

**WELCOME, YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS! DISCOURSES ABOUT  
ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN NEW HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH LANGUAGE  
TEXTBOOKS**

***WELCOME, YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS! DISCURSOS SOBRE O  
EMPREENDEDORISMO EM COLEÇÕES DIDÁTICAS DE LÍNGUA INGLESA DO  
NOVO ENSINO MÉDIO***

***WELCOME, YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS! DISCURSOS SOBRE EL ESPÍRITU  
EMPRESARIAL EN LAS COLECCIONES DIDÁCTICAS DE LENGUA INGLESA  
PARA EL NUEVO BACHILLERATO***



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**ABSTRACT:** The present article analyzes discourses on entrepreneurship in two didactic textbooks of the English Language approved in the Programa Nacional do Livro e do Material Didático (PNLD), 2021 edition – a governmental and educational Brazilian regulatory agency, in line with the Reform of New High School (BRAZIL, 2017). The objective of the study is to relate discourses about entrepreneurship in the aforementioned teaching material with the intentions of neoliberal rationality in the field of education and, more specifically, in the teaching of English as a foreign language. Support is sought, especially, in Foucault (2008; 2010), and Dardot and Laval (2016). This is a descriptive-interpretive and documentary work of a qualitative nature. The discourses on entrepreneurship in the studied books are stained by neoliberal rationality, once they celebrate the entrepreneurial subject as a successful model to be followed by students and strengthen the idea that learning the English language represents an investment in the competitive market.

**KEYWORDS:** Discourse. Textbook. Entrepreneurship. English teaching. New high school.

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**RESUMO:** O artigo analisa discursos sobre o empreendedorismo em duas coleções didáticas de Língua Inglesa aprovadas no Programa Nacional do Livro e do Material Didático (PNLD), edição de 2021, em consonância com a Reforma do Novo Ensino Médio (BRASIL, 2017). O objetivo do estudo consiste em relacionar os discursos acerca do empreendedorismo no material didático antes referido com os desígnios da racionalidade neoliberal no campo da educação e, de modo mais específico, no ensino de inglês como língua estrangeira. Busca-se respaldo, especialmente, em Foucault (2008; 2010) e em Dardot e Laval (2016). Trata-se de um trabalho descritivo-interpretativo e documental, de natureza qualitativa. Os discursos sobre o empreendedorismo nos livros estudados encontram-se matizados pela racionalidade neoliberal, uma vez que celebram o sujeito empreendedor como um modelo de sucesso a ser seguido pelos discentes e fortalecem a ideia de que o aprendizado da língua inglesa representa um trunfo no mercado concorrencial.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Discurso. Livro didático. Empreendedorismo. Ensino de inglês. Novo ensino médio

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**RESUMEN:** El artículo analiza discursos sobre emprendimiento en dos colecciones de enseñanza de inglés aprobadas en el Programa Nacional de Libros y Material Didáctico (PNLD), edición 2021, en consonancia con la Nueva Reforma de la Enseñanza Media (BRASIL, 2017). El objetivo del estudio es relacionar los discursos sobre el emprendimiento en el material didáctico mencionado con los designios de la racionalidad neoliberal en el campo de la educación y, más específicamente, en la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera. Se busca apoyo, especialmente, en Foucault (2008; 2010) y en Dardot y Laval (2016). Se trata de un trabajo descriptivo-interpretativo y documental de carácter cualitativo. Los discursos sobre el emprendimiento en los libros estudiados están teñidos por la racionalidad neoliberal, ya que celebran al sujeto emprendedor como modelo de éxito a seguir por los estudiantes y refuerzan la idea de que el aprendizaje del inglés representa un activo en el mercado competitivo.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Discurso. Libro de texto. Espíritu empresarial. Enseñanza del inglés. Nuevo instituto.

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## Introduction

The discussions to be developed within the scope of this text are located in the radius of marked curricular modifications of reformist nature that were initiated in the Brazilian scenario from mid-2016, at a time of undeniable convulsions of political and social order. We refer, in particular, to the approval of the New High School Reform (NEM in the Portuguese abbreviation), whose genesis dates back to a provisional measure undertaken by the then government of Michel Temer (2016-2018), in a clear nod to the interests of the neoliberal business community, and to the elaboration and subsequent sanctioning of the Common National Curricular Base for High School (BNCC - EM in the Portuguese acronym) that, despite having consulted civil society and representative entities of the educational field for the collective construction of the document, the final version of the text meets the signals of the market in accordance with the various entities linked to the productive sector that actively participated in the process of constitution of this curricular policy of centralizing matrix.

