

**DIDACTICS OF LITERATURE: PROBLEMATIZING A TREND TOWARD
HEGEMONY**

***DIDÁTICA DA LITERATURA: PROBLEMATIZAÇÃO DE UMA TENDÊNCIA EM
VIAS DE HEGEMONIZAÇÃO***

***DIDÁCTICA DE LA LITERATURA: PROBLEMATIZACIÓN DE UNA TENDENCIA A
LA HEGEMONIZACIÓN***

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ABSTRACT: In the light of the historical materialist epistemology, we investigate how the so-called “Reading Strategies” have been presented and used in scientific research and official documents concerning the interface education and literature; based on the analysis of objective data, it demonstrates that, for over a decade, it has been expanding and is currently building hegemony. We seek to understand this process, establishing, as a decisive landmark, its arrival to official documents (which, in the concrete case under study, guide the school education process from a national curricular base, common to public and private networks). Then, we problematize the incorporation of “Reading Strategies” in the text of the National Common Curricular Base; in the conclusions, we point out that, to solve the problems of reading education in Brazil, and particularly the teaching of literary reading, the pedagogical work guided by the “internalization and automatization” of (meta)cognitive reading strategies need to be overcome.

KEYWORDS: Reading strategies. National Common Curricular Base (official documents). Reading. Historical and dialectical materialism. Didactics of literature.

RESUMO: À luz da epistemologia materialista histórica, investigamos como as chamadas “Estratégias de Leitura” têm sido apresentadas e utilizadas em pesquisas científicas e em documentos oficiais concernentes à interface educação e literatura; demonstramos, com base em análises de dados objetivos, que, ao longo de mais de uma década, ela vem se ampliando e encontra-se em construção de hegemonia. Buscamos compreender tal processo, instituindo, como marco decisivo, sua chegada aos documentos oficiais (que, no caso concreto em estudo, orientam o processo de educação escolar a partir de uma base nacional curricular, comum às redes públicas e privadas). Em seguida, problematizamos a incorporação das “Estratégias de Leitura” no texto da Base Nacional Comum Curricular; nas conclusões, apontamos que, para resolver os problemas do ensino de leitura no Brasil, e particularmente do ensino de leitura literária, o trabalho pedagógico orientado pela “internalização e automatização” de estratégias (meta)cognitivas de leitura precisa ser superado.

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PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Estratégias de leitura. Base Nacional Comum Curricular (documentos oficiais). Leitura. Materialismo histórico e dialético. Didática da literatura.*

RESUMEN: *A la luz de la epistemología materialista histórica, investigamos cómo se han presentado y utilizado las llamadas "Estrategias de Lectura" en la investigación científica y en los documentos oficiales relativos a la interfaz educación y literatura; demostramos, a partir del análisis de datos objetivos, que a lo largo de más de una década se ha ido expandiendo y está en construcción de hegemonía. Buscamos comprender este proceso, estableciendo, como hito decisivo, su llegada a los documentos oficiales (que, en el caso concreto que estudiamos, orientan el proceso de educación escolar desde una base curricular nacional, común a las redes públicas y privadas). Luego, problematizamos la incorporación de las "Estrategias de Lectura" en el texto de la Base Curricular Nacional Común; en las conclusiones, señalamos que, para resolver los problemas de la enseñanza de la lectura en Brasil, y en particular la enseñanza de la lectura literaria, es necesario superar el trabajo pedagógico guiado por la "internalización y automatización" de las estrategias (meta)cognitivas de lectura.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Estrategias de lectura. Base Curricular Nacional Común (documentos oficiales). La lectura. Materialismo histórico y dialéctico. Didáctica de la literatura.*

Initial considerations

This work problematizes a trend adopted in scientific research and in curriculum guidelines/bases (consubstantiated in official documents) for the teaching of literature; aims to answer the question about the pertinence and consistency of such a trend in the field of Literature Didactics, considering the objective reality. Therefore, it presents the perspective of teaching literature in the light of "Reading Strategies" in its own terms and then analyzes it in the light of historical and dialectical materialist assumptions.

Considering its presence in the National Common Curricular Base, as well as its presence in the academic sphere, it is evident that it is a perspective "in the process of hegemonization" - here understood in accordance with the thought of Gramsci (1978a; 1978b), for whom The notion of "hegemony" proposes a new relationship between structure and superstructure, rejecting the determinism of the first over the second and arguing in favor of the centrality of superstructures in the analysis of advanced societies. According to Gruppi (1991) and Macciochi (1976), Gramsci was the Marxist theorist who most insisted on this issue; that is why we take his thought to discuss a current perspective for pedagogical work with reading, which we consider, as already said, in the process of hegemony.

