# Life Narratives: The Identity Constitution of Elderly Individuals in a Long-Term Care Facility

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**Abstract:** Population aging is an increasing reality in Brazil, making it essential to understand and appreciate the identity of the elderly, who constitute a significant portion of the population. In this context, the primary objective of this research is to investigate how identities are linguistically and textually constructed by elderly residents of Lar São Vicente de Paulo, a Long-Term Care Institution for the Elderly (ILPI) in Balsas, Maranhão, as well as to give voice and visibility to the residents. This study adopts a qualitative and interpretative approach, employing Narrative Analysis and Conversation Analysis as tools to explore how the elderly construct their identities through oral narratives. Through the life stories shared by two participants, the study seeks to identify textual markers of identity and understand how life experiences influence the construction of their identities and their perspectives on life within a Long-Term Care Institution.

**Keywords:** Narratives; São Vicente Home; Elderly; Identity.

## I.    INTRODUCTION

According to the World Health Organization (OMS), an elderly person is any individual aged 60 or over. According to the Population Projection released in 2021 by the IBGE, Brazil has more than 31.2 million people in this age group, a number that represents 14.7% of the country's population (IBGE, 2021).

The elderly population is expected to grow in Brazil in the coming decades and, in order for today's and tomorrow's elderly to have a good quality of life, it is necessary to guarantee rights such as health, work, social assistance, education, culture, sports, housing and means of transport. In Brazil, these rights are regulated by the National Policy for the Elderly, as well as by the Statute for the Elderly, enacted in 1994 and 2003, respectively. Both documents should serve as guidelines for public policies and initiatives aimed at regulating the interests and guarantees of the elderly.

According to Camarano and Kanso (2010, p. 01), "population aging in Brazil is occurring in a context of major social, cultural, economic, institutional changes and changes in the configuration of family arrangements". However, the certainty of growth in this population segment is being accompanied by uncertainty about the care conditions that the oldest old will experience. This requires that the State and the private market share with the family the responsibilities of caring for the elderly population.

"In this context, one of the existing non-family care alternatives is Long-Term Care Institutions for the Elderly (ILPIs), whether public or private" (Camarano; Kanso, 2010, p. 03). These institutions are intended for the collective residence of people aged 60 or over, with or without family support and in conditions of freedom, dignity and citizenship.

However, living in these institutions is not a common practice in Brazilian society. Although Brazil is making great strides towards becoming a country with a predominantly elderly population, it is necessary to neutralize the negative stereotypes related to old age so that we can understand the changes in

today's society and the need to have a good structure for adequate care, aiming at promoting health and the physical, mental, emotional and social well-being of this population.

In researching the elderly at Lar São Vicente de Paulo in Balsas - MA, in addition to the general objective of investigating how identities are constructed linguistically and textually by the elderly, the aim is to give a voice to the residents of a Long-Term Care Institution, investigate how the elderly weave their discourses in relation to the place in which they are inserted and analyze the conceptions of identity constructed in the discourses of the subjects/narrators in their life stories to highlight the textual marks of identity, providing them with a space to tell their life stories, relive their memories and think about what they have experienced in a process that involves the past, present and perspectives for the future. By telling stories, the elderly will be sharing knowledge they once had and through interaction and discourse they will build their identities and those of the group.

Narratives and identities emerge from spontaneous social contexts, and discursivity is a privileged lens for investigating social practices and personal experiences. This perception of knowing the stories of the elderly, which constitute a representation of society and reality, will allow us to reflect on institutions, the aging process, and the problems faced by individuals who are often marginalized. This is a discussion that is essential for a society that is unaware of the identity constructions of the elderly, which makes it important and necessary to diagnose them through the memory of the experiences of the individuals.

The research focuses on investigating narratives as an instrument for analyzing discursive production with the aim of investigating how narrators discursively construct their identities. The meanings of narratives are contained in the stories that are told, in the memories that connect the present and the past, and in the images that are constructed from them (Hall, 2006). According to De Fina (2015), narratives are seen as the main vehicle for expressing identity, since the stories we tell reveal who we are.

