



A TEACHER'S STORY OF FACING THE ROAD OF CHANGE

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ABSTRACT: This paper aims at discussing some difficulties to promote changes in the established landscape of Education. This paper is mainly developed based on some experiences concerned to language teaching in undergraduate course level of a Brazilian University Center. I intend to draw a picture of such difficulties through some stories to live by, having in mind possibilities of changing on the teaching and learning process and also on the research language. As my aim is connected to the idea of changing, the way I assume a narrative writing is important to some aspects addressed throughout the paper.

KEYWORDS: narrative, changes, language teaching

A HISTÓRIA DE UMA PROFESSORA AO ENFRENTAR O CAMINHO DA MUDANÇA

RESUMO: Neste artigo tenho como objetivo discutir algumas dificuldades para promover transformações em nossa paisagem educacional. O artigo se originou do estudo de experiências relacionadas ao ensino de línguas em um curso de graduação de um Centro Universitário Brasileiro. Pretendo compor um cenário dessas dificuldades, por meio do contar de histórias vividas, considerando algumas possibilidades de transformação no processo de ensino e aprendizagem e, também, na linguagem utilizada em nossas pesquisas. Assim, como meu objetivo está relacionado à idéia de mudança, a forma como assumo uma escrita narrativa é importante para alguns aspectos tratados ao longo do artigo.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: narrativa, transformação, ensino de língua



Introduction

This paper tells and discusses an experience of a teacher trying to change the teaching-learning landscape established in an institution where it took place. This experience was lived in the context of Portuguese classes at an undergraduate course on Engineering in Brazil. This self-study research (BULLOUGH & PINEGAR, 2001) was carried out on Narrative Inquiry's basis (CLANDININ & CONNELLY, 2000; CONNELLY & CLANDININ, 2004), considering possible metaphors related to the work of University. Although this paper has its main focus on the teacher's trying to change journey, it is based on some theoretical perspectives related to social interaction (VYGOTSKY, 1991/1930; 1993/1934) and development of language for specific purposes and genre-based approach (HUTCHINSON & WATERS, 1987; DUDLEY-EVANS & ST. JOHNS, 1998; SWALES, 1990; BHATIA, 1993). However, the results of the research developed, related to the language constructed and to the genre-based approach applied during the experience lived, are not going to be discussed in this paper, whose main focus is the teacher's experience.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p.80) say narrative inquiry is aimed at understanding and making meaning of experience. So thinking on the possible reasons why I decided to live the experience told in this paper I start bringing a piece of my personal story as a student and a teacher, trying to puzzle the experience lived. This narrative path is kept during the whole paper in order to tell the experience lived and the reflections and meanings made from it.

I have always wanted to create my own way of doing things. Maybe because I want to have my signature in everything I do. I remember when I was a 4-year-old student already able to read and develop math exercises. As I was too young everybody liked to suggest me this or that and also to stare at me while I was reading a book or doing my homework. As soon as I realized there was someone watching over my shoulders I just closed my book and decided to go back to my school activities when I could do it by myself and far from those curious people around me. Looking back to that time I wonder the reason why I behaved like that. Maybe I was afraid of having to do things the way people wanted me to do and not the way I myself had decided would be easier and more interesting to me. Maybe I was trying to escape from some established rules.

Throughout my life as a student I met some important teachers and instructors whose stories of practice influenced my stories of learning and teaching. Those teachers wanted to make the difference in their practices and in the students' lives and that fitted my personal goals. They were not traditionalists. Time has flown and I am still trying to run away from traditional educational landscapes. Now, as a teacher, I have



insistently tried to lead my practice through different paths instead of just following those the educational institutions where I work say I should. But what is important to write about that? What can we really change in our practices? What is the role of the student in this changing possibility? Why is it still too difficult to promote some change if some relevant studies on reflective practice and educational transformation have been strongly developed so far? Looking for some possible answers to these questions I find some place to discuss some tensions and stories of interruption (MURPHY, 2004). That is, I think, a plausible reason to write this paper.

1. Theoretical perspectives

In order to show the stories interrupted I use some ideas developed by Ritchie (2001). He presents two metaphors to show the way Universities work. In my view, these images can be used for all other levels of Education. Based on the proposal of Ely et al. (1997) and Ely (2007) of a search for different ways of academic writing, I decided to present Ritchie's ideas in poem format.