For the Italian philosopher, ideology appears as constitutive of social relations, so that the construction of a new historical moment requires its analysis. According to Alves (2010, p. 74-75, our translation):

Gramsci states that it is quite common for a certain social group, which is in a situation of subordination in relation to another group, to adopt its conception of the world, even if it contradicts its practical activity. Furthermore, he emphasizes that this conception of the world mechanically imposed by the external environment is devoid of critical awareness and coherence, it is disaggregated and occasional. This uncritical adoption of a conception of the world of another social group results in a contrast between thinking and acting and the coexistence of two conceptions of the world [...]. Gramsci (1978a, p. 15) therefore concludes that “the philosophy of politics cannot be highlighted; on the contrary, it can be demonstrated that the choice and criticism of a worldview are themselves political facts”. [...] For Gramsci, critical consciousness is obtained through a dispute of contrasting hegemonies, first in the field of ethics, then in the political sphere, culminating, finally, in a superior elaboration of a conception of the real.

It should be noted that when we speak of a trend towards “paths of hegemonization”, we do not necessarily take the same interest as Gramsci, who developed a thesis on how the western working class could build a hegemony that could lead to the seizure of power. We use the concept of hegemony bearing in mind that we investigate how a pedagogical notion (not necessarily articulated to the interests of the working class) builds its hegemony from the “outside to the inside”, establishing itself as hegemonic (or “on the way to hegemony”) when it arrives to official State documents (which, in the specific case under study, guide the school education process from a national curricular basis, common to all networks and institutions).

According to Gramsci (1978a; 1978b), the expansion of the social base and the establishment of a hegemonic apparatus takes place through a system of alliances, so that the issue of hegemony should not be grossly understood, based on the idea of subordination the weakest group in the correlation of forces with the hegemonic group; on the contrary, the production of hegemony presupposes that the interests of the groups over which hegemony will be exercised are considered. Therefore, we understand that the construction of a hegemony in the field of school education requires the conviction of teachers that, by adopting this or that theoretical orientation for pedagogical practice, they will be contributing to their goals as a professional class (and, consequently, as a class who live from work), namely, the best training of students.

For this reason, the discussion here does not focus on a criticism of education professionals who adopt this or that tendency to guide their work, that is, we do not “so-and-so” the debate – rather, we want to place it in the horizon of the exercise of thought critically

oriented scientific and philosophical, which is required of organic intellectuals. Thus, in view of the need for ideological unveiling that interferes in the proposal for the adoption of “Reading Strategies” in the context of Didactics of Literature, this work is justified.

"Reading Strategies" as a trend towards hegemony

Why would “Reading Strategies” be a trend towards hegemony? Let's go to objective evidence: regarding the presence of the so-called "Reading Strategies" in the academic context, the base of the "Google Scholar"³ informs that, between 2015 and 2019 (thus, the five years prior to the time of writing this text), this expression, combined with the keyword “Literature”, received 5,580 citations. This quantitative data makes it clear that it is an expression widely used in university circles, in articles, essays and training materials approved in/by the corresponding sphere of activity.

The “Capes Theses and Dissertations Catalog”⁴, which brings together the works developed at the postgraduate level in Brazil (therefore, advanced research works – supposedly – with greater depth and more nurturing than articles, essays and formation materials), from the same parameters as the previous search, it reports 230 occurrences of “Reading Strategies” as a key term. Such occurrences, in the Catalog, are concentrated in the academic master's and professional master's courses, with 2016 being the year that brings together the largest number of works retrieved from this descriptor. The dissertations and theses located there are mostly distributed among the following institutions: Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo, Federal University of Minas Gerais and University of São Paulo.

From the point of view of subjects working in the academic field for the development and consolidation of this trend, the survey carried out from the Capes Catalog points out that the most frequent advisors in the set of 230 works retrieved are Beatriz dos Santos Feres,

³ Consultation last held on 20 October 2020, at 10 am (Available: https://scholar.google.com/scholar?q=%22estrat%C3%A9gias+de+leitura%22+%2B+literatura&hl=pt-BR&as_sdt=1%2C5&as_ylo=2015&as_yhi=2019. Access: 21 Oct. 2020). It is the most used academic-scientific search engine in Brazil for citation mapping and which, according to the Journal Portal of the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (official agency of the federal government), generates the so-called "H factor", used as a metric for the scientific impact of researchers and scientists (Available: https://www.periodicos.capes.gov.br/?option=com_pnews&component=Clipping&view=pnewsclipping&cid=970&mn=0#:~:text=O%20%C3%ADndice%20trata%2Dse%20do,n%C3%A3o%20seriam%20considerados%20no%20c%C3%A1lculo. Access: 21 Oct. 2020). It should be noted that Google Scholar is a private search engine, linked to an international corporation.

