through the process of recognizing a problem, comprehending its facets and working together on its democratic and dialectical transformation.

The critical and dialectical transformation process motivates the discussion in this research, which aims at analyzing a scenario of a shared meaning construction among English teachers to-be. These teachers are undergraduate students at

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<sup>3</sup> “[...] para transformá-la.”

*Universidade Federal de Pernambuco* (UFPE). They work in a project of English teaching for students who are eligible to study abroad through the Science without Borders program (Ciências sem Fronteiras–CsF). The project is called *Núcleo de Idiomas sem Fronteiras* (NucLi–IsF UFPE) and teachers are encouraged to develop researches in the English as Foreign Language (EFL) field. NucLi–IsF at UFPE is considered a place for teachers’ development, which is guided by the principles of Social-Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (TASHC).

This research focuses on a written discussion in the NucLi-IsF teachers’ Facebook group (Grupo Acadêmico) that constitutes the object of this article. NucLi–IsF UFPE teachers had different opinions about choosing a book for TOEFL preparation classes. This situation set a linguistic-argumentative conflict because the group had to decide on a textbook from a set of 4 different TOEFL coursebooks<sup>4</sup>. By that time, the textbook teachers were using in class demonstrated some features that did not match the specific teaching context at NucLi-IsF UFPE. In this particular discussion, which will be analyzed, there were 5 teachers and the 2 coordinators discussing. Those 5 teachers were the ones who taught TOEFL preparation courses at NucLi-IsF UFPE.

These professionals based their linguistic and pedagogical practices on the concepts of the Argumentation as Dialog. The idea of argumentation is established on the TASHC perspectives and it relates to a critical-collaborative linguistic activity. Mateus (2014) defines it as the construction of:

[...] democratic practices, seeking to create opportunities for more people to be able to think critically, to reflect carefully and

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<sup>4</sup> By that time, the book used in TEOFL Prep classes was *Longman Preparation Course for the TOEFL Test: iBT* by Pearson (PHILLIPS, 2007).

position themselves in an articulately way across the social issues on the matter of politics, economy, culture [...] (p. 9).<sup>5</sup>

The argumentative process of interdependent decision-making exemplifies a possibility for democratic, inclusive and ethical organization, where the dialogicity of argumentative practices is a fundamental mediation tool for professional development. Argumentation is understood as a linguistic medium that can both set conflicts and help people work them out. Conflicts are welcome because they shape great environments for expansion and creative outcomes, since individuals can work on their dialogicity and respect everyone's viewpoint in order to reconstruct their own. According to Liberali (2013), when people critical-collaboratively use argumentation, they are able to balance different perspectives to come up with shared objects.

## 2. Activity Theory and Task

There are many theories that try to explain human activities. These go through different perspectives and manage to grasp glimpses of the whole complexity. Vigotsky (1991) understands that any human activity is driven by a dialectical conception. He defends that it is the convergence of abstract signs (language) and the interaction with an object, which generate a process of intellectual development. Vigotsky (1991) designed a threefold framework of activity. He explains that in this process the dialectical activities were represented by the *subject* (S), the *object* (X) and the *mediating artifact* (R). The first aspect refers to the social-cultural individual. The second refers to objective of interaction, the meaning that is to be constructed by the

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<sup>5</sup>Quotes have been translated by the authors of the paper: “[...] práticas democráticas, buscando criar possibilidades para que mais pessoas sejam capazes de pensar criticamente, de refletir cuidadosamente e de se posicionar de forma articulada frente a questões sociais de natureza política, econômica, cultural [...]”.

individual. In addition, the third is the tools that mediate the process of activity, which is the symbolic representation that interfaces the activity.

Engeström (2001) bases his concept of activity system<sup>6</sup> on Vigotsky's model of activity. However, Engeström (2001) expands this concept by arguing that there are other categories to be included, such as rules, community, division of labor and the further outcome from the object-orientedness activity (ENGESTRÖM, op. cit.). He names this new concept Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT).

According to Engeström (op. cit.), human activity is considered a framework of different parts, actions and roles in order to function as it is intended regarding a common goal. The activity involves the processes of human cognition, which are conceptualized in an interdependent way when people are engaged in an activity. That is why objects are important; they are the tools that help the individuals. Objects are cultural entities and they are the motives that shape the entire division of labor. The figure (1) exemplifies this concept. The arrows indicate the multiple-orientated connection between the elements. They represent both a continuum process and a set of conflicts within the system.