Briefly, we can cite as main changes in Law 13. 415 (BRAZIL, 2017a), which establishes the NEM and amends the Law of Directives and Bases of National Education (BRAZIL, 1996), the following are the main changes: a) increase in the minimum workload, which should increase from 2400 hours to 3000 hours over the three years of this educational stage; b) the suppression of the historically constituted disciplines, in view of the division by the so-called formative itineraries thus outlined: Languages and their technologies, Mathematics and their technologies, Nature Sciences and their technologies, Applied Human and Social Sciences, and Technical and Professional Training; c) the appeal to a supposed flexibility through which the student will be able to choose in which formative itinerary to deepen; c) the institution of the BNCC-EM as a benchmark to guide the elaboration of the NEM curricula regarding the competencies and skills required for the student's general education; d) in the scope of the NEM, only the subjects of Portuguese Language and Mathematics will be compulsory during the three years of high school, so that the other curricular components will be distributed according to the curricular arrangement of each educational system; e) in the framework of the formative itinerary concerning technical and professional training, there is the possibility of subjects without training for teaching to be admitted in the educational institutions, because they would be in possession of "a notorious knowledge".

Throughout these educational policies, we can see signs of neoliberal rationality, understood in the wake of Dardot and Laval (2016), not as a merely economic doctrine, but as

a governing practice that tends to affect all sectors of social life, modulating subjectivities and behaviors. Within such a conjuncture, subjects are summoned to enter, from an early age, the logic of competition and competition and, to do so, they need to take responsibility for their formative processes and behave like small businesses managing risks and investments in themselves. Thus, in the NEM students are led to plan their life projects in line with their competencies, aptitudes, and skills according to the BNCC-EM. A discourse is encouraged according to which young people have the freedom of choice to undertake their educational paths, without considering the ineffable inequalities that exist in a country as diverse as Brazil. As a corollary, there is contempt for everything that is not considered useful, interesting and stimulating, in order to produce a precarious, obscure, individualizing and legitimizing education for the success or failure of the subjects (RIBEIRO; ZANARDI, 2020).

Within these conditions of possibility, a myriad of discourses emerge about entrepreneurship, conceived as a kind of "apple of the eye" of neoliberal rationality. To encourage entrepreneurial behavior presupposes the insertion, in the school environment, of certain knowledge and practices from the business universe, transforming the educational space into an experiment of marketing matrix. When we situate the social and political context of the approval of the NEM and the BNCC-EM with punctual modifications in the field of labor and employment, notably in relation to the Labor Reform (BRAZIL, 2017b) - which was produced under neoliberal wishes, because it appealed to the need to change labor laws, considered obsolete, to adapt them to the new configurations of financial capitalism -, we can conjecture that the insertion of the theme of entrepreneurship in education is deeply linked to the *modus operandi* of governmentality of neoliberal nature, especially because being an entrepreneur is read as a bold, flexible, and courageous attitude, according to the mentality of the competitive market.

In view of these points previously made, we aim in this text, from a discourse analysis, to relate the approach about entrepreneurship in didactic collections of English Language from NEM with the designs of neoliberal rationality in the field of education and, more specifically, in the teaching of English as a foreign language. We assume that as these teaching materials were approved in the National Program of Books and Teaching Materials (PNLD in the Portuguese acronym), 2021 edition, and therefore in accordance with the NEM, with the BNCC-EM, as well as with the various power games that shaped the development of these normative instruments, it is expected that these textbooks reveal, in the discursive texture, a marked approximation with these guidelines of the official discourse. Therefore, we ask: how

do the discourses on entrepreneurship in NEM's English language textbooks articulate with the interests, beliefs, and propositions of neoliberal rationality? How do these discourses seek to induce entrepreneurial and proactive behaviors among young people of the NEM?

For this, we analyze statements extracted from three English language teaching collections. The theoretical framework that leads these reflections is located in the investigative horizon of Foucault (2008; 2010) about the discourse, the utterance, the discursive formation and neoliberalism, in addition to some notes of Dardot and Laval (2016) and Casara (2021) around the specificities of neoliberal rationality and the inflections in the field of education, considering the imaginary about entrepreneurship.

