



Sounds of literacy in Brazil Empire: present of Castilho and Jacotot¹

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Abstract

In order to indicate the "systematic fonic education" as one of its guiding principles, the National Literacy Policy (2019) resonates a latent imperial methodological discussion that perpetrated the quarrels between the synthetic and analytical marches in the teaching of the mother tongue. This article presents the arrays of the phonic method created by the Portuguese António Feliciano de Castilho (1855) and the analytical method of Universal Education created by Joseph Jacotot (1834), that circulated and generated clashes on Brazilian soil in the 19th century. Restricting divergences in the literacy process to the methodological aspect of adopting these marches reiterates the technical bias decoupled from the social, historical, political and cultural context of the subjects involved.

Keywords: Literacy. Castilho. Jacotot.

¹ English version by Christiane Soares de Souza (Nexus Traduções). E-mail: sp@nexustraducoes.com. This paper is part of the thematic project of The São Paulo Research Foundation (Fapesp) entitled "Knowledge and practices in frontiers: toward a transnational History of Education" (Fapesp Process: 2018/26699-4).

Resumo

Ao indicar a “instrução fônica sistemática” como um de seus princípios norteadores, a Política Nacional de Alfabetização – PNA (2019) ressoa uma latente discussão metodológica imperial que perpassava as querelas entre as marchas sintética e analítica no ensino da língua materna. Esse artigo apresenta as matrizes do método fônico, criado pelo português António Feliciano de Castilho (1855), e do método analítico do Ensino Universal, criado por Joseph Jacotot (1834), que circularam e geraram embates em solo brasileiro no século XIX. Restringir as divergências do processo de alfabetização ao aspecto metodológico da adoção dessas marchas reitera o viés tecnicista desacoplado do contexto social, histórico, político e cultural dos sujeitos envolvidos.

Palavras chave: Alfabetização. Castilho. Jacotot.

Resumen

Al indicar la "instrucción fónica sistemática" como uno de sus principios orientadores, la Política Nacional de Alfabetización (2019) resuena una latente discusión metodológica imperial que atravesaba las querellas entre las marchas sintética y analítica en la enseñanza de la lengua materna. Este artículo presenta las matrices del método fónico creado por el portugués António Feliciano de Castilho (1855) y del método analítico de Enseñanza Universal creado por Joseph Jacotot (1834), que circularon y generaron enfrentamientos en suelo brasileño en el siglo XIX. Restringir las divergencias del proceso de alfabetización al aspecto metodológico de adopción de estas marchas reitera el sesgo tecnicista desacoplado del contexto social, histórico, político y cultural de los sujetos involucrados.

Palabras clave: Alfabetización. Castilho. Jacotot.

Introduction

In a Brazilian national historical context indicating the “systematic teaching of phonics” as one of the guiding principles of the National Literacy Policy² (2019), the republic in the 21st century echoes a latent imperial methodological discussion. In this context, the reduction of the epistemological and political discussion on the importance of reading for the quarrels of the synthetic and analytical literacy marches is seen.

Such arrays for teaching reading entered imperial Brazil: the synthetic by António Feliciano de Castilho³ (1800-1875) and the analytical by Joseph Jacotot⁴ (1770-1840), presenting disputes and demarcating the 1850s as a stage for pedagogical experiments in literacy in the Brazilian Empire.

More than a century later, the permanence of speeches that reduce the question of literacy⁵ to method and technique, taking as the center of the discussion the starting point of teaching (letters, syllables, sounds, words or texts), can be seen.

To the degree that it presents an allegedly scientific guideline, based on the conception of literacy under the prism of a synthetic march, “which must be taught in an explicit and systematic manner, in an order that derives from the simplest to the most complex” (BRASIL, 2019, p. 18), the current National Literacy Policy (2019) reduces the challenge of social praxis that includes the literacy process to issues such as sonority and/or the starting point of a methodological march.

The National Literacy Policy (PNA), instituted by presidential decree of 4/11/2019 (BRASIL, 2019a), as noted by numerous authors (MORTATTI, 2019; CARDOSO; GUIDA; SEPÚLVEDA; PAULET, 20019; FRADE, 2019), integrates a neoliberal political-ideological and ultra-conservative project of the current federal government, being strategically linked to other measures to destroy the democratic advances achieved by the Brazilian population in recent decades.

By indicating the synthetic and phonic arrays as a guideline for teaching reading and writing, the National Literacy Policy (2019) tries to slow down its mandatory reading of the literacy process, declaring that “basing literacy on research evidence is not imposing a method, but proposing that programs, curricular guidelines and literacy practices always take into account the most robust findings of scientific research” (BRASIL, 2019, p. 20). Of course it could be said, with Isabel Cristina Alves da Silva Frade (1919, p.15), that “although the PNA proposal seeks to build a notion of evidence based on experimental researches, there is a set of empirical evidence, derived from other researches, which allows us to ask other questions”.

