

Literacy meanings in curriculum policies for Portuguese Language: a discussion on new and multiliteracies

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Abstract

This article discusses the dialogue between the signifier “literacy” in the PCN [National Curriculum Parameters] for Portuguese Language and the new and multiliteracies in the BNCC [Brazilian Common Core State Standards] for Portuguese Language in Elementary Education. Anchored in the theoretical assumptions of Laclau (2011) and Derrida (2006), it problematizes the prescription of universalist curriculum documents as an attempt to sustain the idea that they ensure educational quality and the formation of critical and conscious subjects. The article argues that the subjects are marked by a fluid nature that permeates every social or discursive identity. The article concludes with reflections on the impossibility of curricular universalization, since the ultimate meaning will always escape and slip away, given that there are no means to halt the displacements of a hegemonic formation.

Keywords: Literacy. New and multiliteracies. Portuguese Language. Brazilian Common Core State Standards.

Sentidos de letramento nas políticas de currículo para a Língua Portuguesa: uma discussão sobre os novos e multiletramentos

Resumo

Neste artigo, discute-se o diálogo que existe entre o significante “letramento” nos PCN de Língua Portuguesa e os novos e multiletramentos no texto da BNCC de Língua Portuguesa do Ensino Fundamental. Acorado nos pressupostos teóricos de Laclau (2011) e Derrida (2006), problematiza-se a prescrição de documentos curriculares universalistas como tentativa de sustentação da ideia de que eles garantem a qualidade da educação e a formação de sujeitos conscientes e críticos. Argumenta-se que os sujeitos são cindidos por um caráter flutuante que perpassa toda identidade social ou discursiva. Apresentam-se algumas reflexões acerca da impossibilidade de universalização curricular, pois o sentido último sempre escapará, deslizará, por não existirem formas de estancar os deslocamentos de uma formação hegemônica.

Palavras-Chave: Letramento. Novos e multiletramentos. Língua Portuguesa. Base Nacional Comum Curricular.

Significados de la alfabetización en las políticas curriculares para la lengua portuguesa: un debate sobre las nuevas alfabetizaciones y las multialfabetizaciones

Resumen

Este artículo analiza el diálogo entre el término “alfabetización” en los PCN de Lengua Portuguesa y las nuevas y multialfabetizaciones presentes en el BNCC de Lengua Portuguesa.

Portuguesa en Educación Primaria. Fundamentado en los supuestos teóricos de Laclau (2011) y Derrida (2006), problematiza la prescripción de documentos curriculares universalistas como un intento de sustentar la idea de que garantizan la calidad de la educación y la formación de sujetos conscientes y críticos. Argumenta que los sujetos se dividen por un carácter fluctuante que impregna toda identidad social o discursiva. Este trabajo presenta algunas reflexiones sobre la imposibilidad de universalizar el currículo, ya que el significado último siempre eludirá y se desvanecerá, pues no existen maneras de detener los cambios en una educación hegemónica.

Palabras clave: Alfabetización, Nuevas alfabetizaciones y multialfabetización, Lengua portuguesa, Base del currículo común nacional.

Contextualizing the theme

In this article, we argue that hegemonized discourses—whether of literacy in the *National Curriculum Parameters* (*Parâmetros Curriculares Nacionais* – PCN) or of new and multiliteracies in the *Brazilian Common Core State Standards* (*Base Nacional Comum Curricular* – BNCC)—constitute attempts to sustain a logic whose intentionality lies in prescribing curricula as a promise of guaranteeing the universalization of educational quality, a process that has generated a range of tensions in the educational field (Costa, 2024; Lopes, 2019, 2024).

We revisit the perspective of Lopes (2004), who argues that every curriculum policy is constituted by school knowledge developed through two distinct logics: knowledge constructed for the school and knowledge constructed by the school through its everyday practices. Thus, every curriculum policy is established as a cultural policy, insofar as curriculum is conceived as a field of disputes, conflicts, and confrontations among subjects, conceptions of knowledge, and ways of understanding and constructing the world. From this perspective, curriculum policies cannot be reduced to official documents issued by governmental bodies, often projected as “official.” Nevertheless, we cannot disregard the privileged role these documents play in the production of meanings within policies, precisely because they are capable of generating constraints across different contexts (Costa; Lopes, 2018).