⁴ Consultation last held on 20 October 2020, at 11:00 am (Available: <https://catalogodeteses.capes.gov.br/catalogo-teses/#/>. Access: 21 Oct. 2020).

Renata Junqueira and Maria de Lourdes Guimarães Carvalho, working in the areas of knowledge “Portuguese Language”, “Letters” and “Education”. The panel members most present in the evaluation of dissertations and theses recovered through this survey are, respectively, Renata Junqueira de Souza, Dagoberto Buim Arena and Luiz Antônio Ferreira.

Taking such data into account and seeking consistency in the presentation of the theoretical perspective of “Reading Strategies”, it will be presented from the book *Reading and Understanding: Reading Strategies (Ler e compreender: estratégias de leitura - MENIN et al., 2010)*, since in it two of the authors nominated by the Catalog, as fundamental to the development and consolidation of this perspective from the academic field, appear as organizers and authors of the texts. Thus, we avoid the risk of taking as a reference for the conceptual presentation any divulgators or diluters that are not very fond of the effective development and dissemination of the notion in focus.

Regarding the scope of official proposals, it is important to emphasize that this perspective is explicitly mentioned at least *eighteen times* in the new National Common Curricular Base (BNCC) (BRASIL, 2018). In the sub-item “Portuguese language in elementary school - early years: language practices, objects of knowledge and skills”, appears for the first time in the following excerpt: “Thus, in elementary school - early years, [...] in the axis Reading/Listen, literacy expands, through the progressive incorporation of *reading strategies* in texts of increasing level of complexity” (BRASIL, 2018, p. 89, authors’ highlights, our translation).

Then, the “Reading Strategies” appear as an “object of knowledge” of the “Artistic-Literary Field”, in the summary table of the proposal for the teaching of Portuguese Language in the 6th and 7th grades and then in the 8th and 9th grades (BRASIL, 2018, p. 168-186); and appear in the corresponding list of “Abilities” to be developed by students of this discipline in these years of study:

(EF67LP28) *Read, autonomously, and understand* - selecting procedures and *reading strategies* suitable for different purposes and considering characteristics of genres and supports - children's novels, popular tales, horror tales, Brazilian, indigenous and African legends, adventure narratives, enigma narratives, myths, chronicles, autobiographies, comic books, mangas, free and fixed-form poems (such as sonnets and strings), video-poems, visual poems, among others, *expressing evaluation* of the text read and *establishing preferences for genres, themes, authors*. [...]

(EF89LP33) *Read, autonomously, and understand* - selecting procedures and reading strategies suitable for different purposes and considering characteristics of genres and supports - novels, contemporary short stories, mini-tales, contemporary fables, youth novels, romanticized biographies, novels, visual chronicles, science fiction narratives, suspense narratives, free

and fixed form poems (such as haiku), concrete poem, cyberpoem, among others, *expressing evaluation* of the text read and *establishing preferences for genres, themes, authors* (BRASIL, 2018, p. 169-187, authors' highlights, our translation).

The other occurrences of the expression “Reading Strategies” are located in the part of the BNCC referring to the English language; consign, according to the contextualized reading of the document, a different understanding from that carried out in the part referring to the Portuguese language, as they emphasize that they do **not** apply to *autonomous reading, to the comprehension of literary texts, to the expression of evaluation or to the establishment of preferences for genres, themes and authors* (as in the part referring to the Portuguese language, mentioned above); but they are understood as (meta)cognitive resources for the initial approximation of texts to be read in any sphere of human activity (and not just in the literary sphere).

Regarding the English language, the "Reading Strategies" appear as a "Thematic Unit" (and not as an "Object of Knowledge", as it happens in Portuguese), linked to the following "Objects of Knowledge": "Hypotheses about purpose of a text" and “General and specific understanding: rapid reading (skimming, scanning)”, for the 6th grade; “General and specific understanding: rapid reading (skimming, scanning)” and “Construction of the global meaning of the text”, for the 7th grade; “Construction of meanings through inferences and implicit recognition”, for the 8th grade (BRASIL, 2018, p. 256); and “Resources of persuasion” and “Resources of argumentation”, for the 9th grade (BRASIL, 2018, p. 260).

In the field of "Study and Research Practices", at the end of the document, the "Reading Strategies" are explicitly mentioned in the skill identified as "(EM13LP28) Organize study situations and use procedures and *reading strategies* appropriate to the objectives and nature of the knowledge in question” (BRASIL, 2018, p. 517, authors' highlights, our translation).