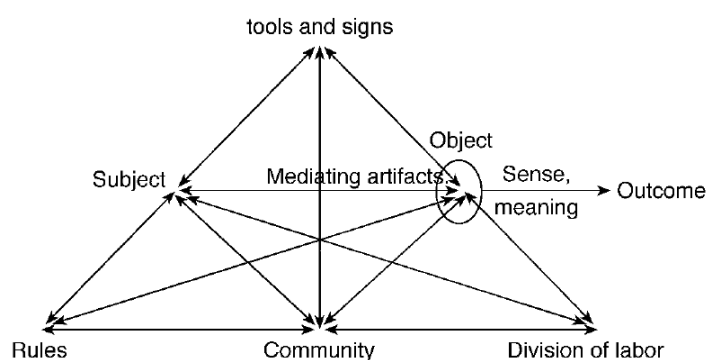


Fig. 1: Engeström's model of activity systems (ENGESTRÖM, 2001, p. 135)

The concepts discussed regarding CHAT are focused on many aspects of the individuals' identity and their social role. For this reason, the individual's social role and

<sup>6</sup> In addition to this, activities do not exist as single actions, but they interconnect with other activities in order to coexist. That is the reason why they are called activity systems.

background are also to be considered essential for the comprehension of their activities in a group.

Liberali (2012) expands the concept. She adds the social aspect to the idea of activity system because she says that in the social-cultural-historical perspective, “the subjects constitute themselves and the others in their relations with the objects/world mediated by society”<sup>7</sup> (p. 19). She understands the activity system as a dynamic process of object transformation within an interdependent network of activities. This means that the object-directed activity is a process of constant reinterpretation (meaning-building process). Intentions towards objects are what make an activity to function. However, these intentions are better interpreted when they are put into action. Participants create and follow relatively established rules as they act together in this variable cycle of activity systems (LIBERALI; FUGA, 2014).

The concept of Social-Historical-Cultural Activity Theory<sup>8</sup> (TASHC) dialogs with the Marxist philosophy and its historical materialism. Theory and *praxis* are combined to understand and socially reposition individuals. Human activities are historical processes; they are culturally practiced. Moreover, the social aspect within TASHC implies that the activity is a collective conception and it is an outcome of a collectiveness. Therefore, activities can foster changes and social repositioning (LIBERALI; FUGA, 2014).

Repositioning refers to the individual’s role in an activity. The process of repositioning is derived from the fact that different needs and different roles are inserted in the activity. Since that is how activity systems are constituted, Liberali (2013) understands this episteme of human activity as being inserted in the individuals’ social

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<sup>7</sup> “Na perspectiva só-histórico-cultural, os sujeitos constituem-se e aos demais nas relações com os objetos/mundo mediados pela sociedade.”

<sup>8</sup> Translated by the authors. Abreviation from Portuguese: Teoria da Atividade Sócio-Histórico-Cultural (TASHC) (LIBERALI, 2013).

contexts. The interaction within an activity changes the individuals' position along with the transformation of the object and the expansion of the individuals' zone of proximal development (VIGOTSKY, 1991). According to the theoretical perspectives aligned with TASHC, language incorporates the mediation role of a cultural-symbolic artifact. This is “fundamental, since the individuals are seen as being capable of establishing constant and deep changes in their contexts and in society as a whole”<sup>9</sup> (LIBERALI, 2012, p. 20).

The critical use of language in collaborative work not only establishes the meaning-sense of a certain activity, but it also highlights the rules that involves the activity. According to Damiani (2008), in a context of collaboration, members of a group rely on each other and manage their conflicts to pursue collective objectives. The author defends that collaborative work among teachers potentially makes their understanding more meaningful.

### 3. Argumentation

The study of argumentation is usually associated to rhetoric and, as a consequence, some aspects are highlighted. One of the first authors who started discussing the implications of argumentation was Aristotle. His ideas were based on three basic concepts: 1) *Ethos*, 2) *Pathos* and 3) *Logos*. *Ethos* stands for the way the speaker socially portrays themselves in terms of credibility, reputation and character. These factors contribute for the arguments to be better accepted. The second concept represents the emotion that affects the listeners and moves them to persuasion. Language can be used to help the listener adhere to what is being said. Finally, the third concept relates to the logical operations and to the use of reason to support arguments

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<sup>9</sup>“[...] fundamental, uma vez que os sujeitos são vistos como capazes de estabelecer mudanças constantes e profundas em seus contextos e na sociedade como um todo”.

(LIBERALI, 2013; MEANEY, 2009).

Schopenhauer (2008) agrees with Aristotle in terms of methods and techniques of winning a debate and bases his concept on dialectics. He explains that argumentation is a process of confrontation. Aristotle seems to understand argumentation as functioning in speeches to audiences. On the other hand, due to new comprehensions on dialectics, Schopenhauer conceives his ideas on refuting modes.