University Metaphors
 In the University as Monastery
 Philosophical concepts are more important than the content
 Knowledge has an end in itself
 And is important even if the students never use it
 Student's role is to spend hours working on verbs and calculation
 Interaction with the teacher?!
 Just to reverence and respect
 The subject matter is the way through the respect and obedience occur
 Students don't know what is better for them
 This is the teacher's role
 In the University as Business
 Knowledge becomes a product
 Sold in the university plants
 They work hard on marketing and promotion to attract the clients
 The subject matter become line of products
 And can be left out if there is not enough interest to keep them
 Researches are the tools to investigate the quality of services offered
 Students are considered row products
 But they can be transformed into good products
 And so they can get their space in the job market
 Interaction is a contract relationship
 Students needs must be considered and satisfied

Source: Author based on Ritchie (2001, p.50-51)



These two metaphors, University as monastery and University as business, express what I call here a traditional view of the educational system. I call traditional to think that something must be taught even if the students will never have the opportunity to apply that knowledge in real life. I call traditional to think that students must spend hours going mad in order to work on verbs or doing math calculation. I call traditional to use the subject matter to get some respect and obedience from students. I call traditional to think that the teacher is the one always in charge of deciding what is better for the students. I also call traditional to think knowledge is a product to be sold to students because considering this possibility is consider the one who has the product is the teacher and that this product is somewhere ready to be sold. I call traditional to think that the market is something static and ready to absorb the knowledge students bought at the university. And it is also necessary to comment that in this perspective, consider and satisfy the students' needs may have nothing to do with teaching and learning but just with the selling of what students think the job market requires.

My metaphor would be that of a community of learning and practice as pointed out by Wenger (1991) and suggested by Karamavadivelu (2001), also considering learning as socially constructed through its participants' interaction. I believe, as exposed by Scheneuwly (1992), that the language learning development comes from the result of social interaction lived in concrete experiences according to a concept of Vygotsky. So my idea of changing the landscape established in the institution where I carried out this self-study was related to my belief that learning could be meaningful if the students and I had different places from those established through the University as a Monastery or as Business.

Keeping in mind I wanted to create a place in which the students and I could construct our community of learning, I thought it would be good if we created a context in which knowledge were available, so that students could elaborate and construct their own concepts and express them, being aware of what they were learning in order to apply that knowledge in different contexts, as approached by Barth (1993). Thus, I decided to follow the language for specific purposes and genre-based approaches. The story of change told and discussed in this paper has its support also in the concept of learning needs and target-situation (HUTCHINSON & WATERS, 1987; DUDDLEY-EVANS & ST JOHN, 1990) and, the concept of genre (SWALES, 1990; BHATIA, 1993). After a brief needs analysis carried out through conversation with some engineers, I realized the students from an engineering course were expected to use language to write reports and other kind of documents demanded in the Organization's world. But more than just know how to write them I



wanted the students to understand “how texts are perceived, categorized and used by members of a community” (SWALES, 1990, p. 42). Even more than that, I wanted the students to carry out a genre analysis from linguistic description to explanation, so to understand the reasons “why do members of a specialist community write the way they do” (BHATIA, 1993).

But as the focus of this paper is the teacher's journey into trying to change an established educational landscape, now I try to get a narrative sense of the educational system, working on the studies of Cochran Smith and Lytle (1993) and Oyler (1996). I wonder they can help me to construct some different understanding of the educational landscape and the tensions and difficulties faced by teachers to implement changes.

When discussing about the contributions of teacher research that is built inside the classes, Cochran Smith and Lytle (1993) assume that in general it is “the academy who decides what counts as knowledge according to its own traditions”. But they argue that the knowledge constructed inside the classroom can constitute another legitimate arena of formal knowledge and also that the teacher, in this situation, can be seen as an agent for change. I see here a possible different metaphor, the one of a community of learning, which shapes University as a place for teacher and students' stories of local knowledge (CANAGARAJAH, 2002) and relationship construction (CLANDININ & CONNELLY, 2000). In this different educational landscape, teachers and students co-construct teaching and learning in classroom. Both become knowers, learners and research doers. According to these authors, “when teachers redefine their own relationships to knowledge about teaching and learning, they often begin to reconstruct their classroom and to offer different invitations to their students to learn and know” (p.52). However, although this knowledge can contribute to the University it is currently ignored and sometimes invisible. It happens because they can also promote development of the curriculum, generating new knowledge that may affect school reform. And when students and teachers “change their relationship to knowledge they may also realign their relationship to the brokers of knowledge and power in schools and Universities”. (p.52). So, using the dance metaphor I got from Oyler (1996), I see schools expose teachers and students to pre-established calendars, curriculum and formal procedures and it means the rhythm is already chosen. They just have to dance. But when teachers try to bring a different song so students and teachers can dance a different rhythm, they interrupt the traditional story of those keepers and distributors of knowledge (APPLE, 1990a. e 1990b; 2000). I see here a great tension, making it difficult to open a space for change because “teaching against the grain” (COCHRAN-SMITH, 1991) is not so easy. Considering that, I bring again the research