Given this set of data, the process of building a hegemony of “Reading Strategies” in the field of Literature Didactics in Brazil emerges as unequivocal. Thus, we can say that this is a trend “in the process of becoming hegemony” – as it is widely recurrent in the intellectual field and, from then on, assured in official State documents that guide pedagogical work in public and private school education networks.

Yet another element must be considered: there is a fluctuation or instability regarding the understanding of what “Reading Strategies” are. Would it be a theoretical-methodological framework (as mentioned in some of the works in the Capes Catalog) and, therefore, would it outline an epistemological horizon to produce knowledge in the fields of Letters, Linguistics

and Education? Would it be a teaching methodology? Would it be something to be incorporated into the “expansion of Literacy” (as it appears in the first occurrence in BNCC)? Would it be an object of knowledge in the artistic-literary field? Would it be part of the text comprehension process (a process that is explained in BNCC items EF67LP28 and EF89LP33 as being the ability to select “*reading procedures and strategies* suitable for different purposes and considering characteristics of genres and supports”)? Would it be a “thematic unit”, as it appears in the part of the BNCC referring to the English language?

Faced with so many questions, and given the inconsistencies already demonstrated in the basic document for the curriculum of all basic education, our objective is quite modest: to clarify in its own terms how the perspective of “Reading Strategies” in Brazil is presented; for that, as already announced, we will resort to a publication organized by reference authors, based on the parameters already explained above.

Our main attention will be directed to the conceptions of the American intellectual who introduced, through lectures, courses and research collaborations, the "Reading Strategies" in our country, and who was invited by the publication's organizers to preface the work: what evidences that Brazilian intellectuals grant it recognition and prestige – since, as a paratext, the role of a preface is not only to present the work, but, through an argument of intellectual authority, to reinforce the pertinence and legitimacy of the publication's content.

The "Reading Strategies" in the view of the researcher who formed the first Brazilian cadres for its development and dissemination

The book *Reading and understanding: reading strategies*, organized by Menin *et al.* (2010), is structured in five parts: a preface (signed by Lynn Davis, identified as Associate Professor in the area of Education at Plymouth State University); chapters I (Children's Literature as cultural production and as an instrument for the initiation of children in the world of written culture); II (Reading strategies: to think students and understand what they read); and III (Evaluate reading activities for what?); and finally, an appendix entitled “Suggestions from books for comprehension strategies”.

The preface informs that the book is the result of a three-year research, started in 2006, which aimed to "bring children's literature into the classroom and, in this way, involve students with books", and as an object of investigation “the applicability of using children's literature in teaching text comprehension strategies developed in reading programs in primary and secondary schools” (DAVIS, 2010, p. 9, our translation). The prefacer (DAVIS, 2010, p.

9-11) reports that she gave a lecture in Brazil and that she returned some time later to teach “a series of mini-courses for teachers from regular schools and universities on comprehension strategies” (DAVIS, 2010, p. 10, our translation); she informs that the studies were carried out based on the book *Strategies that Works* (HARVEY; GOUDVIS, 2008 *apud* DAVIS, 2010, p. 10) – currently, in the third edition, published in 2017.

Next, the preface explains her conception of reading:

[...] I did not need to speak their language to understand the passion of those teachers for learning and I could see with what dedication they struggled to improve the teaching of reading. We agreed that reading is much more than decoding words and answering literal questions. *Reading is a matter of strategy*. Finally, connecting with the characters in the story, asking questions about new things the reader has learned, making inferences to reach a conclusion or interpret. Either way, *independent and proficient readers develop strategies*.

As proficient, independent readers, we are aware of when we have lost focus and we know how to overcome our lack of understanding. *Our fixation strategies are internalized, which is precisely why they are automatic*. [...] *When we read, we use mental images to help us understand the characters' actions or acquire a new concept*. Unlike us, many early graders do not automatically use comprehension strategies. [...]

Proficient readers engage in reading because they have very well-developed skills and strategies that enable them to achieve an elevated level of comprehension. Teaching comprehension strategies helps students reflect on what they have read and equips them to delve deeper into the text. [...] Classes that effectively help to develop strategies *provide opportunities for the practice of reflection* under the guidance of the teacher, *awakening in students desired behaviors* such as independent practice. Students who internalize comprehension strategies can transfer their knowledge to different genres and more complex texts. [...]

[...] It has been a privilege to work with these dedicated educators [Renata, Cyntia, Dagoberto and Ana Maria] whose *main objective is to create learning environments* in which students become proficient and independent readers (DAVIS, 2010, p. 9-11, authors' highlights, our translation).