Conversational practices constitute a privileged locus for investigating the linguistic-discursive nature, as well as social and semantic phenomena intertwined in the understanding of the relations between language and social organization. Thus, Conversation Analysis, a theoretical framework that supports this research, is used to analyze how identities emerge in oral narratives circumscribed in linguistics.

## II.    THE ELDERLY IN BRAZIL

The 2021 census by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) found that there are approximately 31.2 million elderly people in Brazil, 14.7% of the country's population. According to the OMS (World Health Organization), "elderly" is defined as any human being aged 60 or over. The survey also states that by 2043, a quarter of the Brazilian population will be elderly, surpassing the percentage of children aged 0 to 14 years old.

Given the data, a good structuring of public policies will be necessary to serve this large portion of the population, which needs access to health, education, sports, leisure, culture, transportation and social assistance, in order to achieve longevity with vitality.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the treatment and care for the elderly were very different. "The prevailing concept in Brazil was that of segregating the elderly, giving rise to the practice of hospitalizations in nursing homes, which proliferated during this period, in a logic that concealed social, political and economic aspects." (Veras; Oliveira, 2018). For this reason, it was only in the 1960s that a welfare policy emerged, that is, a policy that basically consisted of small, discontinuous and philanthropic aid with donations.

With the enactment of the 1988 constitution, there was a change in the view regarding aging, and this constitution guaranteed several rights to the elderly, including:

- Art. 230. The family, society and the State have the duty to support the elderly, ensuring their participation in the community, defending their dignity and well-being and guaranteeing their right to life.

- § 1º Support programs for the elderly will be carried out preferably in their homes.

- § 2º Those over sixty-five years of age are guaranteed free urban public transportation.

The first legal milestone was on January 4, 1994, when the National Policy for the Elderly, Law No. 8.842 was sanctioned. According to Art. 1º of Law No. 8.842/1994, the objective of this law is to "ensure the social rights of the elderly, creating conditions to promote their autonomy, integration and effective participation in society". This law ensured that care for the elderly was prioritized in public and private service providers, when they were homeless and without family, and supported research and studies related to aging, which was the result of several discussions in the country and abroad.

Another important policy was the creation of the National Health Policy for the Elderly (PNSI), created through Ordinance No. 1,395, of December 10, 1999, by the Ministry of Health, responsible for targeting health care/recovery during old age to ensure a healthy and lasting old age. At the time, it received several criticisms due to what the document claimed did not match the Brazilian reality, especially the economic one.

Brazil is a country with considerable legislation that guarantees the rights of the elderly, but, in any case, aging in all its nuances is a topic that should always be discussed, since it is recurrent by nature to everyone and that in the coming decades there will be a large number of elderly people in the country. Many elderly people in Brazil are sent to long-term care facilities for the elderly, which were established in Brazil in the mid-19th century, the first being the São Luiz Asylum for the elderly in Rio de Janeiro. According to ANVISA, the National Health Surveillance Agency, long-term care facilities are government and non-government institutions designed to provide comprehensive care, offering housing with conditions of freedom and dignity to people aged 60 or over, with or without the support of their family members, with varying degrees of dependency.

The use of the term "long-term care facility for the elderly" began in specialized committees of the Brazilian Society of Geriatrics and Gerontology (SBGG). These institutions are still recognized today as social assistance institutions, according to Resolution of the Board of Directors 283/2005 of ANVISA and Resolution SS 123/2001 of the National Policy for the Elderly and the Statute of the Elderly. Although there are documents that designate them as health services, social assistance services and nursing home care services, such as systems such as the SUS, for example, the needs of residents are not at the discretion of the State or the system, but rather of the institutions themselves.

Until recently, it was not known how many ILPIs there were in Brazil, what work they did, how many individuals they housed and what their origins were, until a survey in 2010 conducted by doctors in demography and public health Ana Amélia Camarano and Solange Kanso between 2007 and 2009. The authors revealed that, in Brazil, there is no consensus on what an ILPI is. Their origin is linked to nursing homes, "initially aimed at the needy population that needed shelter, as a result of Christian charity in the absence of public policies" (Camarano; Kanso, 2010, p. 02). The authors conducted a census survey of 3.549 ILPIs in the North, Central-West, South, Northeast and Southeast regions of Brazil, with 3.295 institutions participating in the survey. It was found that 65.2% of these institutions are philanthropic, with varying degrees of government support, only 6.6% are public and the majority of those created between 2000 and 2009 are private initiatives that aim for profit.