questions kept in my mind during the experience I lived with my students: What can we really change in our practices? What is the role of the student in this changing possibility? Why is it too difficult to create some space for change?

2. Experiencing change

According to Narrative Inquiry Paradigm, a narrative is the phenomenon studied and also the methodology to study it (CLANDININ & CONNELLY, 2000). This kind of research assumes the movement of going backward in order to tell the story, so it is possible to reconstruct it and make meaning of the experience lived. It also assumes the movement of going forward so we can think of ways to relive that experience in future perspectives. The research should also make the movements inward and outward, that means to look at his/her perspective while living and reconstructing the experience, and to think of its perspective to a broad context. Data generated in this inquiry includes researcher field notes and class' diary notes. In the research text, a story is developed to provide ways to understand the experience lived. After explaining how narrative inquiry is carried out, I contextualize and share the stories I lived with my research participants.

In 2003 in Brazil I taught Portuguese to a second year group of an Engineering undergraduate course. I was supposed to teach grammar points, writing activities and ways of writing commercial letters, memos etc. But instead of assuming the role of Mrs. Knows Everything, as in the monastery and business metaphors (RITCHIE, 2001), I decided to invite the students to join in a research project under my supervision. I could have taught them the way they were used to: explanations on the subjects following the book full of recipes to write good commercial letters, for instance. But I decided we could try to find out what the companies were/are doing in their everyday life, in the real world. Then, I suggested the students that we could turn this idea into a project to be developed during our term. They accepted my invitation. We negotiated the number of groups we would have in class and the number of students in each group. The class, with a number of 60 students, was divided in 10 groups with 6 students each. Through a brainstorm activity, the students and I organized a list of type of writing documents to be studied and I presented a guideline so that they could face their journey as they were assuming a researcher role. I knew they were also having research methodology classes and that the teacher was teaching them how to develop a research project. So, considering a interdisciplinary approach, our Portuguese classes would help them to learn not only language but also how to carry out a research and it could help them to do a good job



in their methodology classes. Having this in mind, the guideline I provided was developed according to what they were learning in the research methodology classes (elaboration of a research project, discussion about research aims, data collect, data analysis and research presentation). So, by implementing the idea of developing this research project with my students I was trying to change the class having the students working in-group and to create space for autonomous learning (KARAMAVADIVELU, 2001), since the teacher was not the only one in charge of constructing knowledge in class. I was also trying to create a space for research, so we could really construct a community of learning, as suggested by Karamavadivelu (2001) and according to the metaphor I chose to live.

Besides having the students develop a research project, my curriculum choice of studying the way companies keep their writing documents was connected to other two aspects. First, I saw a chance to work with genre in an atmosphere where they are authentically produced. Although I know there are many books offering patterns for those interested in learning how to write different genres used in the business field, it could be a good idea to have some up dated examples from the companies. We would not study about genre theory but the way they were produced in the world of practice (BARTH, 1993; BHATIA, 1993; RAMOS, 2004). In addition, the students were supposed to investigate in the companies where they worked, so it could be also worthwhile for them since it was part of their everyday lives. Second, I designed this project as a response to the controversial student statement that we have just theory at schools and theory does not help them in their practice, since companies have their own rules to be followed. As stated by Freire (1998, p. 380), studying samples of texts produced in the students own work activities can enable them not only to interact with language but also with their experiential continuum, creating opportunities to perceive job activities as potential learning situations. Following the ideas already exposed, I was turning our subject matter from a grammar-based approach to a genre-based approach constructed in practice and not theoretically.