The text is organized as follows: in the following section, some reflections are developed about the discourse, the statement and neoliberal rationality. Subsequently, we analyze selected statements from the English language didactic collections. Finally, there is a concluding section, in which we try to put an end to the reflections developed here.

### **Theoretical remarks**

#### **On the concepts of discourse, utterance, and discursive formation**

In *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, originally published in 1969, Michel Foucault delimits concepts that are the foundations of his thought, which are present in previous works. Three notions are essential to the analytical undertaking proposed in this study, namely: the discourse, the utterance, and the discursive formation. The first is understood as a practice that founds the objects of which it speaks and that is constituted from statements coming from the same discursive formation. By thinking of discourse as an event, that is, as something that erupts in a specific time and place, Foucault (2010) advocates the need to analyze how different knowledges enable the emergence of a given discourse and from this we can deduce the process of the archeology of knowledge, since it is cardinal to excavate the most varied layers from which the discourses may be enunciated. According to Machado (2007, p. 110, our translation), archeology does not turn to the examination of "[...] possible speeches, speeches for which principles of truth or validity to be realized are established; it studies the real speeches, effectively produced, existing as materiality".

In this, the author distances himself from categories demanded by the history of mentalities, such as work, origin, tradition, influence, continuity, and evolution, and bets on discontinuities, series, cuts, and dispersions. According to Foucault (2010, p. 28, our



translation), "It is not necessary to refer discourse to the distant presence of the origin; it is necessary to treat it in the play of its instance."

The second concept that matters more closely to us concerns the utterance. It is, according to Foucault (2010), a function that crosses different domains and provides the conditions of existence for the appearance of distinctive units, such as the sentence, the proposition, and the speech act. For the author, the utterance constitutes the grain of discourse, the atom, the minimum unit of analysis and, therefore, it is congenitally linked to a particular discourse, seen as a larger instance. As Sargentini (2019, p. 41, our translation) stresses, "[...] different in their forms, dispersed in time, utterances can form a set when they refer to one and the same object, thus setting up a discourse."

Every utterance, in the Foucauldian conception, has four constitutive properties, namely:

a) referential - is related to the laws of possibility that make a given enunciation appear in a specific time and place;

b) subject position - does not refer to the grammatical subject, the author or the empirical being, but articulates a position to be assumed in the enunciation;

c) associated domain - establishes a chain through which an enunciation correlates with others already said and yet to be said, thus assuming the operation of a memory;

d) repeatable materiality - encompasses the fact that the enunciation needs a support, a place, a date, a substance, and an institutional support to materialize. According to Foucault (2010, p. 119, our translation), "[...] the enunciation circulates, evades, allows or prevents the realization of a desire, is docile or rebellious to interests, enters the order of contestations and struggles, becomes a subject of appropriation or rivalry".

Following this perspective, to understand the concept of discursive formation, it is worth noting that the enunciative analysis aims to trace the discursive regularities present in a system deeply marked by dispersion. Thus, when recurrences of certain themes, types of enunciation, strategies, and objects are found, we have a discursive formation. In the words of Foucault (2010, p. 43, emphasis in original, our translation), "[...] if we can define a regularity (an order, correlations, positions and workings, transformations) we will say, by convention, that it is a *discursive formation*".

Through the discussions about the Foucauldian archeological theory, it is opportune to go through the discourses that link the current neoliberal rationality, focusing on English language teaching and the formation of the subject. To do so, we build our reflections, in the following topic, through the genealogical bias, also attributed to Foucauldian thought.

### On Neoliberal Rationality

In the reflections developed by Foucault (2008), neoliberalism is established as a form of government that is not restricted only to the economic domain, but extends to different sectors of society, including education. According to this thinker, the American neoliberalism, more specifically, managed to create a *modus operandi* that acts directly on the production of subjectivity, based on some major changes, among which we can mention the human capital theory. According to this theory, developed by Thomas Shultz, the worker subject, once seen only as a manual labor force, is endowed with a capital that can generate income streams, to be continuously improved, through permanent training courses, through access to health and education. In general terms, neoliberalism via human capital seeks to internalize, from an early age, that one must invest in oneself, in order to prepare the subject to deal with a competitive and unstable market.