There are several difficulties faced by the elderly in society today. In addition to many not having access to basic human rights that should be guaranteed by the State, many suffer from health problems, all the harm caused by abandonment, family neglect and isolation, since there are still few philanthropic Long-Term Care Institutions in Brazil, and there are still stigmas created around old age that generate fear of aging and often prejudice against the elderly. This prejudice is also called "ageism" or "etarism" and Palmore (1999, p. 4, apud. Loth; Silveira, 2013) defines ageism even better "[...] as any prejudice or discrimination against or in favor of an age group. [...] it is the inappropriate negative treatment of members of that age group". In Brazil, this is seen "in families, in government agencies, in the health system, in the wage labor market and throughout the media". Goldani (2010, p. 01) also points out that in Western society youth is highly revered and old age becomes a source of shame.

Considering the way the elderly population has grown and the evolution of laws that protect their rights and criminalize forms of prejudice, in addition to public policies of inclusion and that promote longevity,

it is still necessary to raise awareness around this issue, it is necessary to give voice and visibility to the elderly in order to deconstruct the prejudices that still exist in Brazilian society "whoever accumulates years of life is the living being par excellence, the elderly represent a concentrated Being and, as such, a subject of honor" (Santos; Encarnação, 1997, p.33). By presenting this work and bringing the life stories of the elderly at Lar São Vicente de Paulo, there is an attempt to encourage the appreciation that the residents need to have and to draw attention to the invisibility they have in society.

### III.　　CONVERSATIONAL STRATEGIES AND IDENTITIES

Conversation analysis, an interdisciplinary field of research, reveals the complexity of human communication beyond verbal elements. This research approach goes beyond isolated linguistic structures and investigates the pragmatic and social subtleties that permeate everyday interactions through the act of conversation, "the most common social practice in human life" (Marcuschi, 2003, p. 5). In this sense, according to Marcuschi (2003, p. 6), conversation analysis "develops a privileged space for the construction of social identities in a real context", a characteristic that contributes to the objective of the research, which is to investigate how the elderly at Lar São Vicente de Paulo in the city of Balsas, Maranhão, construct their identities through verbal interactions.

In the early 1960s, AC (Conversation Analysis) studies, according to Marcuschi (2003), were concerned with the descriptions of linguistic structures generated by conversational social interactions, their organization, which involves grammar and lexicon. Today it is more than that, linguistic, paralinguistic, social and cultural aspects are observed, therefore the problem moves from "organization to interpretation" (Marcuschi, 2003, p. 64). Despite this, AC is not something disorderly, it has order, as well as its own methodological characteristics:

> AC proceeds by induction: there are no a priori models. It is based on empirical data in real situations. Hence, it does not consider as adequate the materials of "conversations" extracted from literary works, films, plays or TV soap operas, no matter how faithful they may seem, since these will always be constructions reproducing our intuition of real speech. This primacy of the empirical gives CA a naturalistic vocation with few quantitative analyses, with qualitative descriptions and interpretations still prevailing. (Marcuschi, 2003, p.7)

In other words, although there are criteria for carrying out conversations within the AC so that they are appropriate or not, these do not have pre-established models such as interviews with closed questions and expected answers, since conversations, as explained by the author, have an empirical character.

The transcription of interactions is also very important for their scientific study. According to Marcuschi, there is no "best" transcription, since "all are more or less good" (Marcuschi, 2003, p. 9), but there are still basic rules for making transcriptions, for example, fidelity to the original content is crucial. Marcuschi (2003) emphasizes the importance of accurate transcriptions for a comprehensive understanding, since elements such as pauses, intonation, and overlapping speech are important to reveal the nuances of the interaction, and there is the adoption of certain symbol conventions to mark these elements, such as the use of (+) to indicate a pause of 0.5 seconds or square brackets ([ ]) to indicate overlapping speech with specific characteristics of each conversation, a colon after a vowel to indicate elongation in pronunciation (a::::), and even signs for the researcher to include what is happening during the conversation of a non-verbal nature as a kind of optional comment between "(( ))". Everything that makes it possible to examine language variations, politeness patterns, etc. The "/", in turn, is used to indicate an abrupt stop in speech during a turn and, according to Marcuschi (2003), this can appear in several situations, such as when the speaker is interrupted or practices self-correction during the act. There is also the case of "/.../" to indicate the elimination of some term in the transcription, as is used here to hide proper names.