After having the student's agreement about our research project we started working on it. First, I explained them how that assignment should be carried out and some criteria to be assumed in order to have the data collected, analyzed and presented in class. I established that our first step would be to have each group choosing a type of document. After that they should collect their data and bring them to class and then they could start analyzing them and organizing their presentation. Going through our first step, with the students' help through a brainstorm activity, we listed many kinds of documents on the board and each group decided which one they would choose for carrying out their research.



Most of the documents listed were the ones students knew were written in their companies, but we also included those they were expected to write or read in their everyday lives at the University, for example. The documents listed were memos, meeting reports, internal communications (CI), newsletters, e-mails, business letters, minutes book, informative, descriptive memorial, requisitioning and circular. Each group should analyze five examples of a document they would collect in different companies. As there were more than five students in each group it wouldn't be difficult to have it done. Each one in a group could bring a copy of the same kind of document from one different company. I told them the name of the companies should be omitted by deleting them from the document studied. The criteria for collecting the documents were: being an authentic one (a real one used in the companies' everyday routine and not from books), as suggested by Ramos (2004); being up dated and also being different. If one document were being written in the same way in different companies, then students should try other companies since the main idea was to compare different writing styles of one kind of document. Two weeks later they should bring what they collected to class so I could supervise and help them as far as their data were concerned. I was worried they had some difficulty to get the documents and in that case some changes could be made. I also wanted to check if the criteria were being followed. As soon as they had collected their data, then we would go to our second step – the data analysis. The guideline to analyze the documents was related to content, language use and differences in the way a document is produced in one company to another. Basically the research questions of our guidelines were: Which department or people in companies are in charge of writing this kind of document? What is this kind of document used for? What kind of language (formal, informal, other) is used? What are the documents differences from one company to another? Are there mistakes or misuse of language? Are the documents produced in companies different from the examples and theories established in the literature? Doing so I expected we could try to characterize that type of text studied but it would be done as a result of our research and not from the patterns suggested in the academic literature. While analyzing their data the students were told to highlight some examples or evidences of their findings. If they were assuming the type of document analyzed to be formal they had to show linguistics evidences of that, for instance. Among others, these two steps of collecting corpus and analyzing its linguistics structure are suggested by Bhatia (1993). Our third step was having the work presentation. We arranged the dates for each group to have it and we established a schedule for the term. The presentation should be similar to those communication presented in conferences, so each group



would have fifteen minutes to expose their work. Projector and power point equipments would be provided. Each group could choose their own way of presenting their findings, but I just established that all participants of a group presenting a work should not be absent and besides questions would be addressed to all participants and not only for those in charge of speaking, if it were the case. Each group should also leave a copy of the work presented to be shared with all students in class.

According to the institution's class plan, we should have eighteen classes a term. In order to cope with all the project steps, some of our classes were used to have the proposal discussed and the groups organized, besides the topics chosen. Then, the groups would have two weeks to start collecting the data and bringing them to class so I could talk to each one in our class. During those two weeks the students had to collect their data, I chose, analyzed and presented one document, a piece of a contract I collected at the web, in class in order to make students more confident about the way a research could be carried out and presented in a research seminar or conference. I could have asked them to develop their researches as homework so I could cover the institutional curriculum plan but I decided it should be a project to be developed in classroom. My aim was to have all the analysis and presentation organization developed in class in an interactive manner within the students and also with my help and my supervision. Doing so, our classes became work in progress sessions. Doing so we changed the classroom landscape. Another aim I had was having the students living a different way of learning and teaching. I also wanted them to experience a different way of being evaluated in opposition to the tests they were used to have at that institution. But even so at the end of the term, students were afraid of being betrayed because they knew every teacher was expected to test them with a final exam and our group would have a different story. We had negotiated they would be evaluated by their participation during all the work in progress sessions and also by their final presentation. We did have a test but it was like a cover story we created just in case the institution asked me to leave it with the coordinator. I assured my students they would be graded by their process and final product (research presentation) in a formative way and not by that sheet of paper filled at the last day of class, as usually done at many institution. My students and I were dancing a different rhythm. But what were the consequences of that changing for the students and for me as a teacher? What were the consequences for other teachers and for other classroom landscapes? What about the Institution?