According to Foucault (2008), human capital is presented as a component to be permanently worked on by the subject, conceived as an entrepreneur of himself, an agent of consumption and income production. This cooperates with the production of proactive, autonomous, resilient, entrepreneurial, free, and flexible subjectivities, causing neoliberalism to agent the most different domains of social life and the market logic to enter a multiplicity of life instances. For Dardot and Laval (2016), neoliberal rationality is presented as the only possible alternative and imposes on each person the obligation to be an entrepreneur of himself or herself. In the voice of these authors, a norm is in force that "[...] changes even the individual, who is urged to conceive of himself and behave as a company" (DARDOT; LAVAL, 2016, p. 16, our translation).

By focusing only on the individual dimension, there is a continuous depoliticization and the weakening of any collective movements and, with the sharpening of a performance culture, the other is seen as an enemy to be defeated. As an effect, "[...] the unmanaged life is considered as a moral failure of the individual; when this occurs, he is objectified as someone irresponsible for his choices" (CANDIOTTO, 2016, p. 36, our translation). In other terms, the subject is attributed the responsibility over success or failure, as he is supposedly given the freedom to

choose how he should manage his life, as it is, according to Foucault (2008), a business-unit, thus requiring planning, risk management, cost and benefit analysis, and other key terms of the corporate universe. For Casara (2021, p. 136, our translation), "Neoliberal rationality makes the self a fiction, the entrepreneur-of-self, and the other a competitor. The entrepreneur-of-self enters into dispute with other people also identified as entrepreneurs".

In the field of education, neoliberal rationality produces undeniable impacts, as summarized by Mota and Gadelha (2016).

a) the dissemination of the corporate form throughout the social fabric, causing not only the student subject to be conceived under this bias but also their families;

b) the predominance of competition as the guiding element in labor relations and in the forms of sociability in the educational space, which becomes permeated by an agonistic based on distrust of the other;

c) the culture of ranking, both in measuring the academic performance of some students, and among schools and educational networks and selection processes, in order to reward the best and punish the worst;

d) the belief that human capital needs to be improved and that investments in education must necessarily return in the form of valorization of income streams and high positions in the labor market;

e) the celebration of a culture of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial pedagogies, conceptualized as the salvation to the crisis in education, from the focus on competencies based on principles such as leadership, motivation, emotional intelligence, efficiency, among others;

f) the centrality of a culture of evaluation, accountability, transparency, examination and distrust (HAN, 2017), in order to produce a myriad of data and reports that target students and teachers as subjects to be continuously monitored;

g) the generalization that the management modes of the private sector are more efficient than the public and, therefore, schools should increasingly move closer to private corporations, so as to give up their political and republican character (CARVALHO, 2020).

Correlating these issues within the scope of English Language teaching from the advent of the Common National Curricular Base and the New High School, Szundy (2019) argues that the status of English seems to be at the service of neoliberal rationality, as it seeks to meet the development of skills and abilities, with the intention of leading the student to become an



entrepreneur of himself and to participate in the global world in which English is the predominant language, without, however, questioning socially unequal structures, but rather improving human capital from the acquisition of this language as a good, a commodity, a commodity. A similar finding can be found in Lucena and Torres (2019, p. 639, our translation), when they argue that "[...] English emerges as a commodity/merchandise linked to globalization, reified also as an object amenable to domination and a communication tool."

In this logic, the discourses about entrepreneurship and the entrepreneur are endowed with knowledge for which everyone can become and follow this path that, supposedly, would lead to success in personal and professional life. This success discourse is supported by power relations that urge the subjects to demand a series of efforts in order to be recognized as winners. In the educational field, the insertion of this logic is intrinsically related to the increasingly active participation of private initiative sectors, which see in the school institution the opportunity to fulfill the desires of the financial market. According to Sá (2022, p. 293, our translation), entrepreneurship "[...] as well as other buzzwords that permeate curricular prescriptions, is a product of the neoliberal wave that since the last decade of the twentieth century has strongly advanced over Brazilian public educational policies," which aim to "[...] placate the supposed failure of public education" (SÁ, 2022, p. 293, our translation).

It is worth noting that both the BNCC-EM and the Curricular Reference Points for the Elaboration of Formative Itineraries point out the importance of developing entrepreneurial skills in high school students in the achievement of their life projects.

