To understand the literacy proposal: the textbook for the first year of elementary school in focus

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ABSTRACT. Underpinned by the Critical Theory of Society, the aim of this article was to understand the relationship between the orientation given to education and the initial teaching of the written language, and the proposal of cultural training for children in the process of learning to read and write. The data were collected in the textbook entitled 'Aprender juntos: letramento e alfabetização' (meaning 'Learning together: literacy and learning to read and write') intended for the literacy & reading/writing syllabus in the first year of elementary education. The analyses show that the presented proposal prioritizes situations of experience of the social application of reading and writing, with few activities devoted to the explicit study of the ability to read and write words, phrases or texts. Despite this orientation being predicated on the idea of the need to educate the critical subject, by emphasizing form (within the dualism of form and content), it ends up contributing to an education where the emphasis is on adapting to the prevailing reality, and therefore encourages pseudo-education.

Keywords: learning to read and write; literacy; textbook; critical theory of society.

Para compreender a proposta de alfabetização: o livro didático para o primeiro ano do ensino fundamental em foco

RESUMO. Fundamentando-se na Teoria Crítica da Sociedade, este artigo tem como objetivo compreender a relação entre os encaminhamentos dados ao ensino e à aprendizagem inicial da língua escrita e a proposta de formação cultural para crianças em processo de alfabetização. Os dados foram coletados no livro didático 'Aprender juntos: letramento e alfabetização', destinado ao componente curricular letramento e alfabetização para o primeiro ano do ensino fundamental. As análises apontam que a proposta apresentada prioriza situações de vivência do uso social da leitura e da escrita, com poucas atividades voltadas ao estudo explícito das habilidades de ler e de escrever quaisquer palavras, frases ou textos. Apesar de este encaminhamento se pautar na ideia da necessidade de formar o sujeito crítico, ao enfatizar a forma (no dualismo forma e conteúdo), acaba concorrendo para a formação cuja ênfase é a adaptação à realidade vigente, portanto concorre para a pseudoformação.

Palavras-chave: alfabetização; letramento; livro didático; teoria crítica da sociedade.

Para entender la propuesta de alfabetización: el libro didáctico de texto, para el primer año de la escuela primaria, en foco

RESUMEN. Con base en la Teoría Crítica de la Sociedad, este artículo tiene como objetivo entender la relación, entre las directrices dadas a la enseñanza y al aprendizaje inicial, de la lengua escrita y también de la propuesta de formación cultural para niños, durante el proceso de alfabetización. Los datos fueron colectados en el libro didáctico 'Aprender juntos: letramiento y alfabetización', destinado al componente curricular letramiento y alfabetización, para el primer año de la enseñanza fundamental. Los análisis apuntan, que la propuesta presentada da prioridad a situaciones de vivencia, del uso social, de la lectura y de la escrita, con pocas actividades orientadas al estudio explícito, de las habilidades de leer y de escribir todas y cualesquier palabras, frases o textos. A pesar de esta orientación pautarse en la idea de la necesidad de formar el sujeto crítico, al destacar la forma (y no la dualidad forma y contenido), termina auxiliando para la formación, cuyo énfasis es la adaptación a la realidad vigente. Por lo tanto, contribuye para la pseudo formación.

Palabras clave: alfabetización; letramiento; libro didáctico; teoría crítica de la sociedad.

Introduction

In Brazil, illiteracy is not a nowadays exclusive problem; it was already present in the colonial period, nevertheless, it was only in the beginning of the 20th century that it became an issue faced by the State (Mortatti, 2004).

In quantitative terms, in the transition from the 20th to the 21st century, almost the entire Brazilian child population in the literacy phase started to have access to schooling (Mortatti, 2004), however, with regard to quality, data from the National Assessment of 2014 Literacy (ANA), although referring to a standardized external assessment, it demonstrates that illiteracy is not an overcome problem. According to the Ministry of Education (MEC), in 2014, the rate of students with an insufficient reading level was 56.17%, indicative of a performance level in which the student is not capable to identify the text purpose, and to locate an explicit information in it. In the case of writing, 34% are not capable to write words alphabetically, and produce readable texts[1] (Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais Anísio Teixeira [INEP], 2015).

This question prompted us to analyze the concept of literacy that has served as basis for pedagogical practices. Therefore, we sought to analyze the textbook of the 2016-2018 cycle of the National Textbook Program (PNLD), entitled 'Aprender juntos: letramento e alfabetização' (meaning 'Learning together: literacy and learning to read and write'), for the curricular component 'Letramento e alfabetização' (meaning 'Literacy and learning to read and write'). We understand that this material reveals the tendency assumed for literacy by the Brazilian State, since it is a teaching material evaluated according to criteria established by the PNLD. In other words, even if the books adopted by Brazilian public schools that adhere to the PNLD are not the same, there is certainly a similarity between it, since it is evaluated using the same criteria. Thus, we conduct the discussion presented in this article in order to understand the concept of literacy that guides the didactic-methodological proposals for child literacy and, therefore, for human development.

To analyze the textbook in which the data were collected, we sought to understand the following aspects that permeated the literacy proposals adopted in recent decades (1980-2016): (i) synthetic and analytical methods; (ii) psychogenesis of written language; (iii) dispute between 'how to teach' and 'how to learn'; (iv) literacy; (v) cognitive science of reading.