In the beginning, the students were afraid of what I was proposing. They were used to having a teacher in front of the classroom telling



them what they should or should not do and also saying what was wrong or right and what to study for the final exams. Sometimes they expressed that, asking me lots of times “what do you really want us to do, teacher?” A little bit incredulous they insisted “Ok, bring some texts and analyze them in class, is that really what we are supposed to do?” Some of them also looked at me in a suspicious manner because they thought I was just killing some class time. They also thought I did not want to work and that was the reason why I refused to be a “real teacher” lecturing every week. It was funny to see that. As Cochran and Lytle (1993) express, when teachers are developing different activities from those expected in the educational landscape, they are considered not working. I tried to persuade the students giving them the reason why I was being a different teacher. I talked to them about our educational system, about the companies’ environment; about the world transformation as a way of showing them we really needed some changes in the educational landscape. I told them I was aware of what we were doing in class because I was not only a teacher but also a researcher, always in charge of turning the classroom into a place for constructing knowledge and not only working on “sameness”. Without naming, I talked to them about the monastery and business metaphors, also trying to say we could live a different metaphor, a different dance in class. Even so, students thought it was a little bit unusual to have a teacher going around the class and “visiting” the groups and talking about their work in progress. Sometimes I just paid attention to their discussion and just interfered if they asked me to do so. Somehow they could not see that we were creating knowledge! At the end of the term, for example, a student came to talk to me and said he was worried about his grade, since the class was not like real Portuguese classes with grammar points and so many spelling corrections. He thought somehow we had wasted our time and he was afraid of being betrayed at evaluation time, understood by him as a test.

Although it seems the institution did not officially forbid me to carry out this experience, since the students and I were the only ones in classroom, it was in the institution’s atmosphere. I was not working the way the institution wanted me to and I could be in trouble. Because of the official story established in the institution I knew I could face some problems. That is why I was also afraid of what we were doing. But my reasons were different from the students’ ones. For example, I was afraid of being blamed by the coordinator for not having followed the class plan. In my institution the students were evaluated (tested) in the middle of the term through a similar exam applied to all groups in the same

¹ According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), teachers live sacred, secret and cover stories. In this case, cover stories are those a teacher can create in order to protect his or her work and also their students.



grade. It meant all the classes (there were more than five in the same level) had to be prepared to face the same exercises. It was a kind of institutional exam and every teacher had to teach being always in the same page so they could be sure students would be really prepared for the mid term exam. What if my students did not succeed well? What if they could not answer questions about punctuation, syntactic rules and spelling? We covered all that or at least part of that during our discussions and research presentations, but we did that in a different way. We covered grammar as part of our discussions and not as an isolated topic. As Berra (2002,p.36) says, “traditionally, Portuguese language teaching in Brazil turns to exploring normative grammar, in its prescriptive perspective...” In the experience lived with my students, I knew we did not work on exceptions or abstractions (APPLE, 1999; 2000) as most of teachers usually did, focusing mainly on grammar rules and pieces of language out of context and, unfortunately, most of the times that was exactly what was demanded from students during the exams. So, maybe my students were not really able or prepared for that kind of test since we were studying the forest and not breaking knowledge into pieces so I could offer the students a b c d options for answer. I was also afraid the coordinator heard “I was not teaching” but just helping the students to develop their work in progress. At the teachers’ room I heard my friends saying they had already covered this or that grammar point and they seemed so proud of that and sometimes I blamed myself for not doing the same. On the other hand I was happy with our work! I was proud of myself for trying to develop research in the classroom. That is the way I understood/understand studying. As soon as the groups were bringing and presenting their contribution, I felt we could have good findings about the ways companies develop writing. I believed in the type of class and the curriculum we were constructing. I was not the only one in charge of teaching, I was trying to have a community of practice and of learning where everybody could learn from everybody.

I was so curious about what could be that difference students pointed out when they said writing in companies was not similar to the way they learned writing skills in class. Why the theories do not fit the way writing is developed in companies, I asked myself. What kind of knowledge would we construct living our research experience? During our student-teacher learning process I learned so much about the way companies are developing their communication. We do have much to tell, considering the questions concerned to a language genre-based approach when teaching in writing courses, as discussed lately in the Linguistics’ field. Freire (1998), for example, assumes that “this approach would involve students in discussing samples of their routine correspondence and would constitute an indirect way of exploring



written genres in a teaching/learning situation”. This author is referring to ESP courses in Brazil but the idea can also be applied to our first language. Understanding the way genres (YATES, 1989; SWALES, 1990; BHATIA, 1993) have been developed in authentic contexts may help students to learn them instead of just being introduced to grammar points and genre recipes to be followed as usually done in the University I was working for. Our findings about it will be further presented in another paper. As said before, what is being focused here is the way the students and I lived that experience of changing the classroom story, going from a monastery/business University metaphor to a learning community metaphor.