Although long, the quote is necessary to adequately contextualize and in its own terms the “Reading Strategies”, from the perspective of the American scholar who formed the first professionals from which this perspective was developed and disseminated in Brazil. For Davis (2010, p. 9-11), then: reading is a matter of strategies; independent, proficient readers develop and apply strategies and engage with reading because they “have developed skills and strategies very well”; these reading strategies are internalized and therefore automatic; when we read, we use mental images.

As for the work of teachers, for the author, good reading classes “promote opportunities for the practice of reflection”, “awakening in students desired behaviors”; and dedicated educators have as their main objective “to create learning environments in which

students become proficient and independent readers” (DAVIS, 2010, p. 11, our translation). All of this seems to show a repurpose of pedagogical concepts that, in theory, would have guided the 20th century: teachers, far from teaching content and focusing on the omnilateral formation of students, "promote opportunities", "awaken behaviors" (in the behaviorist fashion) and “create learning environments” (DAVIS, 2010, p. 11, our translation).

Regarding the object of knowledge, it is important not to forget that Davis (2010) shows that her contribution⁵ to the formation of the first Brazilian cadres is unequivocally articulated with the development of an inaugural research carried out by Menin, Giroto, Buim and Souza between 2006-2009, and whose synthesis was published in the book that we use here as a source.

In the aforementioned research, the *objective* was “to take children's literature to the classroom and, in this way, involve students with books” and the *object of investigation* was “the applicability of the use of children's literature in teaching text comprehension strategies developed in reading programs in primary and secondary schools” (DAVIS, 2010, p. 9, our translation). We are not going to advance here in terms of compatibility or not between the stated objective and object. We will restrict ourselves to indicating that in the statements cited: a) the widespread belief that children's contact with children's literature in the school context is recognized as the main factor (not to say the only one...) to subjects to “get involved” with books; and b) a vision of instrumental literature is detected, as children's literature would be used in teaching textual comprehension strategies.

From the point of view of a pedagogical analysis, the notion of "involvement" (of children with books) is unspecific or empty, without parameters that allow judging what a person is "involved" or not with books and without parameters that justify why this is it would be desirable to the point of constituting a legitimate educational objective, which is why it seems to be scientifically or philosophically unproductive. From the point of view of an aesthetic-literary analysis, the impertinence of reducing children's literature to a didactic material whose use would come to be judged as “applicable” (or not) in teaching textual comprehension strategies seems sufficiently obvious.

⁵ Additionally, through research in the official resumes of Plataforma Lattes and through news published on the website of Plymouth State University, we located the information that at least one of the Brazilian researchers held an internship (during a gap year) with the institution to which Lynn Davis is linked, developing between them an intense collaboration over the years (Available: <https://www.fosters.com/article/20080910/GJNEWS02/709107787>. Access: 21 Oct. 2020), including with funding from the Foundation for Research Support of the State of São Paulo (Available: https://bv.fapesp.br/pt/instituicao_exterior/2590/plymouth-state-universitypsu/?sort=nome&group_by=type&sort_intermed=-count. Access: 21 Oct. 2020).

Finally, note an emptying of the transmission function of school content, as even in the few occurrences of the word “teaching” in Davis' (2010) preface, it is reduced to “teaching textual comprehension strategies developed in text programs reading in primary and secondary schools” – that is, *content* is not taught, with a view to developing skills and abilities, but *strategies* are taught, that is, (meta)cognitive processes. It is, therefore, an allusion to the perspective that in school one should “learn to learn” (or to monitor learning itself), emptying the learning objects (that is, the contents that should be appropriated and targeted).

Such strategies, according to Girotto and Souza (2010, p. 47), would be: connections, inferences, visualization, questioning, synthesis and summarization – and such nomenclatures are assumed by the authors in the publication we scrutinized with the following justification: “we chose to use these nomenclatures, considering that we are based on the teaching of these strategies in the light of the metacognitive theory of the North Americans referenced in this text” (our translation).

An analysis of "Reading Strategies" in the light of objective reality

Regarding the conception of reading decanted from Davis' (2010) thought, the discursive and dialogic process does not constitute the reading activity, because, if it did, reading would imply not only producing meanings, but assuming a responsible and responsive position towards the speech of others. In this sense, the use, in the different chapters of the publication, of quotations from authors with a historical and dialectical materialist basis, such as Bakhtin and Vigotski, seems to constitute only a strategic resource to favor the acceptance of the ideas presented there by eventual readers in tune with these authors contributions, or to dilute the concepts that support the defended perspective, making them more easily “assimilable”.