Marcuschi also addresses the turns that mark the speech of each participant in the conversation, which is essential for their understanding. Turns are understood as "what a speaker does or says while he has the floor" (Marcuschi, 2003, p.18), which also includes the possibility of the absence of speech during a turn, and this silence may also indicate something like a lack of understanding of what the other person said.

Through this type of research, it became possible to investigate how the elderly people at the São Vicente de Paulo home communicate and weave their stories, as well as how they construct their own identity and even how they feel. Here we have an example of a transcript with an elderly woman (Mrs. L) at the moment of an intervention by an employee (B) regarding a response given previously by L about whether or not her children visited:

**Table 1 – Speech by Elderly Woman L**

| 77 | B | you said your children don't come to visit you |
|----|-------|-----------------------------------------------|
| 78 | Mrs.L | Huh |
| 79 | B | she said (+) that they don't come to visit |
| 80 | Mrs.L | no... they take a while but they come (2.0) they come |

Source: prepared by the authors

It is possible to notice that the quotation marks in "huh", positioned at the end, indicate a questioning tone, and the way in which Mrs. L, a fictitious name that will be used, uses the marker "huh" for the other speaker to rephrase her question when Mrs. L did not understand it. It is also possible to observe Mrs. L's self-correction at a later moment, saying that her children are coming to visit her, although, from her point of view, they take a long time. It is also possible to observe the pauses of 0.5 seconds marked by (+) and those longer than that marked by (2.0). Continuing, after the pause, she repeats the last terms from before in line 80, which have a textual organization function, since the repetitions emphasize the information introduced in the conversation.

AC goes beyond the spoken word and enters the realm of social and cultural relations. This approach offers valuable insight into the dynamics of power, identity, and belonging in interaction. By observing the communication strategies used, such as how a strategic pause can express dominance in a conversation, we can interpret not only what is said but also the underlying subtexts. This reveals the norms and practices that govern communication in different groups and contexts, contributing to a deeper understanding of social dynamics. Through this lens, we can deconstruct the social structure underlying our daily interactions, "it is the most common social practice in the daily lives of human beings" (Marcuschi, 2003, p. 1).

Conversation analysis is a journey that takes us beyond words, revealing the complexity of communicative exchange and its social effects. Literal precision and sensitive interpretation of communication allow scholars and researchers to explore the deep dimensions of language and human sociability, as well as the way in which people construct their own identity in relation to themselves and others. In this sense, CA not only enriches the understanding of languages, but also connects us with the cultural and social roots that shape our communication, as well as the life experiences of each speaker.

The question of what, why and how "identity" is constructed is something that permeates human life, unconsciously or consciously, throughout their lives. From this, studies to investigate these questions have become increasingly recurrent.

The British-Jamaican sociologist Stuart Hall is one of the leading authors in this line of research, as he has written about the issue of identity in contemporary times, discussing the fragmentation of the identity of the modern subject due to changes in the world, based on the idea that there are three types of subjects, each with their own conception of identity, with the contemporary subject being his focus.

The first subject is the subject of the Enlightenment; the second, the sociological subject; and the third, the postmodern subject, "conceptualized as having no fixed, essential or permanent identity" (Hall, 2006, p.12).

These categories offer a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that contribute to the formation of identity, encompassing natural, institutional, communicative and social elements.

In view of this, this research analyzes how the elderly at Lar São Vicente de Paulo, individuals who were not born in post modernity but are inherent to it, base themselves on these conceptions of identity, exploring not only how they see themselves today, but also how they saw themselves in the past, in a different era, a time that is portrayed in the stories told, in memories, observing "what kind of people" they were throughout their lives and how they feel in the face of these changes.

This construction of the self is done through narratives, which, in turn, are texts that concern the act of telling stories and, therefore, can be defined "[...] as the discourse constructed in the act of telling stories in everyday or institutional contexts, in so-called spontaneous situations or in an interview situation for social research" (Bastos; Biar, 2015, p. 99).