From a methodological point of view, we understand that literacy proposals must be analyzed in relation to the social context. Therefore, we must take into account the scenario that the developed industrial society gives to human training nowadays, as well as the training expected to fulfill the objective of maintaining the current order. Consequently, we resorted to authors of the Critical Theory of Society, such as Adorno (2017), Benjamin (2012), Horkheimer (2007), Horkheimer and Adorno (1985) and Marcuse (2015), in search of foundations for understanding the educational process in the current context and the implications of this process for cultural formation (*bildung*). The aim is to investigate how these thinkers positioned themselves in relation to the loss of the subject's autonomy in the face of the predominance of instrumental reason, mass culture and how such loss is possible once most people have access to schooling. Although these theorists have not been specifically occupied with the school education process, nor with the child literacy process, they analyzed modern industrialized society, human education and contemporary culture, fundamental categories for understanding the literacy proposals and the desired education in the current context.

Critical theory of society and cultural formation (*bildung*)

For Horkheimer (2007), understanding the process of formalizing reason requires taking into account the dualism through which this category has permeated in the Western world: subjective reason and objective reason.

Subjective reason refers to the faculty that makes rational actions possible, that is, "[...] faculty of classification, inference and deduction, no matter what the specific content of these actions [...]" (Horkheimer, 2007, p. 9); in this sense, "[...] subjective reason is the ability to calculate probabilities and thus coordinate the correct means with a determined end" (Horkheimer, 2007, p. 11). The objective reason, on the other hand, refers to that desired by large philosophical systems that sought to "[...] develop a comprehensive system, or a hierarchy, of all beings, including man and his purposes" (Horkheimer, 2007, p. 10-11).

Philosophical systems based on objective reason imply the possibility of discovering an essential structure that encompasses all 'being' and from which a conception of human destiny can emanate (Horkheimer, 2007).

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[1] Although these data are from a standardized assessment, it indicates that the literacy process deserves attention, whether it is with regard to teaching, whether it is with regard to the underlying conception of public policies for literacy, whether it is the assessments that set standards for reading, writing and language.

The problem is that, in modernity, reason tends to dissolution, losing its objective content. In this context, subjective reason has predominated, which, once formalized, becomes an instrument, that is, it becomes instrumental reason and, consequently, "[...] ideas become automatic, instrumentalized [...]. It is considered as things, machines [...]", points out Horkheimer (2007, p. 27).

The more formalized human reason, the less we perceive social contradictions. As Marcuse (2015, p. 45) states, "[...] the more radical, productive, technical and total the repressive administration of society becomes, the more unimaginable become the means and ways in which managed individuals could break their bondage."

In other words, the more immune to contradictions, the less we think critically, dialectically and negatively, as we see the world according to the ideology of industrial society: everything must be seen positively, in a formalized, immutable and eternal way. In this way, the one-dimensional man is the subject who sees the present (disregarding the past and the future) and the positive (disregarding the negative), says Marcuse (2015).

With the process of reason formalization, Western society faces a crisis in its cultural formation (*bildung*); to understand it, we base ourselves on the concept of cultural industry, created by Horkheimer and Adorno in the mid-twentieth century. With this term, presented in the essay 'A indústria cultural: o esclarecimento como mistificação das massas' (meaning 'The cultural industry: enlightenment as a mystification of the masses'), a chapter of the work 'Dialética do Esclarecimento' (meaning 'Dialectics of Enlightenment'), written in 1947, the authors explain that the duality between 'mass culture' and 'popular culture', it allowed us to suppose that there would be a high culture for the bourgeois elite, in opposition to the culture produced by the people or for the people. The term 'cultural industry' makes it clear that, in the bourgeois world, there is only one culture, or rather, a false culture, which is industrialized and reaches everyone, without distinction; it is, therefore, a pseudoculture.

In the German language, *bildung* (cultural formation) is inseparable from the term *kultur* (culture). These terms are intrinsically linked to the rise of the bourgeoisie in Germany, as it is the social class that feels "[...] proud of being the author of cultural productions that idealize a very different future from that supported by the praise of 'civilized' habits and customs and supported by idle European nobility" (Pucci, Zuin, & Ramos-de-Oliveira, 2008, p. 56, authors' emphasis). However, as the rise of the bourgeoisie was linked to the triumph of the modern industrialized society, which, in turn, was supported by the cultural industry, culture itself became questionable, as it would be the very reality to which the subject must adapt in order to be able to form culturally, that is, on the one hand, the subject appropriates that culture; on the other hand, when there is the ideology that there can be no culture other than the one that is present. This is a dangerous determination, as this premise does not admit the contradiction and, therefore, the overcoming of the false culture inherent in the modern world industrialized.

Horkheimer and Adorno (1985) point out that the dissemination of industrialized culture as a culture is a mechanism for concealing the possibility of overcoming bourgeois culture. This is because, by calling itself authentic and insurmountable, pseudoculture becomes the ideology of modern industrialized society and, at the same time, a fetish that sustains the perpetuation of capitalism. On the other hand, the idea that the appropriation of high culture, which would mean the negation of pseudoculture, would be sufficient for human emancipation is false as an end, but true as a means to reach authentic culture. In other words, dialectically, the appropriation of culture, as a medium, is the condition for accessing true culture.