In the words of the prefacer and main disseminator of "Reading Strategies" in her transplantation from the US context to the Brazilian context, reading comes down to a matter of learning (meta)cognitive self-monitoring tools, as “reading is a matter of strategy” and “as proficient, independent readers, we are aware of when we lose focus and we know how to overcome our lack of understanding” (DAVIS, 2010, p. 9-11, our translation). Such strategies would not only need to be internalized, but *automated* – so that they apply them to texts without any hesitation. Therefore, there would be no doubts about its relevance given the infinity of texts and genres that circulate in countless spheres of human activity.

Given the idea that independent and proficient readers get involved in reading because they “developed skills and strategies very well”, it is pertinent to emphasize an erasure of the cultural, economic, historical and social dimension of reading; in the words of Davis (2010), as we have seen, there is no mention of the fact that people become independent and proficient readers for a number of reasons that are not restricted to (meta)cognitive issues.

Access to and permanence in quality public schools, the existence of good libraries (accessible, with planned collections and well-trained reading mediators), family/community coexistence in concrete situations of use of reading and writing, the possibility of acquisition of the desired reading materials and their use for the time necessary, the availability of free time that can be used for reading, the existence of adequate physical spaces for reading (illuminated, clear, quiet), the formation and professional development of the teachers, who are the main responsible for transmitting reading and writing in a systematic and intentional way to children... finally, none of this is mentioned as a requirement for the formation of readers by the American scholar who worked in the dissemination of "reading strategies" in Brazil, in the preface to the work that constitutes a significant research milestone: "The information in this book, resulting from This [research] project has the potential to bring about change. The findings of this group and this publication will serve as a valuable resource for both novices and veteran teachers" (DAVIS, 2010, p. 9, our translation).

From the point of view of the elements of concrete reality, the hypothesis raised for the problems related to teaching and learning to read was the use of textbooks "whose *scripts* were quite specific", the limited availability of children's literature and the lack of teaching strategies (meta)cognitive:

[...] During my visit [to São Paulo State University, in Presidente Prudente - SP], I discovered that most reading classes in Brazilian schools were taught through textbooks with lessons whose *scripts* were very specific. There was little children's literature available for these classes and, in most cases, strategies that would enable students to exercise reflection were not taught. My friend Renata and her colleagues believed that the exclusive use of textbooks in teaching reading did not prepare students for proficient reading. They knew that students needed specific comprehension strategies to become independent readers and to reflect on what they read. (DAVIS, 2010, p. 9-10, our translation).

The opposition between, on the one hand, proficient and independent readers and, on the other, non-readers or non-proficient readers, does not even permeate class issues, judging by the position taken by Davis (2010). What escapes the author is that people read or not read

not because they are able or unable to carry out an automated monitoring of their own reading process, but because of a series of factors influenced by material objectivity.

Brazil and the world have *unacceptable illiteracy rates* (according to the CIA World Factbook, the global literacy rate for people over 15 years old is 84.1%; in Brazil this rate is 93.2%) (INDEX MUNDI, 2020). These illiteracy rates refer only to people over 15 years of age: the situation in Brazil, at the end of the literacy cycle – planned to end up to 8 years of age for children – is dramatic. According to the official document of the National Literacy Policy (BRASIL, 2019, p. 10, our translation):

According to the results of the 2016 National Literacy Assessment (ANA), 54.73% of more than 2 million students completing the 3rd year of elementary school showed insufficient performance in the reading proficiency exam. Of this total, about 450,000 students were classified at level 1 of the proficiency scale, which means that they are unable to locate explicit information in simple texts of up to five lines and to identify the purpose of texts such as invitations, posters, recipes and tickets.

In writing, 33.95% were at insufficient levels (1, 2 or 3). Although the number is not that high compared to reading, the seriousness of the problem can be seen in the description of these levels: approximately 680,000 students aged about 8 years are at levels 1 and 2, which means that they cannot write "words alphabetically" or spell them with spelling deviations. As for writing texts, they either produce illegible texts or are absolutely incapable of writing a short text.

Comparing the results of the 2014 and 2016 editions reveals a stagnation in student performance (INEP, 2018a). In addition, it is clear that the situation is far from that established by goal 5 of the National Education Plan (PNE), namely, to make all children literate, at the latest, by the end of the 3rd year of elementary school.

Brazil has the 2nd *highest concentration of income* in the world (according to the United Nations Human Development Report, published on 9 December 2019, the richest 1% concentrates 28.3% of the country's total income; and the richest 10% in Brazil concentrate 41.9% of total income). This means that, for so few to have so much, most of the country's population lives in miserable conditions. In this regard, the text of a journalistic article that exposes research data produced by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics completed in 2019 is instructive:

Only 2.7% of Brazilian families concentrated almost 20% of all the money received by families in the country, between 2017 and 2018. The information comes from the Family Budget Survey (POF), released by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE). According to the survey, the total number of families in Brazil is approximately 69 million. Of this number, 2.7%, equivalent to 1.8 million families, have an income above 23 thousand and 850 reais. Meanwhile, 23.9%, equivalent to 16.4 million

families, only receive up to 1,908 reais, corresponding to two minimum wages.