3. Making Meaning of our Experience

In order to interpret and make meaning of the experience lived I conducted a thematic analysis as suggested by van Manen (1990).

Looking at the stories lived and the way the students and I lived that different experience, I can see one main theme as story thread: It is “scared”. The students were scared of being in charge of the classes and responsible for their work in progress. They were also scared of being betrayed at the end of the term by being evaluated through a final test and not by the research carried out. On the other hand, I was scared of being required to have my students doing well on the required institutional tests. I was also scared students would tell the coordinator I was not teaching. But why be scared if we were doing nothing but studying? Maybe we were scared because we were living a “liminal space” experience. According to Kennedy (2001, p. 130), a liminal space is one we are in-between what was and what might be. Applying this idea, my students and I were living in between the traditional University metaphors and a possible different one I had proposed. As a teacher, I was trying such a great change, dispositioning (VINZ, 1995a) not only the subject matter but also the students’ way of being in class (organized in groups instead of being in rows) and studying since they were living a researcher story of constructing knowledge in practice. I was also changing the teacher’s role in class and considering all those changes, we were drawing a different classroom landscape.

But thinking about the research questions I raised in the beginning of my journey, some topics need to be pointed out. Based on the experience lived, I can say much can be changed in teachers’ practice. However, considering that in the story lived with my students, in which I, as a teacher, was still the one in charge of suggesting a new path, I wonder how my role was different from the traditional one I was trying to avoid. I could have asked the students to decide what kind of project



we would carry out and how it would be done, for example. Doing so we could have had a more collaborative experience. Even so I would be the one asking for something or suggesting another path. It makes me wonder if it is not utopia to think we can totally disposition the teacher from his/her role in class. However, analyzing the way the project was developed, much has changed. I was not the expert placed in front of the class imposing the students some content (in this case, grammar rules as usually required and done in the institution studied) to be memorized. We were all a community, a group of students trying to construct knowledge about documents written in organizational sets. I left my place in front of the class and put myself between the students in the classroom.

Bringing my second question, related to the place of students in a change possibility, I wonder what could have happened if students had completely refused to put the project in practice. Somehow it seems that because the teachers' place as the strongly established authority in class, students tend to "accept" everything, still keeping a passive attitude. Based on the experience lived, I believe it is too difficult for the students to see themselves and the teacher as a community, sharing the space of knowledge construction. They couldn't see me as one interested in their findings but just as a teacher ready to evaluate them. So it seems I am going to my third question that is related to the difficulties to change an educational established landscape.

As Connelly and Clandinin (1999) say, our story was interrupting a traditional story lived at schools, which can be connected to the monastery and business metaphors. Although there are lots of studies related to the need for change in the educational system as pointed out by Apple (1990a), most school stories are still one of having the teacher lecturing in front of the students. As pointed out by Pimenta (2002), the class plans are usually made previously by the institution and then teachers are invited to cover that content. And even when teachers are invited to make some suggestions, from my personal practical knowledge (CLANDININ & CONNELLY, 1995) I can say that just what is expected by the institution is accepted, since most of the coordinators and also most of the teachers or instructors are still following a traditional educational paradigm. I remember some meetings I had when my suggestions were refused because the other teachers were afraid of losing their authority and power in the classroom. So as Torgovnic (1994, p.7) says, "Difference is not only unwelcome, it is unacceptable." The idea of transforming the classroom into a learning community was really interrupting the monastery and business stories lived by the other teachers; the stories of the way students were used to studying; the stories of evaluation and the stories of teaching Portuguese.



When I told some friends, teachers from the teacher's room, my experience of changing, they said they liked the ideas but even so they kept on saying they would keep themselves doing the same (and the same in language teaching means focus on grammar). It might happen because at the bottom of their hearts they do believe it has to be the beginning, and besides being teacher means having something to transmit to students. Some of them might consider the University as a monastery and there they are ready to decide what is good for the students and to demand discipline. Some might see the University as business and there they are ready to give the students the package they suppose can be delivered straight at the job market.