De Finna and Georgakopoulou (2008) also note the mutual importance of narratives and AC for each other, since the narratives that serve to generate data arise in conversations and interactions; at the same time, AC makes it possible to analyze the stories told through the processes of transcribing them.

With regard to language and human communication, people also assume positions (Harré; Van Langenhove 1999), for example, when, in a story, someone produces the sentence "I don't like the color pink", they assume a place, a position in the conversation about a certain taste. When telling a story, narrators do the same, they assume positions.

Davies and Harré (1990, p. 48 apud. Bamberg, 2005, p. 336) better conceptualized positioning as a discursive practice "where individuals are located in conversations as observable and intersubjectively coherent participants in jointly produced narratives", that is, during social interactions, people are actively placed in roles and positions through discourse and communication, and these positions are jointly constructed by the participants.

In this type of analysis, "one can discuss the phenomenon of identity as the "agent positioning" of the narrator in the narrative" (Moutinho; Conti, 2016, p. 2). Through linguistic elements within the discourses, the narrator positions himself and constructs his identity, giving as an example the use or not of the personal pronoun "I" at certain moments, in the use of chronotopes (Bakhtin's concept apud. De Fina, 2016), which indicates time-spatial markers such as "here", "there", "today", "yesterday" and so on).

Bamberg (2005) established three levels of analysis of positioning. The first concerns how the characters are positioned in relation to each other within the narrative.

At the second level, focused on questions of interaction, the analysis concerns how the narrator positions himself in relation to the listener/listeners. It is possible to observe here, for example, the narrator's objective in narrating that story.

At the third level of analysis, it is possible to observe how the narrator positions himself for himself, the narrators considered how they want their narrative to be perceived by the listeners and how this relates to their own identity. By the way, about the third level, Bamberg (2005) highlights that,

> By constructing the content and its audience in terms of role-players, the narrator transcends the question, "How do I want to be understood by you, the audience?" and constructs a (local) answer to the question, "Who am I?" However, at the same time, we must caution that any attempt to answer this question is not necessarily one that applies to all contexts, but rather a project of limited scope. (Bamberg, 2005, p. 337).

In other words, even though at this level there is an attempt by the narrator to answer for himself "who am I?", this answer is temporary, related to the context of that interaction.

The analysis of positioning proposed by Bamberg (2005) is crucial to understanding how the construction of identities in narratives occurs in a social and interactional context. This approach provides

valuable conceptual and methodological tools to explore how identities are shaped, communicated and experienced through stories.

## IV.     STORIES AND IDENTITIES: LIFE NARRATIVES OF ELDERLY PEOPLE

The research was conducted at Lar São Vicente de Paulo, a non-profit philanthropic institution linked to the Catholic Church that is maintained through donations received from the community in general, the Catholic Church, and assistance from the city of Balsas - MA in paying the salaries of three of the seventeen employees. With the COVID-19 pandemic, the state government began to help with food donations and some tax receipts. Another source that helps maintain the Institution is the 70% of the retirement benefits of the elderly who live in the home that are used to cover expenses.

The data used in this research were collected in narrative interviews with two elderly women from Lar São Vicente de Paulo identified as L and M in the form of audio recordings transcribed according to Marcushi's model (2003). This chapter will be based on the analysis of the transcripts obtained in the interactions and the analyses will be divided into: The Language of the Elderly, Who Am I, and How the Narrators Construct Themselves.

## V.     THE LANGUAGE OF THE ELDERLY

The way we communicate is influenced by a variety of factors, such as gender, religion, geographic location, education, age group, etc. The language used by the elderly, for example, is influenced, like that of any other age group, by their life experiences, cultural aspects, physical and psychological conditions such as hearing problems, and dementia, which is not specifically a disease but "a clinical syndrome characterized by cognitive decline and/or behavioral (neuropsychiatric) changes in relation to a previous level of performance" (Scientific Department of Cognitive Neurology and Aging of the Brazilian Academy of Neurology, 2022), which is why it affects memory, language, and reasoning.