[...] The survey states that the average income of families in Brazil is 5,426 reais. However, this calculation sums the income of all families, poor and rich, and forms an average. Of these 5,426 reais on average, 1,080 reais come from the income of the richest families and only 297 reais come from the poorest families. In other words, while the richest families (1.8 million) hold 20% of the total income generated in Brazil, the poorest families (16.4 million) have only 5.5%.

The survey also shows that, in the income of families earning up to 1,908 reais a month, 24.3% comes from government transfers, such as retirement, public and private pensions, scholarships and social programs for income transfer. [...] For the researcher José Mauro de Freitas Júnior, manager of the IBGE's Family Budget Surveys, the study shows high levels of social inequality in Brazil. "When you say that 2.7% of families contribute with a much higher percentage than the overwhelming majority of families, you are saying that there is great inequality. Imagine: 87% of families contribute with 54% of the average income. So, there is a huge inequality" (OHANA, 2019, authors' highlights, our translation).

Considering the objective Brazilian reality, one cannot forget that, at the time of writing this text, the current minimum wage is R\$ 1,045.00 (BRASIL, 2020), while the Inter-Union Department of Statistics and Socioeconomic Studies (DIEESE) calculates that "to support a family of four in August [2020], with two adults and two children, the minimum wage should have been R\$ 4,536.12. This value corresponds to 4.34 times the current minimum" (ECONOMIA, 2020). Additionally, according to data from the National Household Sampling Survey (PNAD), at the time of writing this text, in 2020, "the underutilized population grew by 15.7%, reaching 29.1%, a total of 31.9 million of people. The population outside the workforce reached 77.8 million people, the largest contingent in the historical series [started in 2012], with record growth" and "The number of formal jobs in the private sector reached the lowest level of the historical series – 30.2 million people formally employed" (TV JORNAL, 2020, our translation). The parents of children in our schools are having serious difficulties putting food on the table, paying the rent, buying school supplies and uniforms, keeping up with the energy bill that ensures light for reading until later...

These Brazilian problems – and here we focus only on *illiteracy rates* and the *failure of children's literacy*; in *income concentration*; in the *incompatibility between the minimum wage received by most workers and the minimum necessary to live with dignity*; in *unemployment and underutilization of the workforce*, with the retraction in the number of employed people and the growth of precarious employment relationships – these are not new, but chronic. In other words, they were already public and notorious in the first decade of the

2000s; thus, it is alarming that, in the research carried out by Brazilian scholars, as well as in its presentation by a foreign intellectual, they have not been considered to think about the causes of children's failure with learning to read.

Not even the chronic structural problems of national education were dimensioned, and the hypotheses raised revolved around the poor quality of textbooks, the unavailability of children's literature and the lack of mastery of (meta)cognitive strategies for monitoring the reading process itself. With this we do not want to say that such questions are not relevant, but they seem to us to miss the central problems that effectively prevent people from “getting involved with books” and “understanding the texts”.

Even the strictly pedagogical aspect was reduced to its psychological (or psychologizing) face and to personal engagement, since, in the words of Girotto and Souza (2010, p. 46-47), the perspective of working with reading strategies for teaching students to understand what they read “brings metacognition as a basis”, understood as “knowledge about the thinking process”. For the authors, also: “teaching for understanding is more effective when it happens in the structure of active literacy” and “classrooms that promote active literacy have enthusiastic and interested students, as teachers are not the only ones to speak and give opinions” (our translation).

Final considerations

At the beginning of our argument, we recover the Gramscian thought, for which it is quite common for a certain social group, which is in a situation of subordination in relation to another group, to adopt its conception of the world, even if it is in contradiction with their practical activity.

Brazilian teachers have teacher formation and working conditions that are far from the minimum desirable; they work in public schools with structural conditions that are not always favorable; their students are the children of the working class or of the class that, being so deprived, cannot even find work (in view of the growing number of underemployed or unemployed people...); they teach reading where there are no quality school libraries or public libraries... And one of the pedagogical perspectives on the way to hegemony in Brazil – assumed in thousands of published scientific works and in the official document that establishes a national curriculum base for all networks and schools – argues that text comprehension problems will be solved through (meta)cognitive self-monitoring strategies.