According to Schopenhauer (2008 p. 10), “our opponent has stated a thesis, or we ourselves – it is all one. There are two modes of refuting it, and two courses that we may pursue.” Argumentation is considered a medium of exposing ideas, in which speakers look for flaws on the others’ speeches and try to dismantle their arguments, either directly or indirectly. This is highlighted by the word *opponent*, which implies a need to win a dispute. Schopenhauer also explains that a direct attack on an argument means to show that their point is not true, while the indirect course means to show that the argument cannot be true. Either way, this postulation relies on a fighting setting.

For Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (2005) argumentation should reside on rhetorical terms. They also combine that idea to the conception of value and credibility, which would help the speaker adheres audiences to their arguments. Their understanding on argumentation is called the New Rhetoric and it outlines the necessity for persuasion. The objective is convincing through logical means and rational persuasion. Moreover, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (2005) believe the objective is gaining audience adherence and encouraging them to act according to one’s point of view.

Nevertheless, there are other aspects when it comes to argumentation. The New Rhetoric conception lacks taking discursive factors into consideration and it seems that other variables are left out as well. Mateus (2013) argues that argumentation should be



understood through a different perspective. She defends a collaborative concept based on TASHC and she explains that argumentation is a process of repositioning.

According to Mateus (2013), individuals are inserted in activity systems where conflicts are mediated by their arguments. Argumentation functions to build rather than finish ideas. The way individuals express their opinions can be either helpful for the working system or make it stop. Mateus (2013) conceives a broader comprehension on argumentation and names it Argumentation as Dialog. The use of the word ‘dialog’ emphasizes the dialogicity feature of the language instead of the debating postulation.

Argumentation as Dialog is a mediation tool to manage human interaction in society, preserving our power of saying things and our ability to listen to the others as well. It does not assume the inexistence of conflicts and the possibility of disagreement. The critical argumentation provokes us to change, refracting others’ understanding into our consciousness, while we rebuild meanings and share them.

#### **4. Analyzing the discussion on Facebook**

The discussion begins with a post on *Grupo Acadêmico* written by teacher Túlio<sup>10</sup> on March 25th, 2014 where he affirms the *DTT* (TOEFL prep book) published by M.M. is a good option for some reasons he is about to explain. It is noticeable the fact that he starts his post with a title “Review of the day:” This implies that he has been looking for other options to replace a given book and now he is posting one of his findings. His objective is to share the information, and since he writes a review, it is understood that he is trying to make the decision-making process interdependent. The post is printed below.

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<sup>10</sup> Names have been changed due to ethical reasons.