What, then, is true culture? It is culture capable of making the 'self-criticism of reason'. According to Horkheimer (2007), this self-criticism assumes, in the first place, "[...] that the antagonism between reason and nature is in an acute and catastrophic phase [...]"; secondly, "[...] that at this stage of complete alienation the idea of truth is still accessible" (Horkheimer, 2007, p. 182). Despite this, as long as reason does not exercise self-criticism, pseudo-formation will continue to be an accomplice of the imagery suggestions of contemporary aesthetics, that is, of the cultural industry.

In the essay 'Teoria da semicultura' (meaning 'Theory of Semiculture'), Adorno (2017) presents a reflection that contributes to the understanding of the crisis of human formation, which remains current. According to the author's arguments, "[...] cultural formation now becomes a socialized semi-formation, in the omnipresence of the alienated spirit which, according to its emphasis and meaning, does not precede cultural formation, but succeeds it" (Adorno, 2017, p. 1). Pseudo-training has become the form of consciousness that predominates in bourgeois society and it is this that helps "[...] keep in their place those for whom there is

nothing very high or expensive [...]" (Adorno, 2017, p. 6); pseudoformation is, therefore, a representation of the "[...] spirit conquered by the fetish character of the commodity" (Adorno, 2017, p. 11).

As we pointed out in the introduction to this article, despite the population's wide access to the schooling process, children are not being guaranteed learning that enables them to engage in social reading and writing practices with autonomy. We know that multiple factors participate in this scenario, from the training of literacy teachers to the educational policies that have been adopted in relation to this school content. Therefore, it is necessary to understand a specific field that may imply cultural formation (*bildung*): the path/process of initial learning of the written language, that is, the methodological proposals that have been part of this school content in Brazilian schools in recent decades. In this sense, we turn to the conceptions of initial learning of written language that, since the 1980s, have supported theoretical-methodological approaches.

Academic and scientific literature on literacy methods and proposals from the 1980s onwards

Analyzing the written language learning process, literacy methods are an important issue, but; however, after the 1960s, there was a sharp drop in academic research focused on this subject. According to Soares (2014), in the 1970s, only 14% of Brazilian academic and scientific production was focused on the issue of literacy methods, falling to 4% in the first half of the 1980s. In recent years, however, the method has returned to be the object of research and academic debates.

In summary, in Brazil, since the beginning of the republic, discussions about literacy methods have oscillated and, recently, have oscillated again, both in academic research and in the pedagogical practices of literacy teachers, between synthetic and analytical methods (Carvalho, 2005).

Concerning the synthetic methods, three are the main ones: the spelling method (alphabetical), whose teaching has as its starting point the name of the letters; the syllable that emphasizes the pronunciation of syllables; the phonic method that starts from the sounds corresponding to the letters (phonemes). On the other hand, we have literacy methods that propose the opposite path to synthetic methods, the so-called analytical methods. In Brazil, these proposals appeared in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, becoming present when, through a biopsychologization of childhood, the need "[...] to make learning meaningful and, for this, starting from the understanding of the written word, to arrive at the sound value of syllables and graphemes" (Soares, 2016, p. 18). In this sense, the main assumption that guides the analytical methods is this: "[...] the teaching of reading should start with the 'whole', and then proceed to the analysis of its constituent parts" (Mortatti, 2006, p. 7). However, as explained by Mortatti (2006), theorists of analytical methods had different views about this 'whole', that is, its defenders considered the 'whole' sometimes the word, sometimes the sentence, sometimes the 'story', constituting the 'whole', then, the three main analytical methods: the word, the sentence and the global, respectively.

This dispute between synthetic and analytical methods continues to foment discussions about literacy. This can be explained by the fact that constructivism has not presented a path to direct the literacy process. In fact, Ferreiro and Teberosky (1999), researchers of the psychogenesis of written language, consider that the dispute between methods, whether synthetic or analytical, implies an insoluble quarrel, unless "[...] we know what are the 'subject's learning processes', processes that this or which methodology can favor, stimulate or block [...]" (Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1999, p. 29, authors' emphasis), that is, the output for the dispute between these methods there can only be if one considers 'how the child learns'.

Ferreiro clarifies that the fundamental question that guided his epistemological and psychological investigations about the appropriation of writing was the following: "[...] how do you go from a state of lesser knowledge to a state of greater knowledge?" (Ferreiro, 2017, p. 9). According to Ferreiro and Teberosky (1999, p. 32, emphasis added), the answer is that

> [...] no learning has an absolute starting point, since, however, new the content to be known, it must necessarily be 'assimilated' by the subject and, according to the available assimilation schemes, the assimilation will be more or less deforming.

For Ferreiro (2017), advances in writing occur when the child acts on it, that is, information from the world of writing "[...] is not passively received by children [...]" (Ferreiro, 2017, p. 25); "[...] when they try to understand, they necessarily transform the content received" (Ferreiro, 2017, p. 25). "This is the deep

meaning of the notion of 'assimilation' that Piaget placed at the heart of his theory [...]", highlights Ferreiro (2017, p. 25, authors' emphasis).

In summary, the psychogenesis of written language opened a new dispute about proposals for children's literacy: on the one hand, the teaching-oriented method – 'how to teach' – (synthetic methods and analytical methods); on the other hand, the method aimed at learning – 'how to learn' – (natural method/constructivism).