At least two objectives present in the Benchmarks refer such need: "[...] expand skills related to self-knowledge, entrepreneurship and life projects; use this knowledge and skills to structure entrepreneurial strategies with various purposes [...]" (BRASIL, 2019, p. 9, our translation). Already the BNCC-EM, when discussing the preparation for the world of work, highlights: "[...] provide a culture conducive to the development of attitudes, skills and values that promote entrepreneurship" (BRASIL, 2018, p. 466, our translation); the document adjectives the entrepreneurial practice as endowed with "[. .] creativity, innovation, organization, planning, future vision, risk-taking, resilience, and scientific curiosity, among others), understood as an essential competence for personal development, active citizenship, social inclusion, and employability" (BRASIL, 2018, p. 466, our translation).

In this perspective, the English language teaching materials in the scope of the new high school, in view of the close connection between this language and the world of work, globalization and employment opportunity, tends to undertake the construction of discourses

favorable to the development of entrepreneurial skills, in line with the wills of truth of the documents that guide this level of education today.

### Discourses on Entrepreneurship in New High School English Language Teaching Textbooks

We selected for analysis two didactic units from the following New High School English Language textbooks: i) *Interação Inglês*, by Albina Escobar and Juliana Franco Tavares, published by Editora do Brasil; ii) *Anytime!* by Amadeu Marques and Ana Carolina Cardoso, published by Saraiva. We have divided this section into two topics corresponding to each unit studied.

#### Analysis of the *Interação Inglês* teaching collection

Organized into six major units, with four lessons in each, *Interação Inglês* devotes a series of reflections on entrepreneurship in unit number three, called Entrepreneurship. At the beginning of each unit, the objectives and rationale for the choice of that macro-theme are highlighted. Specifically, in the case of entrepreneurship, the selection of this theme follows the following argument: "Addressing entrepreneurship in the classroom helps students leave school better prepared for the labor market, in addition to developing skills for life" (ESCOBAR; TAVARES, 2020, p. 7, our translation); continues advocating "The proposals offer professional and financial options, always in a way to stimulate skills and competencies useful in various contexts" (ESCOBAR; TAVARES, 2020, p. 7, our translation).

In this statement of the collection in focus, one can glimpse the existence of a discursive positioning to consider the relevance of working entrepreneurship in the classroom, in order to encourage, from the perspective of skills and abilities, the construction of proactive and connected to the designs of the market. In this way, the constitution of subjectivities free to choose the existing options and attentive to the learning of competencies to be developed for the management of their lives, following, with this, the neoliberal grammar, is affirmed. To this end, the objectives mentioned by the textbook include reflecting on discursive material that deals with entrepreneurship and, at the same time, analyze written and oral genres in English, understand how modal verbs and imperatives work, distinguish the simple past from the continuous past, and practice reading strategies (ESCOBAR; TAVARES, 2020).

In order to fulfill these purposes, the unit begins with the first lesson, entitled Success, and with two questions that precede the unit's generating text, in a section called Before reading.

The first one asks the student to indicate which types of texts will appear at the beginning of the first lesson and provides the following options: a) excerpts from motivational books, b) online stories, c) articles in newspaper. The option to be marked refers to alternative b, and then we come across the stories of the following entrepreneurs: Thebe Magugu, a South African clothing designer; Aaron Levie, CEO (Chief Executive Officer) and cofounder of a cloud file sharing company; and Mikaila Ulmer, founder and CEO of a natural fruit juice company. The regularity that connects the three entrepreneurs has to do with the fact that they are young, a choice that, in our view, seeks to build the idea that the young is a potential subject to develop the potentialities necessary for entrepreneurship.

Moreover, this is highlighted in the comprehension questions after the presentation of the three stories, when the book asks the student to mark true alternatives to the assertions: "The three stories are about people who became successful", "They all started their business at a young age" and "To one of them, failure was part of the process" (ESCOBAR; TAVARES, 2020, p. 105, our translation).

What's more, in all the stories, the young people are proud and happy with the accomplishment of their projects, participating in trade fairs and exhibitions in various places around the world. In Mikaila Ulmer's story, for example, we read that the young girl, at the age of eleven, gained notoriety after creating a brand of natural flaxseed lemon juice based on a recipe from her grandmother ("she stumbled on a mixture for flaxseed lemonade") (ESCOBAR; TAVARES, 2020, p. 109, our translation). The differential of the enterprise lies in the use of honey as a way to replace artificial sweeteners and preserve bees in imminent process of disappearance.