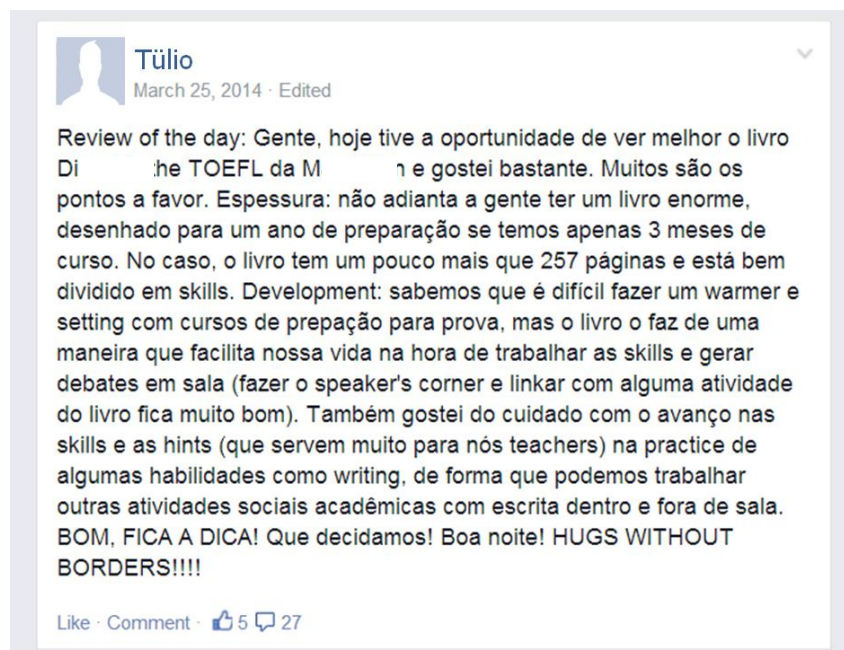


Fig. 2: Post on Grupo Acadêmico written by teacher Tülio

Tülio seems to invite people for discussion. According to Liberali (2013) there are linguistic articulation manners which are what structures sequences of discursive articulation in a discussion. The first one used by Tülio can be characterized as *exordium*. This linguistic articulation is what opens a discussion. It is determined by the process of introduction and it usually comes with a vocative case expression, such as the one in the post: “*People*,”. The choice on this vocative case, whether it represents a conscious argumentative use or not, implies a request for discussion. Tülio is actually calling the others to bring their arguments and to start a process of critical decision-making. It is even more obvious when he says the following: “[...] today I had the chance to better look at the book *DTT* published by M.M. and I liked it very much.” The word “*today*” unravels a fresh language production and it works as a powerful argumentative mechanism. Tülio adds the idea that he just read the book and is able to write a review on it. The fact that he decides to start his sentence with the adverb of

time, instead of following the common word order in Portuguese (leaving the adverbs at the end of a sentence), demonstrates his argumentative objective.

Liberali (2013) presents some manners to support an argument. One of them is the “expressive definition” manner (LIBERALI, 2013 p. 72). In this manner things are defined from a subjective view. As he presents his viewpoint (the book seems to be good), Túlio brings his voice and subjective opinion by saying “and I liked it very much”.

After making his point, Túlio starts describing the features he considers relevant for the discussion. The first feature is this: “There are many points in favor. Thickness: it doesn’t matter if we have an enormous book, designed for more than a year of preparation course, since we only have a 3-month long course. In this case, the book has a little more than 257 pages and it well divided into skills”. Túlio unfolds his arguments and supports. The thickness and number of pages are mentioned for a simple reason: the book which was being used at NuLi-IsF UFPE was thicker and it was necessary to have a longer course to use it as much as possible. This argument is interesting for two reasons: Túlio understands the issues a teacher faces when teaching a short preparatory course. His usage of “we only have a 3-month long course” congregates all the teachers’ voices. Then, he also considers the students’ opinions, for there were complaints about the size of the book and its costs.

The idea of having a book based on skills expresses Túlio’s teaching conception. That is to say that not only is he interested in a thinner book, but he also cares about the pedagogical and methodological structure it offers. What follows is a second support: “Development: we know how difficult it is to do a warmer and a setting in test preparation courses, but the books does it in a way that makes our lives easier when we are working with skills and creating debates in class (working with speaker’s corners

and linking that with some activity in the book afterwards is awesome)”.

This part of the post follows a cohesive sequence of arguments. It expands the conception of teaching methods in class and it highlights how Túlio is concerned with the practical applicability of the coursebook. Therefore, he names his argument “Development”.

Codeswitching is a discursive tool and since Túlio is communicating to English teachers, he tries to use a language that is not only accessible, but also relevant for them. His voice entangles the others’ as he uses the third person plural by saying “we know how difficult it is [...]”. Liberali (2013) calls it as voice distribution, which is a discursive mechanism. Túlio linguistically marks his language and connects his voice to the others with empathy to the difficulties that NuLi-IsF teachers were facing.

According to Liberali (2013), the mechanism of “voice distribution” (p. 79) is highlighted by the use of the third person plural and it provides a possibility of historicity integration, where the individuals get their meanings shared. It allows them to build new meanings due to the connection and the level of involvement they have when discussing. Túlio’s speech is directed to his friend teachers and he implies that he has been through the same problems when it comes to preparing lessons.

Túlio keeps using the *Voice Distribution* mechanism as he adds other reasons why *DTT* seems to be a positive option: “I also liked to delicate work on the skills progression (which are very useful to us teachers) and the hints of some skill practices, such as writing. Thereby we can work on other academic social activities with the medium of writing in and outside classroom”. Once again, it is noticeable his concern to use practical reflections (LIBERALI, 2012) when expanding his opinion.

In this organizational argumentative framework, where it is established the introduction (the exordium), the development of arguments, supports and its closure, Tülio writes his last words. “WELL, IT’S YOUR CALL! Let we decide! Good night” HUGS WITHOUT BORDERS!!!!”. The graphical information conveyed, that is, the usage of uppercase letters and exclamation marks produce a visual effect that calls the readers’ attention. In addition, it expresses the way a person might be saying a cheerful goodbye. The way Tülio says “IT’S YOUR CALL” embodies a semantic meaning of supposed invitation to have the others discussing. This expression is way of inviting the others to participate in the decision-making process.