After the 1990s, new terms came to be used to name the initial learning process of written language:

lettering, learning to read and write and literacy. Within the limits of this article, it is not up to us to deepen the tensions and ambiguities regarding the similarities and differences between the three terms; however, it is necessary to say that the production of the concept of lettering and the distinction between learning to read and write and literacy are simplifying and linear formulations of the 'complex learning process of writing', which responds to the (ideological) need to name things, facts and phenomena in order to control them through specific knowledge.

Etymologically, the word is a translation of the English term literacy, which, in turn, comes from the Latin *littera*, which refers to the word 'letter'. In turn, the word literacy could be decomposed as follows: *litera* (letter) + *cy* (condition or state of), that is, "[...] literacy is the 'condition of being literate'" (Soares, 2009, p. 35, authors' emphasis). Soares, however, shows that the definition of the word can be expanded: "[...] 'literacy' is, therefore, the result of the action of teaching or learning to read and write [...]" (Soares, 2009, p. 18, authors' emphasis); it is "[...] the state or condition that a social group or an individual acquires as a consequence of having appropriated writing" (Soares, 2009, p. 18).

Given the necessity to expand the access of its citizens to literate culture, in the current context (21st century), basically three 'facets' referring to the initial learning of written language have gained space both in the academic and pedagogical spheres: linguistic, interactive and the sociocultural (Soares, 2016). Of these three facets, "[...] three different knowledge objects emerge in the composition of the initial learning process of written language, objects that correspond to distinct cognitive and linguistic domains [...]" (Soares, 2016, p 29) and, therefore, "[...] three categories of skills to be developed", conceptualizes Soares (2016, p. 29).

By focusing on the 'linguistic facet', we find literacy in the strict sense. In this context, the object of knowledge "[...] is the appropriation of the alphabetic-orthographic system and writing conventions, an object that demands specific cognitive and linguistic processes" (Soares, 2016, p. 29).

While in the 'interactive facet', the object of learning and teaching "[...] are the skills of understanding and producing texts [...]" (Soares, 2016, p. 29). This object requires knowledge of cognitive processes – metalinguistics – and reading and writing strategies.

Finally, in relation to the objects of the 'sociocultural facet', we have "[...] social and cultural events that involve writing, an object that implies specific knowledge, skills and attitudes that promote adequate inclusion in these events [...]" (Soares, 2019, p. 29), that is, socio-discursive skills that allow the literate subject to participate/interact with different situations and contexts of social use of reading and writing practices (Soares, 2019).

Therefore, the facet characterized as 'linguistic' has as its object of knowledge something essentially linguistic: the alphabetic-orthographic writing system (Soares, 2016), that is, 'literacy'. The two other facets – interactive and sociocultural – imply other objects of knowledge that exceed the linguistic. In the interactive facet, the object of knowledge is the use of written language for interaction between people, which involves, in addition to the linguistic dimension, "[...] 'textual' and 'pragmatic' elements, not exclusively linguistic [...]" (Soares, 2016, p. 38, authors' emphasis); in the sociocultural facet, the object of knowledge is the uses and functions of written language in different social contexts and in different literacy events; therefore, numerous non-linguistic elements are considered, such as epistemological, logical, cognitive, psychological, etc.

> Working with a proposal that favors the student's literacy is not as simple as working with a literacy method, following it to the letter and, in case of failure, wondering about the possible responsible. Developing activities that prepare the student for the social practices of reading and writing requires the teacher to have scientific knowledge in the area, to research, to plan ahead and to use their creativity (Araújo, Rêgo, & Fernandes, 2008, p. 116).

Smolka (2003, p. 49) points out that words certainly have a meaning, but that "[...] they may not have any meaning for children [...]"; in other words, "Meaning can be 'explained' by synonyms, like dictionary, but meaning is the result of the use of words in the different contexts of situations" (Smolka, 2003, p. 49, authors' emphasis). Given this, 'literacy' arises when one "[...] takes reading and writing as social practices and cultural goods and seeks to understand the symbolic value of writing in different social contexts" (Araújo, Rêgo, & Carvalho, 2009a, p. 74).

Mortatti (2004, p. 80, authors' emphasis) seeks to show that the emergence of the concept of 'literacy' is due to a "[...] certain exhaustion of the theoretical and practical limits of the term 'literacy'". Therefore, in the paradigmatic framework of initial learning of written language, it is currently considered that literacy is not enough; it is necessary to promote literacy. Furthermore, it emerges that the two processes, literacy and learning to write and read, although distinct, are inseparable. We agree with Mortatti (2004), but it is necessary, in our view, to make two reservations: (i) due to the fact that the concept of literacy has its origin in an expansion of the literacy concept, these two processes have often been confused (Soares , 2019), which has caused theoretical and practical problems rather than advances; (ii) we consider Soares's argument (2019) that, at the conceptual level, "[...] perhaps the distinction between literacy and learning to write and read was not necessary, 'just to give new meaning to the concept of literacy'" (Soares, 2019, p. 96-97, authors' emphasis).

In addition to literacy, another discussion that currently underlies the proposals is the cognitive science of reading. It is an area whose assumptions can contribute to the understanding of the desired training in the current context, in relation to the learning of written language.

One of the assumptions that guides the cognitive science of reading is that the formation of good readers must prioritize fluent reading. As Snow and Juel (2013, p. 525) point out, "[...] there are many studies that show that good and bad readers differ not in the use of content to make better predictions, but in the quick and efficient identification of words".