Many educators say changing the educational landscape takes time and patience. Celani (private communication occurred on research seminar at PUC/SP-Brazil) says teachers work as little ants that is why we can change just a little but somehow it can be enough if we consider that there are lots of little ants working hard to change something. Considering the metaphor of education as a parade (CONNELLY & CLANDININ, 1999), Murphy (private communication occurred during the Narrative Inquiry course, winter, 2004 at CRTED-University of Alberta, CA) thinks sometimes teachers can change just part of the parade, the part that is closer to us. I agree with him, but sometimes something deep inside makes me feel unsatisfied. I would like to see the parade going somewhere else. Even being convinced the students also need to be involved and engaged in trying to make the parade to change, sometimes I just wonder why it seems too difficult to have some change in the educational field. And when I say educational field I also include the way research on education is produced.

4. Reliving Stories

When I look back to my experience with my students from the Engineering course, I see I am trying to develop research in a non-traditional form. Since I was introduced to the idea of reflective teaching (SCHON, 1987) I have tried to transform my classroom into a space for research. But instead of being the researcher in class I have tried to have the students also working as researchers so we can be a community of learning and practice. I am the one who is writing this paper but I have invited the students to have a seminar presentation in a conference someday. I couldn't have it done yet, but I am really interested in convincing the students we can do it. But my desires do not end here. As a teacher educator, I also have thought about having some papers co-authored with some research participants, as I have seen in the work of Huber and Whelan (2000). And still thinking about changes, I am



seriously interested in developing a non-traditional writing in my papers, because I believe the language we use has to be coherent with the ideas we develop. I have tried this change during my master journey (MELLO, 1999) and in some papers I publish (MELLO, 2003). I have insistently used the language of Arts based research (DIAMOND, 1999) with the metaphors and poems, and the telling and living of stories (CLANDININ & CONNELLY, 2000).

I have tried to use these languages because I consider the researcher is for the teachers what the teachers are for their students. So, if as a teacher I consider the students and I can behave differently, trying to create a community of learning, so I do have to consider the same with the researches I develop. I want to share our findings in a way it can create a place for inclusion and not exclusion. This inclusion I am referring to is related to what Apple (1999, 2000) says when talking about the need to not distance researchers from all those who might be interested in the content discussed and not only those in the academic arena, even if it is published in an academic journal. As this author says, it is necessary to avoid overtheorization so our discourse is as clear as possible and available to a larger community. "I don't want to dictate theories to be followed or be inaccessible and unrelated to the everyday realities of teaching (COCHRAN & LYTLE, 1993) but to be in the parade (CLANDININ & CONNELLY, 2000) as an insider. From my point of view, the language of arts, stories can fit this aim. According to Coles (1989), we need "more stories and less theory". However it is sometimes hard to try this road of change. Hooks (1997) tell us she was told it could be easier to have her work published if she turned it into conventional prose, telling a linear story moving from point A to point B. As a teacher I can have secret stories (CLANDININ & CONNELLY, 1995) and change the classroom metaphor, but I wonder if changes in the academic writing (whatever it is, as questioned by BATESON, 1989), wouldn't help teachers and students to change their practices.

Final Reflections

While thinking about the way I re-visited my experiences and how I carried out this paper I realized I've been living in a world of becoming stories to live by. I realized the teachers I enjoyed most during my life as a student were (and still are) those who brought something different to classroom. That difference could be the way they managed the class, the way content was developed, the way our relationship were and their explanation and reflection on the reasons why those changes should be carried out. Somehow they created a different classroom landscape that made me feel anywhere else but not in a classroom. In those different



landscapes, knowledge was constructed through life. I also realized I am trying to find places for changing my classrooms landscape and I have been trying to have my students engaged in that journey. But even showing the students the reasons why we should change, it has not been an easy task. It has been difficult to work being afraid of those in charge of coordinating and managing educational institutions, based on the monastery and business metaphors. It has been difficult to face the students' resistance. It has been difficult to keep on going to the opposite side most of teachers are going to, and doing so I am always working against the grain. It has been difficult to feel like a little ant. It has been also difficult to fit my personal way of writing into the academic landscape. As Cochran and Lytle (1993) say, when we try to change our relationship with knowledge we change the class, our relationship with students and the school system can be affected. However, despite of all difficulties I will keep myself going and taking the risk of being a different teacher and a different researcher, because as pointed out by Palmer (1996, p. 56) I do believe "That's what education means _ to be able to do what you've never done before."

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