Preti (1991, apud. Casotti, 2011) states that it is common for elderly people over 80 years of age to have a different way of communicating. It is very common for there to be many pauses, overlapping voices, non-consensual or non-requested inputs in the interlocutor's turn, and abandonment of segments in their interactions, which can harm the temporal segment and the coherence of the narrative. The linguist argues that the speed of transformations in contemporary life contrasts violently with the natural decline in the elderly's abilities, especially in linguistic communication, reflected in the impatience in listening to and understanding them, which characterizes our society, especially urban ones (Preti, 2004, p. 40 apud. Casotti, 2011, p.130).

Even with these peculiarities in the language of the elderly, not seeking to listen to and study their narratives, as well as looking at them with a prejudiced and impatient view, would be yet another way of marginalizing this social group, of silencing them. As Blix (2016, p. 37) states in her work on the importance of untold stories, "we need to listen to the stories of people with dementia and mental health service users. If we don't, we will deprive them of their voices."

There is the example of Mrs. L, a woman living in the São Vicente de Paulo home with hearing, memory and, mainly, comprehension problems. Therefore, it was necessary to raise the tone of her voice and direct the pace of the conversation so that Mrs. L could follow and thus talk about herself, tell her story.

There is also a breach of expectations in the answers to the questions, which could be seen as an inconsistency and could cause this to go unnoticed or even disregarded in canonical studies, hence the need to pay attention to the macro and micro contexts in the analysis of narratives (De Fina; Georgakopolou, 2008). By carefully integrating the analysis of these contexts, scholars can develop more robust and complete interpretations, since the macro context concerns something broader, such as the historical, cultural, and the micro context concerns more specific contexts, such as details of interpersonal relationships.

## VI.     WHO AM I? HOW DO NARRATORS CONSTRUCT THEMSELVES?

The narratives conceived during the research will now be analyzed from the perspective of the construction of the self, how the narrators participating in the research who live in an ILPI construct themselves

based on the stories they carry. One of the participants in the research is an elderly woman over 80 years old. The main similarity between the two is that they live in Lar São Vicente de Paulo by their own choice due to health problems and the lack of availability of family members to take care of them. When telling their stories, they position themselves in the text for themselves and for the listeners, constructing and revealing their identities.

Mrs. L, the narrator of the first story, positions herself according to level 1 of positioning proposed by Bamberg (2005) when she answers the initial question with the feminine possessive pronoun "minha" and the definite article "a" to give emphasis and begin telling her life story and not that of someone else. In table 2, she briefly tells about her origins and journey to Balsas.

**Table 2- Construction of the Self**

| 29 | A | You came here by your own decision here at Lar São Vicente… |
|---|---|---|
| 30 | Mrs.L | it was... |
| 31 | A | it was... |
| 32 33 34 35 36 | Mrs.L | it was my own decision (2.0) I didn't even know São Vicente de Paula… I didn't know it (+) so when I got here (+) I started working there: I came to work here and I'm still here today (++) but it's not good here either… it's like my place: it was better there (+ + ) Fortaleza/ (8.0) |
| 37 | A | what else can you tell me about Mrs. Luiza |
| 38 | Mrs.L | hum" |
| 39 40 | A | what else can you tell me about Mrs. Luiza (+ + ) who are you? |
| 41 | Mrs.L | I have my daughter… and the rest live there |
| 42 | A | in Fortaleza |
| 43 | Mrs.L | Fortaleza/ now Fortaleza is GOOD (+ + ) |
| 44 | A | you already have grandchildren |
| 45 | Mrs.L | Hein |
| 46 | A | you already have grandchildren |
| 47 | Mrs.L | I have/you have a great-grandchild |
| 48 | A | you also have a great-grandchild |
| 49 | Mrs.L | HERE |
| 50 | A | here in Balsas |
| 51 | Mrs.L | here/ (9.0) my grandsons who live here are already marri::ed |
| 52 | A | they already have the:::ir children, their great-grandchildren |
| 53 | Mrs.L | hu:::h |
| 54 56 | Mrs.L | they have/(4.0) his wife is even in confinement now (++) a grandson has two grandchildren already (3.0) |

Source: prepared by the authors

When the narrator says "I came" in line 34, she positions herself according to level 1 as the protagonist of her story again. She also takes this position as a migrant who came from Ceará to Balsas to work. She brought her children with her and stayed here, as she states several times between lines 33 and 35.