With the promulgation of the Federal Constitution in 1988, its Article 210 states that: “Minimum contents shall be established for elementary education, in order to ensure a common basic education and respect for cultural and artistic values, both national and regional” (Brasil, 1988, p. 139, our translation).

Grounded in this constitutional framework, on December 20, 1996, the National Education Guidelines and Framework Law (*Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional* – LDB) – Law no. 9,394 – was approved. In Article 26, it establishes a national common core for Basic Education and, in Item IV of Article 9, assigns to the Federal Government the responsibility to establish, “[...] in collaboration with the States, the Federal District, and the Municipalities, competencies and guidelines for Early Childhood Education, Elementary Education, and Secondary Education, which shall guide curricula and their minimum contents, so as to ensure a common basic education” (Brasil, 1996, our translation).

As indicated in the historical overview of the BNCC¹, in 1997 the PCN for Elementary Education, covering Grades 1 to 5, were consolidated in ten volumes. Subsequently, in 1998, the PCN for Elementary Education, covering Grades 6 to 9, were also disseminated in ten volumes; and, in 2000, the National Curriculum Parameters for High School (PCNEM) (Brasil, 2000) were published in four parts.

Within this context—and amid a growing expectation of controlling education through national curricula (Macedo, 2019)—the idea of a common national curriculum base emerged as an attempt to more intensively standardize the knowledge to be learned, both as a guarantee of educational quality and as a strategy for regulating a supposed curriculum for Basic Education. We agree with Macedo (2019, p. 41, our translation), who states:

The approval of the BNCC in 2017 constitutes a turning point in public curriculum policy in Brazil. Although there has always been

some degree of curricular centralization in the country, it had never reached the level of defining what should be taught in each subject across the different years of schooling nationwide. The BNCC therefore represents the hegemony of a particular conception of education and schooling.

Thus, with a more prescriptive orientation and guided by the same political and aesthetic principles as the PCN, the final version of the BNCC, structured around competencies and skills, became a normative document and a benchmark for the quality of education in the country.

From this perspective, the Portuguese Language curriculum is likewise organized and structured around competencies and skills and strongly linked to assessment (Lopes; Macedo, 2011). In this regard, we consider the case of the signifier “literacy” to be emblematic, as we understand it to be a hegemonized term within curriculum policy for Portuguese Language.

Traces of the signifier “literacy” in curriculum policies

As discussed, since the 1990s Brazil has sought to consolidate an educational policy aimed at guiding a common basic education. With the publication of the PCN, a particular conception of language was established: language as a form of action and interaction in the world, shaped by positions derived from Discourse Analysis, especially those of Mikhail Bakhtin. The philosopher argued that language permeates all social life through a continuous process of interaction and dialogue, rather than functioning as an autonomous system. For the author, “[...] language becomes part of life through concrete utterances (which realize it); it is equally through concrete utterances that life enters language” (Bakhtin, 2006, p. 265, our translation). For this reason, Rojo (2001, p. 174, our translation) argues:

The Theory of Speech Genres (Bakhtin, 1953/1979) thus enriched our discussion, insofar as it enabled a possible organization of the discourses to be taught/learned by teachers/students, as well as a better understanding of the thematic, compositional, and stylistic aspects involved in all discourse, materialized as text (oral or written).

It is from this theoretical potential highlighted by the researcher that the PCN draw upon to construct educational proposals, especially with regard to the teaching of Portuguese Language. Within this perspective, Amorim (2014, p. 363, our translation) argues:

Combined, the views of language and of learning-and-development proposed by Bakhtin and his circle and by Vygotsky, respectively, have guided teaching approaches in Brazil for more than two decades. Officially, as noted, these theories grounded in a socio-historical epistemology entered curriculum guidelines in the 1990s, particularly in 1998, with the publication of the PCN for Foreign Language and for Mother Tongue. Since then, several concepts developed by these authors have been re-signified so as to support the work of language teachers and guide their pedagogical practices. Rojo (2005, p. 184), for example, highlights the concept of speech or text genres, which, since the publication of the PCN, has received significant attention in Brazilian academic contexts.