In both cases presented, the effect generated is that entrepreneurship can be configured as a successful, innovative, and bold life project. For Dardot and Laval (2016), in the neoliberal rationality, everyone has an entrepreneurial spirit inside them and it is up to society to encourage this inclination to flourish and develop. It thus appears in these statements of the teaching collection the belief that entrepreneurs "[...] are supposed to be among the most prosperous because they have a clear purpose in life, are determined to achieve goals they set for themselves, and adapt to adverse situations with optimism" (CABANAS; ILLOUZ, 2022, p. 164, our translation), because even failure can guide them to the path of success. Since the interpretation of the stories of successful entrepreneurs is anchored in the fact that they are all young and one of them shares the idea that failure is part of the process of entrepreneurship, the textbook marks the conception for which the NEM youth can be inspired by these examples of

success and thereby equip themselves with entrepreneurial skills, such as resilience, autonomy, free initiative, and proactivity, even at a young age.

Next, the unit on entrepreneurship in the *Interação Inglês* collection asks the learner to answer a few questions: "What makes a successful entrepreneur?", "What are the abilities of an entrepreneur? Is he successful? If not, what happened? Is he successful? If not, what happened?", "Imagine you have got a sponsor. What kind of business do you want to start? What kind of business do you want to start? These questions seek to lead the student to reflect on how the entrepreneur manages to obtain the desired success and, thus, engender practices and behaviors in line with neoliberal rationality.

Given the above, it is possible to understand that the positioning assumed in the didactic collection is related to the need for the student to develop skills responsible for recognizing which entrepreneurial initiatives can be successful, to analyze how the entrepreneur subject knew how to manage his business or not, and to probe the desires of each young person regarding which initiative he intends to develop. However, it is capital to point out that at no point in the didactic material under study does it discuss why many ventures do not achieve the desired success, nor about the material conditions through which one can start a business. This is in clear articulation with the neoliberal imaginary, because this tends to hide social inequalities, by focusing only on the domain of the individual, who is responsible for managing himself. Under this logic, success or failure concerns only the interference of the subject and not the contingencies of the economic system and the financial market.

Also in the unit under analysis, it is worth mentioning excerpts employed in the book to deal with reading strategies based on inferences. The first excerpt was taken from a website that contains stories of young entrepreneurs from India. Let's see: "Of all the success stories you have heard of, probably the most enthralling ones are those where young adults and teenagers put their mark on this world. Their drive to be on the top of the food chain is what is inspirational. Their desire to be at the top of the food chain is what is inspirational" (ESCOBAR; TAVARES, 2020, p. 112, our translation). In this excerpt, it is highlighted the emphasis on young people and adolescents who, in an authentic way, make a difference and put themselves at the top of the food chain in order to inspire others. This discourse of success is in line with neoliberal rationality, since it appeals to a predisposition of youth to make a difference in the world. The food chain metaphor highlights how the neoliberal imaginary mobilizes, via associated domain, the discourse of survival of the strongest over the weakest, in an update of Darwinian knowledge.

Next, the collection brings a brief presentation of the Brazilian Rafael Santos, guest professor at Regent's University in London, where he teaches Entrepreneurship: "He has won 6 business awards and has been the keynote speaker in several events around the world, including the World Entrepreneurship Forum in China in October 2015" (ESCOBAR; TAVARES, 2020, p. 121, our translation). The number of awards won by this entrepreneur and the fact that he has been a speaker at renowned events denotes a prestigious position, which may encourage young Brazilians - the audience for whom the teaching material is intended - to follow this example. The collection seeks, to this extent, to present victorious stories that converge to a certain consensus: it is urgent to activate the entrepreneurial profile of young people within the NEM.