Level 3 of positioning proposed by Bamberg (2005) answers the question "how do I want to be understood by you?" In the excerpt above, Mrs. L does this when she talks a lot about Fortaleza, using references such as "there" and "my place" in line 35, which indicates that it is her homeland, giving space for the construction of herself, indicating her geographical origin, which is not Balsas, and always stating that the place where she was born is a "very good" place, but she does not go into detail about why.

De Fina (2016) in his article "Chronotopic identities: On the time space organization of who we are" talks about the complexity of the construction of identities and how these identities are strongly linked to a given time-space configuration:

> [...] in our identity work often require specific spatio-temporal conditions, as shown by the fact that changes in spatio-temporal arrangements trigger complex and sometimes massive changes in roles, discourses, modes of interaction, dress, codes of conduct and criteria for judging appropriate versus inappropriate behavior and so on. (De Fina, 2016 p. 5).

This shows that Mrs. L's affection for her homeland, where her family comes from, reveals the good memories of a time spent in a different place and even a life, a different L from the current one. This change is inherent to her life story and, consequently, is linked to her identity, placing her in the position of someone who misses the place where she was born and the experiences she had there, comparing it with "here" (Balsas) which she previously states is no better than "there" (Fortaleza), demonstrating how she does not feel as much of a part of Balsas.

**Table 3 – Belonging**

| 90 | A | is: and what was the lady's profession? |
|---|---|---|
| 91 | Mrs.M | Farmer |
| 92 | A | was a farmer (+) here in the municipality of Balsas |
| 93 | Mrs.M | is on the farm even though he died /.../ (++) |
| 94 | A | on his farm where you] |
| 95 | Mrs.M | [On his land where my father worked |
| 96 | A | he worked |
| 97 98 99 | Mrs.M | then later we came to live in the village he worked in Alegrete ((video still playing) look how beautiful it is look (4.0) ((video ends)) |
| 100 | A | a how long have you been here |
| 101 | Mrs.M | there will be six years on the twenty-ninth of June |
| 102 | A | six years |
| 103 | Mrs.M | is I like it here |
| 104 | A | you like it here... don't you |
| 105 | Mrs.M | I love it… I love it |
| 106 | A | I miss the house |
| 107 108 109 | Mrs.M | the family house from the time she lived/ do you want to know the time I remember the most? five hours, the time everyone woke up to make coffee so everyone could go to work ((laughs)) |
| 110 | A | ((laughs)) the time you remember the most |
| 111 112 113 114 | Mrs.M | is the time I also woke up to make coffee sweep my yard water my vegetable gardens and my plants but I had a lot of plants (+) one day I saw a horrible plant on television I cried/ I made homemade bread to sell I made vegetable gardens I did nails I did hair I did a lot of things besides farm work |

| 115 | | |
|-----|------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 116 | A | very hard-working |
| 117 | Mrs.M | very hard-working... to have a little money I embroidered I sewed I crocheted I made rugs I did a |
| 118 | | lot of things |

Source: prepared by the authors

In Chart 3, Mrs. M, the second participant in the story, tells a little about a specific moment in her life focused on her relationship with work. When she says, in line 93, "on the farm itself Finado /.../" and, in line 97, "on his land that my father worked", she is expressing a series of inferences that refer to the past and the place where she lived her youth with her father. She mentions the "farm" of a man who has already passed away, indicating that he is no longer alive, and the fact that her father worked on this man's land. When she says "then later here we came to live in the village and worked in Alegrete", she is describing a change in time and space, highlighting that after this experience on the farm, she and her father moved to another place where she continued to work. These words and references build a context that allows us to better understand the story and life of the narrator, her past experiences and the changes that occurred over time.

In line 101, she makes this position in time again when indicating the exact date she arrived at Lar São Vicente de Paulo six years ago. The longing for that time, for those places, similarly to Mrs. L, is also present. She misses her youth, her working days. Mrs. M talks about work returning to the past at a specific time, in line 108, "5 o'clock in the morning, when I woke up to make coffee and go to work".