From this excerpt, we can highlight the notions of discourse, genres, and interaction advocated by Bakhtin, as well as the dialogic nature of discourse, the importance of interlocutors, and the historical and sociocultural positioning of language. In this context, language and language teaching are conceived as factors that empower individuals in relation to the social sphere. Furthermore, according to the PCN for Portuguese Language (Brasil, 1998), given the commitment to ensuring students' full exercise of citizenship, Portuguese Language teaching in schools should prioritize texts that characterize public uses of language, as illustrated in the following excerpt:

The texts to be selected are those which, due to their characteristics and uses, may foster critical reflection, the exercise of more elaborated and abstract forms of thinking, as well as the aesthetic appreciation of artistic uses of language—in other words, those most

vital for full participation in a **literate society** (Brasil, 1998, p. 24, emphasis added, our translation).

Thus, the PCN proposed the development of students' linguistic/discursive competencies, enabling them to adapt language according to the context of oral or written communication. Regarding the Portuguese Language PCN for the final grades of Elementary Education, in the section "Teaching and the Nature of Language," it is stated that

[...] responsibility is all the greater the lower the level of literacy in the communities in which students live. Considering the different levels of prior knowledge, it is the school's role to promote its expansion so that, progressively, over the eight years of elementary education, each student becomes capable of interpreting different texts circulating in society, of expressing themselves, and, as a citizen, of producing effective texts in a wide range of situations (Brasil, 1998, p. 19, our translation).

From this perspective, every view of literacy is associated with a particular conception of language and society, with the school functioning as the primary agency of literacy. It is therefore the responsibility of this institution to develop reading and writing practices grounded in a specific ideological stance, shaped by values, power relations, and cultural perspectives.

In Brazil, the term "literacy" gained prominence in the fields of Education and Linguistic Sciences, more specifically in 1986, with the publication of the book *No mundo da escrita: uma perspectiva psicolinguística* [In the world of writing: a psycholinguistic perspective], by Mary Kato (Soares, 2017). Magda Soares, one of the pioneers in studying this topic in the country, states that the term "*letramento*" was introduced into Portuguese Language teaching, originating from the English word *literacy*, defined as "the condition of being literate," that is, the state of being literate (Soares, 2004). According to the author, at first, reading and writing skills were associated with the concept of "*alfabetização*" (learning how to read

and write). With the emergence of new demands in the field of reading and writing practices from the 1980s onward, linguistic studies in Brazil began to focus on the social use of reading and writing, adopting the term “*letramento*” [literacy] to designate these practices.

In addition, from the twentieth century onward, a group of Anglo-Saxon scholars developed studies that focused much more on the social dimension of literacy than on its cognitive aspects. These studies sought to understand the sociocognitive and cultural impact of writing, as well as literacy practices, and became known as the New Literacy Studies (NLS).

Another central issue in understanding literacy as a social phenomenon, as proposed by NLS scholars, concerns the distinction between literacy events and literacy practices. For these scholars, events correspond to the visible and socially valued dimension of literacy, while practices refer to its invisible and often less valued dimension. This means that some uses of writing enjoy greater prestige because they establish an analogical relationship with those that have been historically institutionalized, stabilized, and hegemonically recognized (Street, 2003).

It is important to emphasize that two other key concepts within NLS are the autonomous model and the ideological model of literacy. In the former, writing is conceived as autonomous, self-contained, and detached from sociocultural contexts. In contrast, the ideological model understands writing as a cultural artifact, and therefore not endowed with inherent or universal properties.

According to Bragança and Baltar (2016, p. 7, our translation), the work of teachers in the field of Language can be more plural, insofar as

[...] they observe that school culture has been a champion of writing, given the written nature of the objects of knowledge it addresses and, since this knowledge enjoys considerable social prestige, school literacies also benefit from significant authority in our culture. Perhaps for this reason, the school still functions as a means for legitimizing literacy practices, contributing both to the perpetuation

of already prestigious practices and to the validation of other forms of expression that have been silenced.