We know that science is not neutral; the cognitive science of reading, therefore, also carries with it non-neutrality. By conceiving language as 'code', the cognitive science of reading understands the text as a mere instrument of communication, "[...] the text is seen as a simple product of the encoding of an issuer to be decoded by the reader/listener, just to this, for that, the knowledge of the code" (Koch, 2003, p. 90). Thus, "[...] the text, once decoded, is totally explicit" (Koch, 2003, p. 90). This means that, according to this conception, the reader is a passive 'decoder' of the reading content.

Faraco (2016, p. 47), based on ideas from the 'Círculo de Bakhtin' (meaning 'Bakhtin's Circle'), presents questions about the relationship between language, utterance and ideology, which provide elements for thinking about written language learning, with emphasis on the fact of what,

> Sometimes the adjective ideological appears as equivalent to axiological. Here, it is important to remember that, for [Bakhtin's] Circle, the meaning of utterances always has an evaluative dimension, always expressing an evaluative social position. In this way, any statement is, in the Circle's conception, always ideological [...]. It is ideological in two senses: any statement takes place in the sphere of one of the ideologies (i.e., within one of the areas of human intellectual activity) and always expresses an evaluative position (i.e., there is no neutral statement; the rhetoric of neutrality itself is also an axiological position).

This means to say that all language practice is ideological. Ideology is not something external to the semiotic, but intrinsic to it: "[...] the domain of the ideological coincides with the domain of signs: it is mutually corresponding. Wherever the sign is found, the ideological is also found. Everything that is ideological has a semiotic value", emphasizes Bakhtin (1997, p. 32). Consequently, we are aware that even the simple act of deciphering words (reading) is ideological, but it is an indispensable process for the social function of written language to become effective. In other words, if automatic word recognition does not occur, other reading-related skills (comprehension, inference, deduction, information recognition, etc.) will be at least compromised.

Knowing how to read and write is a condition for effortless reading. This leads us to think about the knowledge needed to learn to read. According to Morais (2014), two types of knowledge are required: linguistic and the ability to identify the written word.

By defending decoding and coding as cognitive principles for learning to read and write, the cognitive science of reading has been considered to have a 'behaviorist' psychological basis.

> For a long time, it was believed that the teaching-learning process [of written language] was based on copying and assimilating content from the gradation from the simplest to the most complex, from the perspective of the adult. From this perspective, activities aimed at teaching reading and writing focused on repetition exercises and memorization of syllabic fragments presented in a given sequence. Seeing the apprentice subject as a 'blank slate', the pedagogical action focused on the concept of teaching dictated by the method and on the efficient use of booklets that guided the teacher's steps (Araújo, Rêgo, & Carvalho, 2009b, p. 117, authors' emphasis).

In this context, we recognize that in the situation where the limit is found, there is also the possibility. Marcuse (2015) also considers this when discussing technological rationality: it is ideological, as it is in it that the elements of perpetuation of capitalist society are found; however, in it, as a means, there are elements necessary for human emancipation. In this sense, the contributions of science to the understanding of the factors involved in the development of the subject's autonomy in relation to learning to read and write are not denied; the school, however, cannot limit itself to providing the child with the appropriation of the alphabetic writing system; it needs to introduce it into authentic, social, contextualized, reading and writing practices.

This does not mean that we consider that it is in the phonic methods, defended by the cognitive science of reading, the solution to the problems that Brazil has been facing in the field of literacy. As warned Adorno (2017, p. 2) about the pedagogical reforms, it is inserted in a scenario in which "[...] the symptoms of the collapse of cultural formation that are observed everywhere, even in the stratum of educated people, are not exhausted by the insufficiencies of the education system and methods, under the criticism of successive generations."

In this way, pedagogical reforms in specific fields, although essential, can 'reinforce the crisis' of cultural formation (Adorno, 2017, p. 2), as it ease "[...] the necessary demands to be made to those who must be educated and because it reveals an innocent disregard for the power that extra-pedagogical reality exerts over them [...]" (Adorno, 2017, p. 2), that is, even if the cognitive science of reading presents elements that lead us to reflect on human emancipation, it is ideological to consider that adopting the literacy methods considered by it as superior would be enough to solve the problems that Brazil faces in relation to child literacy.

We can see, with the notes made so far, that there are different perspectives in relation to the literacy process. We then question the following: what proposals for this process have been made to Brazilian schools?

Textbook 'Aprender juntos: letramento e alfabetização' (meaning 'Learning together: literacy and learning to write and read'): evidence on literacy and training proposals in the current context

In the textbook 'Aprender juntos: letramento e alfabetização' (meaning 'Learning together: literacy and learning to write and read') (Vasconcelos, 2014), for the first year of elementary school, activities involving 'motivation', 'exchange of ideas and information' and 'collaborative teamwork' predominate, which demonstrates that the work meets one of the approaches that the pedagogy of learning to learn most values: the procedural aspects.

The emphasis on the subjectivity of the content of reading and writing that characterizes each unit of the book – 'Tudo tem nome', 'Uni, duni, tê', 'Sem pé nem cabeça', 'Ser criança é bom demais' (meaning 'Everything has a name', 'Uni, duni, tê', 'No foot and no head', 'Being a child is too good', respectively) – and the activities in which the daily experience and situations prevail – 'Agenda telefônica da sala', 'Lançamento da coleção de livros', 'Gosto de ser como sou' (meaning 'Phone book in the living room', 'Launch of the book collection', 'I like to be the way I am', respectively), etc. – indicate that the focus of the proposal is the social function of writing, that is, literacy is prioritized at the expense of work aimed at the development of phonological awareness and the explicit teaching of correspondence between letter and sound and between sound and letter.