The last excerpt to which we refer originally circulated in an article published in Forbes, a famous American business and economics magazine. In this excerpt, some data is exposed which show the difficulties of younger entrepreneurs compared to older ones, but, on the other hand, the latter seem more encouraged to overcome the challenges than the former: "For example, while 32% of startup owners under 45 said obtaining the necessary licenses to operate their business was difficult, only 23% of older ones did. And 21% of those under 45 said applying for loans was difficult, but a mere 14% of those 45+ did. And 21% of those under 45 said applying for loans was difficult, but only 14% of those over 45 did so (ESCOBAR; TAVARES, 2020, p. 121). The statistical data present in this statement, based on the age grouping and the way they face adversities to become entrepreneurs, elucidate the proactive and self-motivated spirit of young entrepreneurs, because "[...] they know how to take advantage of the opportunities that present themselves, learn from their mistakes, and capitalize on their failures to their own benefit" (CABANAS; ILLOUZ, 2022, p. 164, our translation).

### **Analysis of the Didactic Collection Anytime!**

Anytime! contains eighteen units that cover a variety of topics, such as the power of social media, the future of work, healthy habits, film, and literature. Unit sixteen - Welcome, young entrepreneurs - is responsible for exploring entrepreneurship in the book. Briefly speaking, the goal of the unit is to work on listening, reading, writing, and speaking skills with texts that talk about young entrepreneurs, as well as on the comprehension and use of English linguistic-grammatical resources, such as the second conditional sentence (MARQUES; CARDOSO, 2020). It is important to consider that the title of the unit already functions as a strategy to lead the learner to identify with the world of entrepreneurship, given the designation



of the young entrepreneur. Thus, even before getting to know this world, the learner would already present a tendency to follow this path. In the course of the unit, this appears in a marked way.

In one of the first questions that introduce the theme, the learner is asked to mark, in a box, some English adjectives that qualify the entrepreneur, namely: committed, competitive, creative, determined, dynamic, persistent, positive, and resilient. We can see that all these qualifying elements seek to build a valued image for the entrepreneur and, as a corollary, to erase unworthy characteristics that should not be taken into account, such as: disorganized, inflexible, lazy, negative, narrow-minded. In these adjectives, it is possible to deduce traits to be avoided by those who venture into entrepreneurship, because they go against the autonomy, the spirit of leadership, the positivity and initiative typical of the neoliberal regime.

Next, the collection shows a dialogue between two young people and asks the student to talk to his classmate about the activity related to adjectives specific to entrepreneurs. Here is the dialogue: "I think entrepreneurs should be creative / I think so, too. And I think entrepreneurs should be dynamic" (MARQUES; CARDOSO, 2020, p. 247, our translation). The mobilization of this dialog is symptomatic for the subject position to be enunciated in this book, in order to effect a discussion among the students about the conduct by which the entrepreneur needs to be guided. The deontic modalization should be inscribed in this saying in the field of obligation, so as to impose a sine qua non condition for undertaking.

To this end, the book recalls the story of the precocious entrepreneur Mikaila Ulmer, from Texas, also presented in the collection analyzed in the previous topic. The textbook makes use of an article written by Michael Cottman and published on the NBC News website, in order to present the story of little Ulmer. The title of the article announces the young girl's transformation: "How This 11-Year-Old Turned Something Scary Into Something Sweet" (MARQUES; CARDOSO, 2020, p. 248, our translation) - appealing to the fact that the girl had transformed her fear of bees, considered something scary, into lemonades sweetened with honey, something sweet.).

The linguistic-discursive play of the words scary and sweet delineates Ulmer's creative conduct, as she converts her yearnings into a noble and noteworthy cause - a product with pronounced social-environmental concern. At the end of the text, we read: "Today, Mikaila leads workshops on how to save the honeybees, and she participates in social entrepreneurship panels" (MARQUES; CARDOSO, 2020, p. 249, our translation). The didactic collection, by selecting this article and not another in its place, demonstrates that young people can occupy

leadership positions in the so-called social entrepreneurship, because it is not just any business, but a way to act in the preservation of the environment.

Again, we can trace the resonances of neoliberal rationality, since it is not about collectives, but about subjects who, individually, see innovative ways of undertaking. In Henning's (2019, p. 372, our translation) reading, "[...] each and everyone is held responsible for the planetary chaos and it is up to each and everyone to solve the thunders committed on mother-nature." Ulmer's creativity, therefore, constitutes a trait to be developed in order to promote young entrepreneurs.

After the presentation of the text about Mikaila Ulmer, a dialogue appears that seems to constitute a generating theme for the debate to be undertaken by the class, namely: "In your opinion, what is important for someone who wants to open their own business? It is possible to infer from these statements that the entrepreneurial adventure demands from the subject the ability to dedicate himself, to be focused on the execution of the task, skills that are not necessarily related to cognitive aspects, but behavioral and socioemotional. According to Ramos and Magalhães (2022), these competencies are based on a technician and economist conception that seeks to enhance the development of personalities in line with neoliberal rationality.