For the authors, “[...] literacy projects would represent a possibility for the horizontalization of literacy practices” (Bragança; Baltar, 2016, p. 7, our translation), since, in order to carry out such actions, individuals would need to participate in different literacy events—not necessarily those associated with the sociocultural groups to which they belong. Thus, according to the researchers, this would constitute a new educational ethic that values pluralism without falling into the subtle trap of erasing discourses in the pursuit of homogeneity that privileges only a single culture.

Thus, as discussed so far, the conception of the NLS is more closely tied to written texts. However, according to Kleiman (2014), with the emergence and widespread use of information and communication technologies, there arises a need to consider texts that go beyond traditional teaching approaches grounded in a static and monomodal view of language. According to the author,

[...] the digital text, with its combinations of different languages and specific modes of meaning-making; the recognition of the increasing presence of images in texts that were previously dominated by verbal language; and the interest in studying these evolving forms of communication led, in 1996, the so-called New London Group (NLG) to define a new object of study: multiliteracies (Kleiman, 2014, p. 81, our translation).

This argument suggests that “literacy” is a multifaceted signifier that expresses different literacies depending on its use. Multiliteracies as an object of study gained greater prominence in Brazil in the first decade of the 2000s, especially following the publication of studies and research by Roxane Rojo on the pedagogy of multiliteracies proposed by the New London Group (NLG).

According to the NLG (2021, p. 107, our translation), the term “multiliteracies” encompasses “[...] two important aspects of the emerging

cultural, institutional, and global order: the multiplicity of communication channels and media, and the growing salience of cultural and linguistic diversity”.

Rojo (2012b, p. 19, our translation) also argues that the multiplicity of languages demands “[...] capacities and practices for understanding and producing each of them (multiliteracies) in order to make meaning”. For the author, it is necessary to consider that contemporary texts are more than multimodal and multisemiotic—they are hypermedia. Rojo (2013) further argues that changes related to media and the circulation of information, particularly digital media, have significantly transformed the ways in which texts are read, produced, and circulated in society.

Accordingly, Rojo (2012a, 2012b) similarly argues that, unlike (multiple) literacies—which indicate the variety of literate practices—“[...] the concept of multiliteracies points to two specific and important types of multiplicity present in our society [...]: the cultural multiplicity of populations and the semiotic multiplicity involved in the constitution of texts [...]” (Rojo, 2012b, p. 13, our translation).

New literacies and multiliteracies are presented in the BNCC, within the Portuguese Language curricular component, as tools for the development of diverse language practices, which, according to the document itself (Brasil, 2018), result from transformations that have taken place in recent times, driven by the advancement of DICT and the emergence of increasingly multimodal and multisemiotic texts. In this regard, the BNCC states:

The consideration of new literacies and multiliteracies, as well as digital culture practices, in the curriculum not only contributes to enabling more effective and critical student participation in contemporary language practices, but also allows for envisioning more than merely a “user of language/languages.” It points toward what some authors call a designer: someone who takes what already exists (including written texts), mixes, remixes, transforms, and redistributes it, producing new meanings—a process that some authors associate with creativity (Brasil, 2018, p. 70, our translation).

In this regard, there is an effort to justify the relevance of using DICT by schools and teachers and to establish the importance of such tools for the development of pedagogical practices. We consider this to be a response that tends to ignore the contexts experienced in different school settings, insofar as it seeks to universalize forms of interaction associated with digital technologies.

The BNCC also signals a (classical) conception of the subject, understood as a unified, rational, controllable entity, transparent in its social actions. Likewise, school education, grounded in these principles, would aim to respond to supposed demands arising from society—whether technological, academic, social, related to the labor market, or to everyday life. Thus, the BNCC points to normative precision as a means of addressing what is seen as lacking in school practices, disregarding the uncontrollable productivity of school contexts and the numerous contingencies involved in different processes of interpretation and experience. These and other arguments support the idea that national curricula are indispensable and that the educational sector requires guidance and prescriptions in order to achieve the much-desired quality of education, along with the production of a particular type of subject. From this standpoint, the BNCC seeks to fix meanings for what teaching and learning should be within the Portuguese Language curricular component, under the assumption of a totalized body of knowledge ensured through new literacies and multiliteracies.