In a way, the textbook is inserted in the dualism present in the Western world (Horkheimer, 2007), that is, it is between subjective reason and objective reason. It becomes an object that stimulates the abstract mechanism of reason – subjective reason –, as it proposes that the child reflect on writing; on the other hand, it relativizes the importance of mastering the alphabetic writing system as a principle that allows the use of language with autonomy, that is, by focusing on literacy, the literacy process loses its specificity, its objectivity.

We consider revisiting the idea defended by Soares (2016), according to which critically analyzing the dispute between literacy methods requires understanding that "[...] each of them privileges a certain function, a certain facet, certain theoretical assumptions, ignoring or marginalizing the too much [...]" (Soares, 2016, p. 32), that is, "[...] a 'part' of the object is taken as if it were the 'whole'" (Soares, 2016, p. 32, authors' emphasis).

> Although the persistence of problems and controversies surrounding literacy methods cannot be attributed to a single cause, since several factors are related to the 'issue', one explanation prevails over other possible ones: literacy methods have always been a 'question' because it derives from different conceptions about the 'object' of literacy, that is, about 'what' is taught when teaching written language (Soares, 2016, p. 25, authors' emphasis).

The teacher, when directing his work from a critical perspective, seeks to articulate theories and research results from various fields of knowledge about literacy (Soares, 2016). The multiple methods, even if each one turns to the facet they favor, "[...] can and should be associated in guiding a process of learning and teaching written language in which the 'many facets' act together" (Soares, 2016, p. 12, authors' emphasis). Hence, instead of a literacy method, the proposal is this: "[...] literacy with multiple methods" (Soares, 2016, p. 12). However, the literacy textbook 'Aprender juntos: letramento e alfabetização' (meaning 'Learning Together: Literacy and Learning to write and read') secondaries knowledge of the alphabetic writing system, that is, it is not explicitly covered in the book under review.

In order to analyze the path proposed for the acquisition of written language in the 'Aprender juntos: letramento e alfabetização' (meaning 'Learning Together: Literacy and Learning to write and read'), as far as an article allows, we observe an activity that works with textual genres, prioritized by proposals focused on literacy. In chapter 2 of unit 2, "Como é bom (meaning "How good it is) [...]" (Vasconcelos, 2014, p. 100), the activity begins with this question: "Who doesn't like to play and have fun with friends?". Then, the activity goes on to say that "[...] one of the most enjoyable games is jumping rope in a group. There are several ways to play this game and, in many of them, *parlendas* are used [...]" (Vasconcelos, 2014, p. 100) and then presents two examples of this textual genre, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. *Parlendas* that are part of the activity 'Como é bom' (meaning 'How it is good'), present in chapter 2 of unit 2 of the literacy textbook 'Aprender juntos: letramento e alfabetização' (meaning 'Learning together: literacy and learning to write and read).

A	B
Batalhão, lhão, lhão (meaning 'Battalion, lion, lion') quem não entrar é um bobão. (meaning 'whoever does not enter is a fool'). Abacaxi, xi, xi (meaning 'Pineapple, ple, ple') quem não sair é um saci. (meaning 'whoever does not leave is a *saci*'). - Quem é? (meaning 'Who is it') - É o padeiro? (meaning 'It is the baker?') - O que quer? (meaning 'What do you want?') - Dinheiro. (meaning 'Money') - Pode entrar que eu vou buscar o seu dinheiro, (meaning 'Come on in and I will get your money'), lá debaixo do travesseiro, (meaning 'there under the pillow'), na cama de solteiro, 1, 2, 3. (meaning 'in the single bed, 1, 2, 3').	Salada, saladinha, (meaning 'Salad, little salad'), bem temperadinha, (meaning 'well-seasoned'), com sal, pimenta, (meaning 'with salt, pepper'), fogo, foguinho! (meaning 'fire, little fire!')

Fonte: Vasconcelos (2014, p. 101).

After the brief exposition of the textual genre, the following questions are exposed:
Talk wheel

1) Did you already know these conversations? Are they the same as the ones you know or similar to them?

2) Have you ever played with a rope by reciting some *parlenda*? Which one?

3) In *parlenda* A, participants have to jump in and out by jumping in the rope area, without missing. In your opinion, who wins the game?

4) What part of *parlenda* A is being recited at the time of play shown below?

5) In *parlenda* B, what do you imagine happens when the 'fire, little fire' part arrives?

6) Do you know other ways to play rope? If you know, tell your colleagues how to play? (*chicotinho*, little snake, climbed the rose bush) (Vasconcelos, 2014, p. 101, authors' emphasis).