Tülio closes his review using a positive language and setting a friendly environment for discussion. This goodbye refers to the name of the program Languages without Borders (IsF – Idiomas sem Fronteiras) and it sweetly conveys the idea of a nice talk, where teachers are also invited to bring counterarguments, in case they have them. Tülio’s first argumentation, which is materialized in this post in *Grupo Acadêmico*, demonstrates the expanding process of sharing meanings. His argumentative supports empower his thought, which is collaborative and dialogically constructed.

The first person to respond Tülio’s post is Amara. She asks him if the book mentioned was in Cristal’s<sup>11</sup> office. When Tülio answers her questions, he adds his experience in class, to which she comments. The following figure is their comments on the discussion board.

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<sup>11</sup> Cristal is the General Coordinator who was mainly in charge of administrative and organizational issues.



Fig. 3: First comments on Túlio's discussion board post.

Túlio not only answers Amara's question but also adds another support. The way he starts his comments, by using the oral feature "Ahhhh", conveys the idea that he still has something to say as a complement for his post. His following argument strengthens what was said before, after all, he mentions a real teaching experience. He says "I felt that is class today", referring to the fact that the book is B1/B2<sup>12</sup>. He argues that even if the teachers had students in the B1/B2 English levels, they would not face too many problems since the book was designed for intermediate students. Amara has an interesting comment about that aspect.

She begins with "That's true, Túlio", which implies she agrees with him. This language chunk can be considered a *connection mechanism* (LIBERALI, 2013). *Connection mechanisms* relate to voice entanglement processes and they can be used as an intratextual or intertextual reference within the text (LIBERALI, 2013). When Amara says "That's true" and marks "Túlio", she is actually taking his discourse as valuable and worth agreeing with.

Amara adds: "This week I have shared with some colleagues that I think the

<sup>12</sup> According to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEF), there are three major levels of language proficiency and they measure the linguistic ability of a native or foreign speaker. The A level, which stands for Basic User, is the first level. In this level there are the A1 (Breakthrough) and the A2 (Waystage) sublevels. Also, there is the B level, which is called Independent User and it is where there are two sublevels: B1 (Threshold) and B2 (Vantage). Finally, in the Proficient User (C) there two sublevels as well: C1 (Effective Operational Proficiency) and C2 (Mastery) (COUNCIL OF EUROPE, 2011).

book unfair with TOEFL preparatory courses for level 3. They [students] need some stuff that are not in the book”. This comment expands the discussion and brings other reasons why the book may need to be reconsidered. The use of the adjective “unfair” critically reinforces her opinion and mixes technical aspects with personal point of views. Amara’s support shows her concern with students’ learning rather than her won work. Besides, her speech entangles Tùlio when she makes uses of connections and dialogs with others (some colleagues). She does not speak for herself alone. She makes her point in a collective way. She does not impose anything, but she shows other sides of the discussion.

Liberali (2013) affirms that *lexical mechanisms* create possibilities of new interpretations and they produce collective meanings. The word “unfair” may incorporate this role in Amara’s opinion. It functions as a key word that represents why she feels the book is a little bit difficult for some students. Her comment does produce new meanings and affects the course of the discussion, as it is seen below.

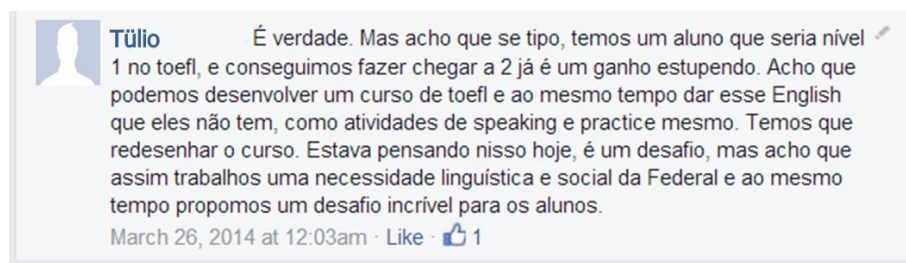


Fig. 4: Tùlio answers Amara’s comment

Tùlio posts another comment. This time, he answers Amara’s previous comment and his speech is motivated by the subjects highlighted when Amara mentions students’ performance. He starts by agreeing with her when he says “That’s true”. Tùlio adds a contrast conjunction “But”. Then he develops another argument. Liberali (2013) defines this process as a *negation mechanism* (p. 69) and she argues that it is used even when the speakers have the same opinion. But they disagree in terms of support.