Such a claim, in itself, entails limitations on critical, creative, and responsible movements, as subjects would be conditioned to acquire knowledge, competencies, and skills detached from the contexts, experiences, and perspectives through which their relationships with Portuguese Language in school—and with different forms of communication and language they may engage with—are constituted. We argue that, contrary to what is advocated in the BNCC, the promise of subject formation

through new literacies and multiliteracies simultaneously contributes to the fragmentation of experiences in school contexts—inasmuch as other axes within the field of Portuguese Language are marginalized—and denies the many other possible cultural and singular productions that take place in schools.

Just as, in the PCN, the quality of Portuguese Language teaching was grounded in work with textual/discourse genres and with emerging forms of literacy in society, the hegemony of new literacies and multiliteracies in the BNCC seeks to represent an improvement in teaching and learning within this curricular component. Within this logic, a Portuguese Language curriculum focused on emerging literacies and on monomodal texts is interpreted as limited, outdated, and ineffective—insufficient for qualifying and preparing subjects to meet the demands of the contemporary world.

We interpret that, between the PCN and the BNCC, there is a perspective of continuity, given that the understanding is that adaptations of the term “literacy” have occurred, leading to an expansion in the prescriptive scope of the Portuguese Language curriculum. These dynamics reveal a polarization in the educational field between literacy and new literacies/multiliteracies, resulting in the exclusion and weakening of other essential curricular axes, such as literature, which is relegated to a secondary position and referred to in the BNCC as “literary education,” signaling a marginalization of literary teaching within the document’s discursive framework.

Also in light of this, from a post-structuralist perspective, we are interested in calling into question the hegemonized discourses of literacy in the PCN and of new literacies and multiliteracies in the BNCC for Portuguese Language, in order to understand the logic that sustains these discourses as synonymous with quality in Portuguese Language teaching, as well as the not dissimilar logic that has supported them. For this reason, we consider it relevant to examine a constitutive outside—that is, what gives

rise to these political dynamics as a response. Drawing on Laclau (2011), we understand the outside as that which mobilizes the hegemonization of signifiers (new literacies and multiliteracies) within policy, producing a sense of stabilization of meanings such that it appears natural.

The ephemerality of the subject and the unclosed structure

Drawing on Laclau (2011), we argue that there is no discourse or system of categories through which the real speaks without mediation. Consequently, there are no universal or totalizing discourses; rather, there is the impossibility of any discourse fully “closing” itself, justified by the presence of antagonism and by the self-referential functioning of discursive structures (Mendonça, 2007). Thus, the emancipatory discourse of classical Marxism, for example, loses ground and representativeness, since a unified discourse cannot account for the plurality of antagonisms that emerge within the terrain of the masses, nor can it sustain any class as a hegemonic force representing “new” collective identities that arise.

These ideas constitute important strategies for discussing and establishing a close relationship with elements/moments of politics and the political. Through articulatory practices that operate within the field of discursivity and seek to dominate it, Laclau (2011) highlights the need to focus on regularity in dispersion. From this perspective, the author highlights that all identity is relational and that no discursive formation is ever fully saturated, insofar as the fixation of elements into moments is never complete. Therefore, every discourse is a precarious and provisional totality.

Articulatory practices, as moments of non-completion or non-closure of the flow, are constituted as ongoing processes that carry their own contingency. As Derrida (2006) argues, it is iteration/translation/supplementation and the proliferation of meanings that disarticulate discursive structure. From this perspective,

supplementation and alteration participate in the movement of constituting discursive formations, ensuring the perpetual destabilization of any truth.