Continuing the narrative, she describes how her life was marked by work. Since she lived with her parents, she was a farmer, but not only that. In line 115, when she states "apart from working on the farm", she uses the word "roça", which in its formal meaning in the Aurélio dictionary (2004), means a plot of land full of weeds, to refer to the countryside, to the countryside in a more regional way. Among her other jobs, she sold bread, worked in the beauty area doing nails and hair, and weaved rugs and other crochet pieces to earn her own living. By showing this diversity of attributes, Mrs. M reveals her identity, a plural identity like that of the postmodern subject described by Hall (2006) linked to different contexts.

According to Worcman and Costa (2017, p. 338), "The encounter between the interviewee and the interviewer is a conscious, demarcated act, almost like a theatrical performance in which the narrator is given complete freedom to construct, for himself and for the other, an image of himself". The authors suggest that this encounter is a conscious activity, in which both parties involved are aware of the interview process. This implies that the participants are making deliberate decisions about what to say, how to present themselves and how to answer the questions. When she is told that she is a very hard-working woman, in line 116, she repeats "very hard-working" and comments on her other jobs. With this, she answers the question of level 3, highlighting and emphasizing an aspect of her identity in front of the interviewer.

In short, the narratives of Mrs. L and Mrs. M, residents of an ILPI, reveal the complex and rich construction of their identities throughout their lives. Mrs. L, with her peculiar speech, highlights her deep connection to her hometown, Fortaleza, and the longing she feels for her distant family. She positions herself as someone who values education, despite not having completed her studies. Mrs. M, in turn, tells her story of hard work and independence, challenging stereotypes about old age and femininity. Her ability to use technology and her vanity show that the identities of older people are multifaceted and cannot be reduced to mere stereotypes loaded with stigma. Both narratives exemplify how the construction of the self is influenced by several factors, including geography, family, education and life experiences, and how people weave these identities into their narratives.

## VII.     FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The main objective of this study was to give voice to the elderly residents of Lar São Vicente de Paulo, ILPI - a Long-Term Care Institution for the Elderly, located in the city of Balsas in Maranhão, through their life stories, in order to analyze their identities, discover who they are and what relationships they have with the Institution where they are residing through the analysis of narratives, conversation analysis and some theoretical aspects of positioning theory. After data collection, it was necessary to seek complements in new

approaches to narrative analysis in the short stories that complemented the research, since the data generated required this, they went beyond the canonical models in such a way that they alone would not effectively achieve the research objectives.

The analysis revealed aspects of the language of the elderly, which is shaped by their life experiences, as well as by their psychophysical conditions that often require a sensitive approach to interaction. Both narrators presented peculiarities in their speeches, such as pauses, overlaps, non-consensual entries and abandonment of segments. However, these characteristics did not disqualify their stories; on the contrary, they enriched their narratives and the way of understanding their identities.

The social relevance of this study lies in the appreciation of the voices and experiences of the elderly, who are often marginalized and stigmatized in society. Understanding how the elderly construct their identities through narratives is essential to promote a more inclusive and respectful society with aging.

The study also reflected on Long-Term Care Facilities for the Elderly and the act of institutionalizing these individuals based on the accounts of the inmates, where the different perspectives of the two participants were compared.

For example, Mrs. L. revealed her geographical origin, her migration to Balsas, and her appreciation for Fortaleza, her hometown. She also shared her study history and how she feels about her family who live far away, as well as her perspective on the ILPI, which, as much as she likes it, does not compare to being with her family. Mrs. M., in turn, highlighted her vanity, her role as a mother, and her gratitude for contributing to her daughter's education, even though she faces health problems. Both narrators also positioned themselves in relation to the interview, expressing pleasure in participating and demonstrating empathy and support for the researcher. Mrs. M. emphasized her friendly relationship with the other residents and staff of the institution. These findings highlight the importance of listening carefully to the narratives of the elderly, respecting their language and valuing their life experiences. The language of the elderly has peculiarities, and this contributes to their construction of their linguistic and textual identities, since this process ranges from the way they tell the story to the reasons for telling it.

In conclusion, the narratives of elderly women Ms. L and Ms. M demonstrate how language, life experiences, and positioning in the text are essential elements in the construction of their identities. Through the analysis of their stories, we gained valuable insight into their lives, challenges, and triumphs, as well as the importance of valuing and respecting the voices of older people in society.

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