Tùlio explains: [...] like, if there is a student who is at level 1 on TOEFL, and

we can help them achieve the level 2, it is an amazing result”. He affirms that helping a student scoring higher levels on TOEFL test is a good thing, even if this student is in A1 and only achieves the A2 level. As a support, he mentions that this is a linguistic necessity at UFPE and it would be a positive challenge for students. Once again, Túlio includes the other in his speech when he says “I think we could design a toefl course [...]”. He does not seem to make any decision independently. He is concerned with the groups’ opinion and the effective results of the book on NuLi-IsF UFPE students.

Then, Cristal, the General Coordinator, also comments. She uses an *appreciation mechanism*. She says: “Beautiful arguments. Cohesive and coherent supports. They are all inserted in TASCH”. According to Liberali (2013), these expressions highlight the position of the speaker in terms of opinion. They are marked by the use of adjectives. However, a critical analysis on her comment would be that she neither defines her opinion nor positions herself in the process of the activity. She invites the others to analyze the books they have at hand, but she could have used her position as a coordinator and expand the discussion by setting her point of view.



Fig. 5: Paulo, Cristal and Scarlet’s comments

Scarlet, the Pedagogical Coordinator, also comments. Her comment is concerned with the timing of the decision rather than offering her own opinion. In a critical-collaborative activity all the individuals should make their point of views clear. It helps



understanding the topics for the discussion and everyone's opinion is clarified. Scarlet asks: "Do you people think you will be able to make that decision until Friday?". The use of the pronoun "you" omits her from the decision. She gives teachers the chance to make important decisions by their own and she seems to trust them. That might explain why she does not critically participate in the discussion.

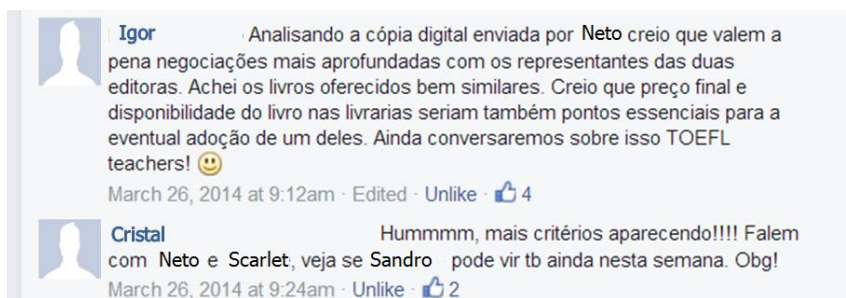


Fig. 6: Igor's first comment

Igor is the next teacher to make his point in the discussion. His opinion focuses on the *practical reflection* of the situation and he argues financial reasons as a relevant variable for the discussion (I believe that price and availability in bookstores are essential aspects [...]). His voice is marked by the use of the first person singular all over his supports. The *voice distribution mechanism* emphasizes Igor's comprehension upon the book and adds valuable information to the shared-meaning construction process.

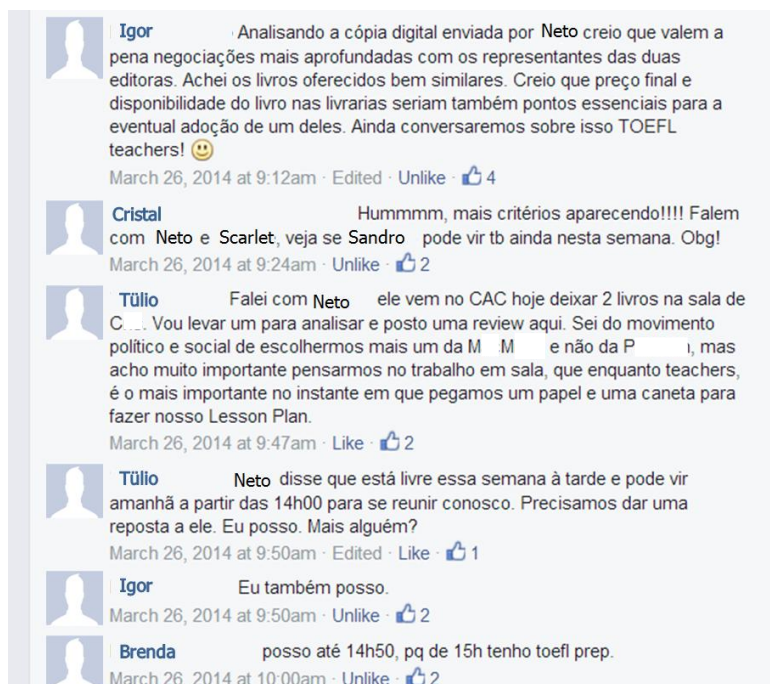


Fig. 7: Tülio's extra supports

Tülio informs that he has reached Neto. Neto was a M.M. publisher's representative. He also mentions that Neto was going to leave two books in Cristal's office. He seems to understand that choosing another coursebook from M.M. would mean not having any professional relations with P. Publisher, the other editor. Although, he is concerned with the practical and professional aspect of any decision, he holds to his first argument. He says: "[...] but I guess it is important to think about the teaching work, which is the most important thing at the moment we grab a pen and a sheet of paper to draft a lesson plan".