Through these questions, we observe the emphasis on the interactive facet of written language. The referrals turn to the social function of writing, without contemplating the work with phonological awareness, for example. The textual genre is worked as an experience, diluted in procedures; characteristics and concepts that are part of it are not systematized (in the case of *parlenda*, rhythm, rhymes, repetition of words, etc.), that is, the child is deprived of the experience with concepts that could lead to autonomy in regarding the alphabetical writing system. Morais (2012) systematizes such methodological confusion in the literacy process as follows:

[...] we 'disinvented' the teaching of alphabetic writing, we created a certain dictatorship of the text (according to which it would be prohibited to work with smaller units, such as words or syllables), as if it were true that most children 'discover', by own and without systematic instruction, how alphabetic writing works and what are its conventions. In

reality, this 'discovery without teaching' does not occur for the vast majority of children from favored sociocultural groups. Even the majority of middle-class and bourgeois children only become literate by receiving specific teaching on alphabetic writing (Morais, 2012, p. 25, authors' emphasis).

In a way, when the focus is on the global method (emphasis in the text), we perceive a typical phenomenon of pseudoculture as part of the schooling process: the valorization of form gains space, while content ceases to occupy a prominent place. From the point of view of writing, it is about the textual genre overlapping the text content, the text itself, the words and sentences. At the same time that the book proposes that the child reflect on writing (literacy), it relativizes the importance of appropriating the letter-sound relationship, of fluent reading, in short, of the child deciphering the written language. Thus, the literacy process loses its specificity, its objectivity, distorting the path towards initial learning of written language. Inserted in mass society, the textbook tends to obey the logic that is present in it about the novelty: "[...] what is new is that the irreconcilable elements of culture, art and distraction are reduced by its subordination to the end to a single false formula: the entire cultural industry. It consists of repetition" (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1985, p. 112).

Regarding this constancy of the administered society, Horkheimer and Adorno (1985) explain that, in the context of this inalterability, the new is precisely the exclusion of the new, that which would break with the adaptive principle. In this sense, the textbook, by excluding literacy and its specificities, starts to support the adaptation to the current society.

In the textbook under analysis, all units are started with a focus on learning to write and read and, quantitatively, learning to write and read situations overlap with literacy situations (see Table 2). This can be considered an advance from the point of view of those who criticize the literacy process centered on teaching letters, sounds, words, etc. In this discourse, however, literacy starts to 'compete' with learning to write and read. In the analyzed textbook, more than half of the proposed activities are aimed at reflecting on the written language through literacy situations – which, by the way, is important; it is secondary, however, the appropriation of concepts that enable reading (phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, reading fluency, word reading, etc.), that is, it can be said that the proposal seeks to give autonomy at the moment the teaching, the direction and authority of the teacher and the content are essential.

As pointed out by Morais (2017), after the proposal of the psychogenesis of written language arrived in Brazil and research on psycholinguistics diversified, the search for the development of written language teaching strategies entered in decay and, then, the hegemony of literacy came to pass. In the words of the author:

[...] from the dissemination of the theory of psychogenesis of writing, our research in the area has diversified: to a progressive 'divestment' in the study of teaching methods, there was a growing interest in investigating learning processes, interactions in the classroom literacy and other related topics. [...]. We interpret that, with the hegemony of the literacy discourse, many linguistics and language didactics scholars in our country began to bet on a spontaneous learning of alphabetic writing, which would supposedly result from the mere fact that children are exposed to situations where they read and write the real world texts (Morais, 2017, p. 2-3, authors' emphasis).

The activities in the book 'Aprender juntos: letramento e alfabetização' (meaning 'Learning Together: Literacy and Learning to write and read') also reveal that literacy is at the forefront: in all chapters, whose number of pages is 21 to 29, on average, 66.6% of them keep the focus on learning to write and read; 33.3%, which represent the end of the chapter, are dedicated to activities that seek to 'literate by learning'.

The secondaryization of literacy can also be seen in the fact that the textbook 'Aprender juntos: letramento e alfabetização' (meaning 'Learning Together: Literacy and Learning to write and read') begins to deal with specific literacy issues, such as alphabet, vowels, consonants, syllable and space between words, after more than one hundred pages. Although the material consists of 287 pages, the concept of vowel, in addition to being diluted in literacy, is dealt with only between pages 117 and 120; the concept of syllable, in turn, appears only from page 174 onwards; the need for space between words is explicitly addressed only on page 206. Of course, the teacher does not need to follow the order given by the book, but we cannot disregard what the book proposes: only after a long time involved with literacy does the child will have contact with activities that deal with concepts related to the appropriation of the alphabetic writing system.

Another aspect that characterizes the analyzed book is that the literacy process is primarily focused on 'learning to learn', so much so that, right at the beginning of the book, in the activity that opens Unit 1, whose title is 'Tudo tem nome' (meaning 'Everything has a name') (Vasconcelos, 2014, p. 8), there is a guideline that predominates throughout the work: a text is presented, without the child's reading being required, and then text comprehension

activities are exposed. In this case, the observation of an urban setting is suggested. In the exercise, the following questions are listed:

The name of the school that appears in the scene is *Sementinha*. And the name of your school, what is it?

The name of the bus company that appears in the scene is *Viação Conforto*. What idea does the company name convey?

What would you name the puppy that appears in the scene?

In the next scene, there are people waiting to cross the street. What precautions should we take when crossing the street? (Vasconcelos, 2014, p. 8).

In the direction proposed by the activity under analysis, we observe that the emphasis is not towards systematized teaching so that the appropriation of the alphabetic writing system is possible, but on issues related to behavior and attitudes. In addition, most of the activities suggested by the textbook 'Aprender juntos: letramento e alfabetização' (meaning 'Learning Together: Literacy and Learning to write and read') is oriented towards the learner being the one who conducts the written language appropriation process, that is, it is assumed that the child is the one who will lead their own learning, implying the secondaryization of both the teacher and the literacy content.