This floating character permeates all political production, configuring the transience, fragmentation, and dislocation of the subject (Laclau, 2011). Within this dimension, the social is an articulation that contains no essence and does not become fixed within the established and intelligible forms of society; it exists only as an effort to produce this impossible object. In this scenario, the idea is sustained that every discourse/utterance is subject to contextual rupture. For Derrida (2006), there is no possibility of any intervention outside language; there is no purity of metalanguage. What we constantly do is translate, iterate, inscribe ourselves within the field of writing, and it is never possible to access the fullness of meaning—although, through iteration, the possibility of producing meanings is acknowledged.

From Laclau's (2011) perspective, language is an opaque medium for all production of discursivity, encompassing actions, institutions, and relations that are continuously translated through articulatory practices that constitute and organize these relations. The plurality of language games renders the process of signification provisional, and, without closure, it always remains open to the production of new meanings.

Our discussion so far has emphasized that the changes signaled by the BNCC—through new literacies and multiliteracies—are constituted as requirements for the realization of an education centered on new forms of language, whether those of hypermedia or those arising from the multiplicity of texts circulating socially, increasingly multimodal and multisemiotic. From this perspective, only a new type of knowledge (new literacies and multiliteracies), produced through a new form of curricular organization, could provide subjects with inclusion and participation in a constantly changing world. Such conditions and preparation become new ways of engaging with knowledge production for work, academic life, and

citizenship. Costa (2018, p. 161, our translation) supports our discussion by arguing that, as part

[...] of a response-text of curricular thought, the repetition of a horizon of reform is performed as a means of achieving what is presented as lacking in the curriculum: knowledge capable of responding to everything that is read as a questioning of alterity.

We argue that reform projects as its exterior a concern framed in advance as society, contemporaneity, the subject, and its demands. This reiterative approach to curriculum reform advocates enabling access to a socially guaranteed right—to historically accumulated scientific knowledge—while also aiming to contribute to the construction of knowledge capable of responding to the demands of a new global era. To this end, it presupposes a particular subject, the knowledge that underpins it, and the ways in which such knowledge should be approached. A former curriculum, read as outdated, negligent, obsolete, and open to criticism, must give way to a Portuguese Language curriculum that supposedly meets the new demands of contemporary life, mediated by the volume of information produced as a result of new technologies.

We agree with Hall (2014) and Laclau (2011) in asserting that identity or subjectivity cannot be determined in an essentialist manner, but only within a contingent and precarious discursive order. From this perspective, identities are always subject to radical historicization and are therefore in a constant process of change and transformation.

In this light, we challenge the expectation within the BNCC of fixing meanings for what teaching and learning should be in the Portuguese Language curricular component, under the assumption of a totalized and universal body of knowledge to be made available to all Basic Education students through new literacies and multiliteracies. Such a claim, in itself, signals a limiting curricular intention (Derrida, 1991), insofar as we consider it impossible to establish such control, since different subjects, in diverse

contexts, also produce meanings/knowledge that cannot be anticipated. Knowledge, teaching, and learning are continuously reshaped through an ongoing process of iteration/supplementation/translation and the attribution and proliferation of meanings (Lopes; Cunha; Costa, 2013). This is to say that there is no single underlying principle capable of fixing the meaning of the social, as it is impossible to ensure stability of meanings. Consequently, everything that pertains to the social is equally subject to contextual exposure to processes of meaning yet to come.

In this vein, Laclau (2011, p. 85, our translation) argues that “[...] there is no truth or value independent of a context, [...] the validity of any assertion can only be determined contextually.” The author contends that context is constituted as such through the exclusion of something foreign—a radical alterity—and affirms that antagonism and exclusion are constitutive of all identity (Laclau, 2011). He further argues that contexts must be internally subverted in order to become possible. Thus, forms of representation of society and the social can only be constructed within a system of differences. This means that, in a society where fullness (universality) is unattainable, the link between the particular and the universal is established through a hegemonic relation—a political moment. We highlight that, although the fullness of society is unattainable, the tension of striving for its presence does not disappear; that is, the pursuit of its completeness is ongoing.