As pointed out by Alves (2010) and Gramsci (1978a; 1978b), a worldview mechanically imposed by the external environment is devoid of critical awareness and coherence, it is disaggregated and occasional. For the Italian philosopher, the uncritical adoption of a worldview of another social group results in a contrast between thinking and acting; in turn, critical awareness is obtained through a dispute of contrasting hegemonies - and here we seek to present, with analytical rigor, what underlies the "Reading Strategies" in the light of an epistemological framework for which concrete reality is the criterion validity of any theoretical elaboration and, therefore, of any methodological proposal for educational practice.

We demonstrate that the centrality given to the (meta)cognitive dimension of reading conceals unavoidable elements - and we point out that this concealment, even if it is not conscious or malicious, results in a lack of clarity as to the real causes of the low performance of children in activities of reading. Looking at these causes would require a foundation and guidance for educational practice that had as its premise the confrontation and overcoming of inequality, caused by a mode of production and distribution of wealth that is not really concerned with the maximum development of the potential of all people.

This emphasis on psychological or (meta)cognitive issues at the expense of cultural, economic, historical and social factors, *on the one hand*, and at the expense of properly pedagogical factors, *on the other*, is explained in macro-political terms by Saviani (2010), when he presents some categories that would characterize current pedagogical thinking. For the teacher, they are:

[...] a) neo-productivism, which subverts the socio-economic bases that pedagogical thought sought to find in the social sciences; b) neoescolanovismo, which metamorphoses the didactic bases that were sought to be defined by pedagogy understood as the science of education; and c) neo-constructivism, which brings back the psychopedagogical bases that were sought to be built by investigations in psychological science (SAVIANI, 2010, p. 19, our translation).

In other words, according to Saviani (2010), before, schooling was characterized as a preparation of the workforce to occupy defined jobs in a market that was expanding towards full employment; now it is the individual who will have to acquire the means to be competitive in the precarious labor market and with increasingly rarefied rights, so that education is understood as an investment in individual human capital. In this contemporary trend, there would therefore be a requirement to reach increasingly higher levels of performance and productivity - hence the importance of the subject "internalizing" and

"automating" their self-regulation, that is, monitoring the reading process itself through the application of "strategies" defined in advance and applicable to any texts in any reading context.

About neo-*escolanovismo*, Saviani (2010) points out that, in this scenario of instability for the worker and for the work itself, there was a redefinition of the motto "learning to learn" in relation to its original elaboration, in the *Escolanovismo*.

This vision [which gave new meaning to *Escolanovismo*] was widely propagated in the 1990s, as can be seen from its strong presence in the "Jacques Delors Report", published by UNESCO in 1996, because of the work of the commission, which between 1993 and 1996 was dedicated to tracing the guidelines of world education in the 21st century.

This same orientation was assumed as a state policy by means of the National Curriculum Parameters (PCN) elaborated at the initiative of the MEC to serve as a reference for the assembly of the curricula of all schools in the country [...].

Thus, inspired by neo-*escolanovismo*, the didactic-pedagogical bases of the new ideas that have been guiding educational reforms and practices since the 1990s were outlined. Such practices manifest themselves with "light" characteristics, spreading across different spaces, from the schools themselves, [...] without greater demands for conceptual precision and scientific rigor (SAVIANI, 2010, p. 22, our translation).

It seems undeniable that the conceptual inaccuracies pointed out throughout this text in the presentation of the "Reading Strategies" (by those who prescribe them) show the lack of scientific rigor and precision pointed out by Saviani as characteristics of neo-schools.

Finally, as Saviani (2010, p. 24, author's highlights, our translation), "neoconstructivism merges with neopragmatism and competences are assimilated to the 'adaptive mechanisms of human behavior' [...] To adapt to the natural and material environment would come into play the cognitive skills". In this context:

[...] both research and teaching are legitimized by performance, that is, research no longer aims, properly, at disinterested knowledge of the truth and teaching is no longer centered on the formation of a model of life; considering, therefore, that, according to this understanding, knowing does not imply turning to reality to understand and explain it, but to build models and virtually simulate the functioning of these models (SAVIANI, 2010, p. 25, our translation).

Thus, considering that our objective was to present and answer the question about the relevance and consistency of the pedagogical work with reading guided by the "Reading Strategies", given the analysis of objective reality, it seems pertinent to conclude that the answer is negative - and not it is just a difference of epistemological orientation, with its spread to the linguistic-literary or pedagogical fields: although this is relevant, when thinking

about the defense of the class that lives from work, which is the class to which the teachers acting in the Brazilian public network also belong. These are, properly, conceptual weaknesses evidenced from the critical analysis of documents and bibliographic references. In this sense, it seems to us that, to solve the problems of teaching reading in Brazil, and particularly the teaching of literary reading, the pedagogical work guided by the “internalization and automation” of (meta)cognitive reading strategies need to be overcome.

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