Learning to read and write is not a naturally occurring process; the child needs to have contact with someone who has mastered the writing system so that the person can instruct the child. These assumptions, however, are neglected in the textbook under analysis, since in the place of the literacy teacher, sometimes there is the method, sometimes the child himself being held responsible for his learning.

In the period of predominance of instrumental reason, even the language learning process tends to be reified. As pointed out by Horkheimer and Adorno (1985), the more the duplication technique improves, the greater the air of similarity between what is reproduced by the cultural industry and everyday life. In the words of the authors:

The greater the perfection with which his techniques duplicate empirical objects, the easier it is today to obtain the illusion that the outside world is the unbroken extension of the world that is discovered in the film. Since the sudden introduction of the sound film, mechanical reproduction has been at the full service of this project. Life should no longer tend to be distinguished from the sound film (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1985, p. 104).

To synthesize the path proposed by the book under analysis, in Table 2, the methodological guidelines given to literacy activities are presented:

Table 2. Literacy activities from the textbook 'Aprender juntos: letramento e alfabetização' (meaning 'Learning together: literacy and learning to write and read'), according to the assumptions of literacy methods.

-------------------------------	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4	Total	%
Pages	8-69	70-131	132-187	188-241	233	100
Natural method/immersion/by literacy events	83	73	80	81	317	54.65
Alphabetical method/spelling	25	26	19	4	74	12.75
Word method	20	19	14	13	66	11.37
Phonic method	19	30	6	9	64	11,04
Syllabic method	5	3	14	4	26	4.49
Sentencing method	1	3	8	6	18	3.11
Global method	2	0	5	8	15	2.59
Total	155	154	146	125	580	100

Fonte: Vasconcelos (2014).

As shown in Table 2, the textbook 'Aprender juntos: letramento e alfabetização' (meaning 'Learning together: literacy and learning to write and read') presents a total of 317 activities aimed at the assumptions of the natural method (immersion/literacy). It should be noted that, even when there are activities aimed at systematizing the alphabetic writing system, they start with 'immersion' and then deal with writing properties; consequently, we have what Morais (2012) called 'dictatorship of the text'.

Final considerations

In this article, we question ourselves about the literacy methods and proposals that have been present in the academic, scientific and school scenario. We realize that, in addition to the divergence between synthetic and analytical methods, there is a disagreement between the proposals that defend the explicit teaching of

the alphabetic writing system - centered on 'how to teach', as supported by the cognitive science of reading - and the which consider learning through discovery – centered on 'how to learn', that is, constructivism/ psychogenesis of written language and literacy.

Through concepts of the Critical Theory of Society, we were guided to understand that the dispute between 'what is taught' and 'how is taught' in literacy is linked to broader purposes that involve the problem of human formation in modern industrialized society, governed by pseudoculture.

The analysis of the textbook 'Aprender juntos: letramento e alfabetização' (meaning 'Learning together: literacy and learning to write and read') allowed us to realize that the loss of specificity in literacy has occurred in the context in which society requires a subject who knows how to make social use of writing, giving second place to the appropriation of the alphabetic writing system. The proposal presented by the book is to unite literacy and learning to write and read, focusing, however, on the former.

Evidently, the textbook is not the only one responsible for the failure in the initial written language learning process of Brazilian children. However, when children participate in the National Literacy Assessment (ANA) and achieve unsatisfactory results, what Horkheimer and Adorno (1985, p. 123) say about today's society ends up happening: "The formal freedom of each one is guaranteed. Nobody has to be officially responsible for what they think [...]", that is, when we bring this analysis towards the literacy process, we find that, currently, no one is responsible for the children's failure; there is a false autonomy that compromises children's learning to read and write in the literacy process, at the very least, by falling into relativism.

Our criticism does not mean the defense of a literacy process that is limited to the appropriation of the 'mechanics' of reading, of deciphering, but the institution of an analysis through the theoretical framework, in order to discern - form judgments - about the literacy and learning to write and read proposals whose understanding is that the child learns to read and write through the social use of texts of different genres without the explicit teaching of the alphabetic writing system, expressing the pseudoculture that accompanies the current context and its pseudoformation due.

By analyzing the academic and scientific literature on literacy methods and proposals, as well as the textbook 'Aprender juntos: letramento e alfabetização' (meaning 'Learning together: literacy and learning to write and read'), we found that the perspective of appropriation of written language and its use underwent an inversion: before the arrival from the psychogenesis of written language and literacy to the Brazilian academic and scientific community, there was an appreciation for literacy, with literacy occurring throughout the schooling process and through writing practices that were present in the child's daily life; then there was a disinvention, a demethodization of literacy and a 'pedagogization' of literacy. This path through which the written language learning process has gone through represents a proposal for the formation of Brazilian citizens adapted to the characteristics of the developed, globalized, multicultural industrial society, governed by different media, which began to mark it since the decade 1990 and that require 'multiliteracies' (Rojo & Moura, 2012) for subjects to adapt to it, although this adaptation does not mean possibilities for human development, for the development of thought that leads the individual to understand society itself, as well as of the possibility of a life worth living.

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