For Laclau (2011), there are several reasons to reject the possibility of a pure culture of difference or pure particularism. First, the author argues that “[...] to assert a purely differential and distinct identity is to affirm that this identity is constituted through pluralism and cultural differences. Reference to the other is deeply present as constitutive of my own identity” (Laclau, 2011, p. 80-81, our translation). Second, he states that “[...] in order to affirm one’s own differential identity, it is necessary [...] to include within that identity the other, as that from which it is distinguished” (Laclau, 2011, p. 81, our translation). For this reason, the author argues that hybridity should not

be seen as a marginal phenomenon, but rather as the very terrain upon which contemporary political identities are constructed.

Considering these perspectives, we understand that, although the BNCC seeks to mobilize the sense that it is necessary, mandatory, universal, and a response to a given context, it represents only an expectation of consensus—one that is contingent, precarious, and provisional (as is any hegemony)—around the terms “new literacies” and “multiliteracies.” Similarly, in the PCN, the term “literacy” was projected, through hegemonic practices, as a universal signifier supposedly capable of solving educational problems within the Portuguese Language curriculum, as were many other signifiers elevated to a universal status by various curriculum documents throughout the history of education. Even though such centralized policies continue to operate with the idea of universal knowledge for all, seeking to fix a desired identity and grounded in a deterministic and controlling conception, we argue that *différance* and iteration/translation/supplementation are dynamics that prevent any proposal from being fully realized. They mobilize the betrayal of everything that seeks to fix meaning, causing all things to become other across different contexts.

Grounded in the theoretical contributions discussed in this article, we argue that there is no subject whose identity is fixed, coherent, unified, or homogeneous, since we understand subjectivation as fractured by a plurality woven within the social, inscribed in a terrain of conflicts and discursive struggles shaped by antagonism and exclusion. The subject is therefore traversed by this floating character that permeates all social and discursive identity, which accounts for its ephemerality, fragmentation, and dislocation.

Final considerations

If subjectivity is not an essence—if it is not fixed, stable, coherent, unified, permanent, definitive, complete, identical, transcendental, or homogeneous—then we may say that it is a construction, a relational process, an unstable, fragmented, and inconsistent performative act, as it is linked to discursive structures (Laclau, 2011). These fractured, plural, unpredictable, and contingent subjects are compelled/required to respond to a singular other—equally unpredictable and surprising—that interpellates us through radical alterity.

For these reasons, throughout this article, we have called into question the hegemonized discourses of literacy in the PCN and of new literacies and multiliteracies in the BNCC, as markers of an attempt to sustain a logic in which prescriptive and universalist curricula not only aim to ensure the quality of teaching and learning processes, but also contribute to the formation of subjects capable of exercising citizenship—thus being considered necessary and useful for guaranteeing the quality of schooling. Drawing on Laclau (2011), we understand that discourses should not be seen as phenomena restricted to speech and writing, since they permeate the entire material density of the social. According to the author, we come to engage with the notion of the subject as a decentralized, de-totalized agent, fractured by plurality and dependent on multiple discursive formations.

Thus, attempts at curricular universalization—whether through the term “literacy” in the past or, more recently, through the signifiers “new literacies” and “multiliteracies”—constitute a failed project, since ultimate meaning will always slide and escape, given that there are no ultimate grounds within any hegemonic formation capable of containing displacements, which are precisely the conditions for the production of new hegemonic processes. What we have sought to address here is a specific moment of policy, which we understand as part of a continuous and

irregular text that precludes the closure of articulations and the end of politics.

We therefore conclude by interpreting that, from the PCN to the BNCC, there has been an increasing prescriptive pressure on school contexts, with an expanded focus on defining the meaning of the subject to be produced through a specific type of knowledge and for a defined world/context. In this context, we argue that these political dynamics—understood here as responses—stand in tension with what actually occurs in schools, within the unpredictable and uncontrollable relations established with Portuguese Language across different contexts. As a response, the advocacy of new literacies and multiliteracies, in its controlling impulse, may be attempting to address the impossibility of controlling what happens around Portuguese Language—an area traversed, in ways we neither know nor can fully know, by different flows of meaning negotiated by teachers and students.

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