The questions elaborated by the collection seek to raise some reflections in the students around the example of Mikaila Ulmer: "Why do you think Mikaila's idea turned out to be a success story?", "Have you ever thought of creating a business? Why (not)?" (MARQUES; CARDOSO, 2020, p. 250, our translation). In the first question, the collection proposes to lead the student to find the differential of Ulmer's business - an idea based on a family recipe and in tune with an environmental concern, while in the second, the goal is to probe the high school student about his or her desires in entrepreneurship, taking into account the success of the young American. By mobilizing these strategies, the English textbook is solidly articulated with the neoliberal interests present in the New High School Reform and in the documents generated from this law, such as the BNCC.

Next, in a speaking activity, the collection provides a board game in which students, in small groups, need to complete statements in English using the second conditional. In each space of the game, there are statements related to the field of entrepreneurship. Let's look at some of them: "If I had a great idea...", "If I had more time...", "If I could cook very well...", "If I knew how to speak many languages..." (MARQUES; CARDOSO, 2020, p. 253, our translation). The statements start from the hypothetical field, through the construction If I (if I),

to engender certain actions for which the condition is expressed in the first part of the linguistic construction, that is, if I had a great idea, what would I do? This is not, in our view, just a speaking exercise activity in English, but goes beyond: it aims to trigger possible desires in young people, such as having innovative ideas, learning to cook, having time, and speaking several languages.

Then, the board contemplates some other statements: "If I opened a store...", "If my family had a business...", "If I invented a product...", "If I became a young entrepreneur ..." (MARQUES; CARDOSO, 2020, p. 253, our translation). Again, it resonates in these statements the attempt to make students assume the position of an entrepreneur and, to do so, it is convenient to encourage certain attitudes: opening a commercial establishment, the relationship with the parents' business, the creativity to invent a new product and, finally, the possibility of being configured as a young entrepreneur. Overall, the discourses on entrepreneurship in this collection conceive this practice as an adventure that advocates the assumption of bold, flexible, and dynamic subjectivities.

## **Final remarks**

In this paper, we proposed to analyze discourses on entrepreneurship in two didactic collections of English Language from NEM, in order to relate this discursive production with the beliefs of neoliberal rationality. This, as we argue in the course of this text, was represented in the reformist desires that subsidized the development of Brazilian educational policies in the last five years, starting with Law 13.415 (BRAZIL, 2017) and the creation of the BNCC. As a consequence, we have seen that the analyzed teaching materials are in tune with such changes and, as a result, devote a salient focus on entrepreneurship, conceived as a viable alternative for the construction of a professional project for which it is necessary to adopt a conduct marked by free initiative, autonomy, flexibility, and the ability to adapt to market instabilities.

In a more vertical way, the analysis of the English language didactic collections allowed us to identify the use of some strategies that aim at bringing the NEM student closer to the world of entrepreneurship and reveal the frank connection with the neoliberal rationality, namely: a) the emphasis on youth as a fertile period for the construction of an entrepreneurial subjectivity and this occurs through the recurrence of successful stories of young entrepreneurs, almost always marked by a discourse of self-motivation; b) the constant search to lead the high school student to discover entrepreneurial potentialities linked, above all, to the recognition of

non-cognitive skills, such as curiosity, flexibility, positivity, among others; c) the effort to frame the entrepreneur as the one who dribbles the challenges imposed on him and, therefore, succeeds in his business; d) the belief that any young person can be an entrepreneur, all he needs is to find within himself the competences required for that; e) the centrality of the individual in the execution of the entrepreneurial career, being solely responsible for the onus or failure of his professional path, and the broader social conditions that may favor or hinder entrepreneurial initiatives not being discussed.

The English language constitutes in this celebration of entrepreneurship a way to develop human capital, given that the prestige of young entrepreneurs appears materialized in this language. Considering the global relevance of English, especially in the business world, it is clear that its acquisition represents an asset for the young entrepreneur. The question remains as to which young person would have this possibility, if we consider the material conditions of most Brazilian students to whom these textbooks are addressed. For this, the textbooks give us no answer.

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