There is a significant number of connectives, which are part of the *connection mechanism*. They establish a relation between the supports and counterarguments. Not only does he use the adverb "but" for refuting ideas, but he also uses it to emphasize his point of view. His argumentative choices critically reposition the other teachers as he reminds the importance of their work.

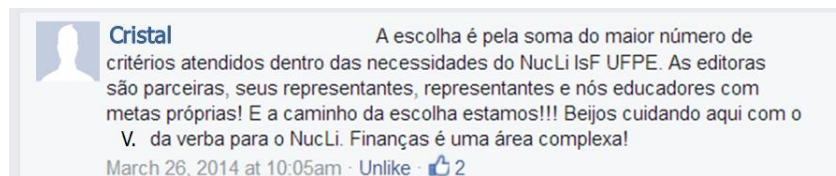


Fig. 8: Cristal intercedes

Cristal intercedes and seems to support teachers by telling them that educators have their own goals. As a coordinator, it is interesting that she reminded teachers they are free to make their decisions. It encourages them to go after their pedagogical concepts. Her comment is valuable because, according to Ninin (2013), taking part in an activity means to be both the subject and part of the community. That refers to the fact that as a community individuals share their object. Likewise, this is only achievable if everyone participates.

Scarlet is next to say a few things and make her point in the discussion. She uses a term “dear” (*Queridos/as*) not only to entangle her voice to the other teachers, but also to set a friendly environment. This kind of word functions as a resource to gain audience adherence as she informs them she would be available for a meeting. Then, Scarlet entangles her voice again: “Let’s do it like this, if you guys agree: either we meet and talk to about your decisions or you evaluate the books and tell me your choices. Then we talk to Neto about it”.

Her invitation for a meeting sounds like she is rushing them. She thinks the decision should be made as soon as possible due to the short time they have to decide on a book. Then, she quotes Cristal to reinforce that teachers are free to make their choices without being worried about publishers. Her voice is again entangled when she mentions the following: “we educators do our choices”. The argumentative effect it causes in the discussion is powerful. She tries to convince teachers that the coordinators are on their side, whatever their decision is.

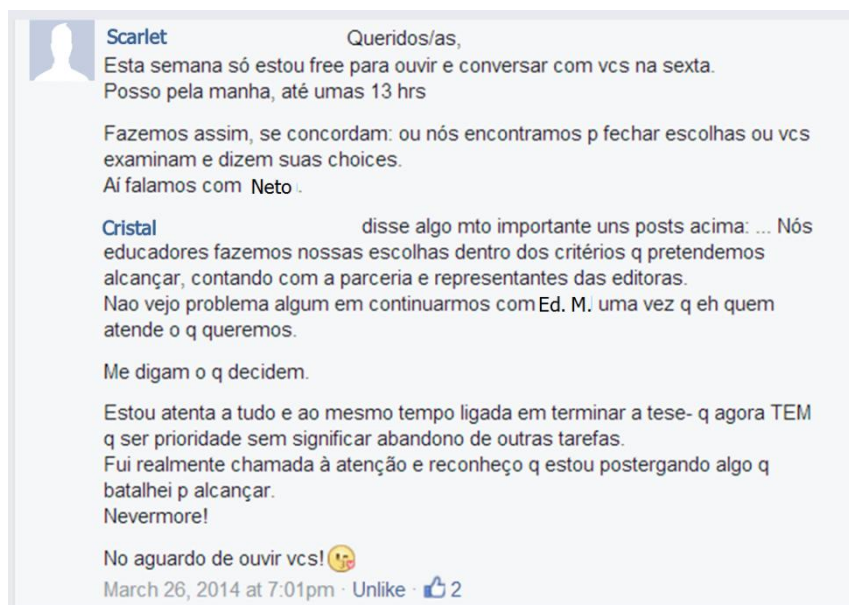


Fig. 9: Scarlet's comment

Although Scarlet sounds like she trusts teachers and knows they will make a good decision, this does not represent a critical-collaborative work. In an activity, the division of labors does not mean that some individuals can exclude themselves from the community work. Everyone has to do something to turn an activity system into a real collaborative activity. Though Scarlet's arguments are not demanding, they are not critical. She does not make her own point and she does not expand the discussion by setting other criterion on any possible decision. Instead, she seems to be concerned with other issues. She says she that her thesis "[...] HAS to be a priority [...]".

Túlio writes another comment and starts it with capital letters (LAST REVIEW). He writes a review on *E. to TOEFL* published by P.L. He explains that this book is shorter than the other P.L. book. It is also more advanced than the M.M. coursebook for TOEFL preparation courses. It is interesting to notice that Túlio uses the subordinating conjunction "even though" to defend his point that this book is somewhat better than the other one. Liberali (2013) understands that such words constitute the *connection mechanisms* (p. 78) and they refer to either intra-text or extra-text information.

After comparing all those books, it seems that *E. to TOEFL* might be a positive

solution for the discussion. Choosing this book means that P.L. would still be providing teachers coursebooks. And at the same time, this second book does not present as many drawbacks as the other one. Túlio's speech changes a little bit. It looks like he is more likely to accept that, though the M.M. TOEFL book was a very good opinion for many reasons, this *E. to TOEFL* might be an ever better option.

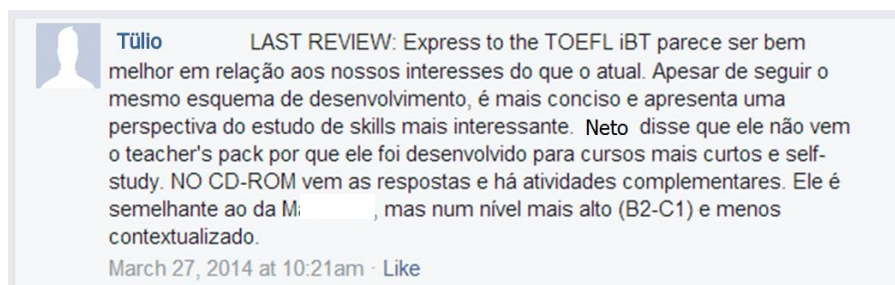


Fig. 10: Túlio's last review

Finally, Túlio posts the final synthesis on the discussion. It seems that teachers have decided not to use any of the books they were analyzing. Their final decision is in favor of a different book: *B. S. for TOEFL*, published by P.L. He distributes the other teachers' and coordinators' voices by using the third person plural and avoiding the use of "I" on his comment. His speech dialogues with Cristal's and Amara's previous comments.

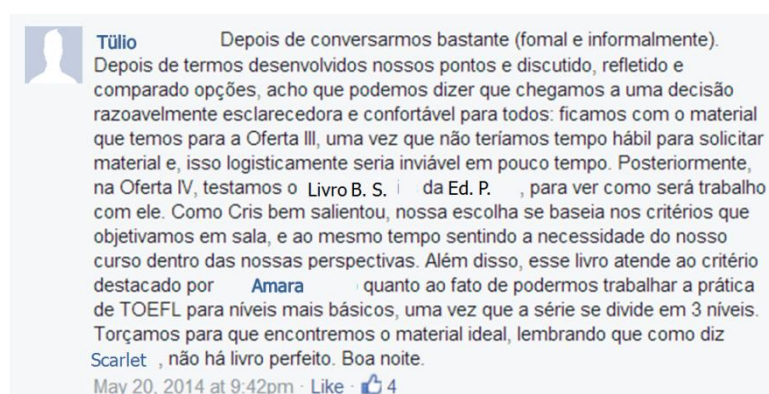


Fig. 11: Túlio's synthesis

It is interesting to observe that Túlio makes it clear that the final decision was a collective action. The group considered many aspects, but eventually, the most relevant

one seemed to be the question of schedule. He says they would not have enough time to ask for another material and offer it to students. So, they kept using the same book for another semester and decided to change it only in the following semester. Besides, the *B. S. for TOEFL* book would be tested for at least one semester. Túlio agrees with Scarlet when he says: “there is no any perfect book”.

## 5. Final remarks

The discussion analyzed on the Isf UFPE Facebook grupo represents a collaborative work in many aspects. Teachers’ opinions were taken into account and were relevant to achieve their main objective. Not having the critical collaborative participation of everyone is something to be avoided in future decision-making processes at NuLi-IsF UFPE. The combination of different point of views expands the object-directed meaning, transforming it into a more democratic and meaningful outcome. This would have been ideal. However, a decision had to be taken, and it was taken mainly based on Túlio’s, Amanda’s and Igor’s positions with the coordinators approval on the final position: keep the current book in use and take more time to analyze other books more carefully and in a more critical collaborative way.

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