² According to Frade and Monteiro (2019), the publication of Decree No. 9765, of April 11, 2019, which instituted the National Literacy Policy (PNA), and the publication of the “National Literacy Policy”, released by the Ministry of Education, on August 15, 2019, “evidence the assumptions that guide the directions and strategies that are being devised for the National Education Policy”, such choices being based on “two research paradigms: Cognitive Science and Neurosciences” (FRADE; MONTEIRO, 2019, p. 10).

³ António Feliciano de Castilho (1800-1875) was a Portuguese professor, poet, bachelor of Laws from the University of Coimbra and a member of the Royal Academy of Sciences of Lisbon, and created the *Castilho Method for the fast and pleasant teaching of printed, handwriting and numbers reading, and writing* (ALBUQUERQUE, 2019, p. 23).

⁴ Jacotot (1770-1840) was a french professor, creator of the Universal Education. He entered the Collège des Godrans at the age of 9, where he spent 33 years as a student and, afterwards, as a teacher (RAISKY, 2012, p. 18). In Dijon, he taught “Analysis, Ideology and Ancient Languages, Pure and Transcendent Mathematics and Law” (RANCIÈRE, 2015, p. 17).

⁵ In the 19th century, it was not common to use the word literacy to refer to the teaching of reading and writing. However, because we intend to establish a parallel between the past and the future, we use the term, understanding, therefore, that, due to its current use in Portuguese, it does not constitute an anachronism.

Even mentioning the possibility of not restricting the issue of literacy to a method, the reference to authors such as Snow (1998), as they were inserted in the document, reaffirms that “all divergences about teaching reading begin with the claim that one thing or another of these things must be done at the beginning of literacy” (SNOW, 1998, *apud* BRASIL, 2019, p. 30).

Restricting “all” the divergences on teaching reading to the methodological aspect, with regard to the adoption of synthetic, analytical or mixed marches, it reiterates a technical bias in approaching the literacy process, removing it from its social, historical, political and cultural aspects of the individuals involved; a fallacy that is criticized by the document itself:

Illiteracy nowadays is clearly associated with adverse living conditions, generally related to poverty and the cause of different forms of social vulnerability, which are expressed in poor housing and sanitation, almost non-existent means of subsistence and lack of opportunity to enjoy all the rights and duties of citizenship (MALUF, *apud* BRASIL, 2019, p. 19).

However, what is seen in the construction of the document itself, is the establishment of a process that came from top to bottom, by presidential decree, without any debate with the academic community and teacher training (MORTATTI, 2019, p. 27). On the opposite way of this political proposal that turns the phonetic arrays of the alphabetical system into a straitjacket to introduce syllabic families in their gradual march, thereby restricting the possibility of experimentation and alternative ways of teaching, by overlapping the base over all other intervening factors in the act of literacy, the purpose of this article is to establish a historical dialogue with the current reality, evidencing, for the Brazilian case, a moment when, probably, the discussion about the phonic way of literacy entered the debate, when the relevance of sound and ear was introduced (SCHAFER, 1991) to effect children's literacy.

By revisiting an imperial clash about the importance of sonority in teaching the mother tongue or in teaching reading and writing, this article intended, therefore, to present the challenges of educating an individual considered in his constructive and creative capacity, and that interacts with the context of production of the text which looks at, transforming it and being transformed by it through the prism of a dialectic in the literacy process.

By emphasizing the current methodological issues regarding the introduction of sound and music when teaching the mother tongue, the definition of auricular reading presented in the Castilho Method was addressed, which, in 1850, was an important antecedent, perhaps even the array of the phonic method⁶ in Portugal - having echoed in the Brazilian Empire. Blind poet, Castilho lived what Schafer (1991) theorized about the idiosyncrasy of the ear, which, unlike other sense organs, cannot be closed, being always exposed and vulnerable, capturing the sounds of the acoustic horizon in all directions.

When developing auricular reading, Castilho broke with the old spelling method, which started from the knowledge of each letter of the alphabet for the composition of syllables as the beginning of the literacy process, starting to respect the sound of the spoken word as a starting point on the same path, as what will later be called phonic method.

⁶ The definition of António Castilho's method in a synthetic and phonetic march was worked on in the thesis of Albuquerque (2019). Although Castilho does not have well-defined theoretical elements at that time to define the analytical and synthetic marches, and does not even name his method as phonic, there is a historical process of construction of rupture between these marches and also of differentiation in synthetic march methods, once its break with the old spelling and syllabus consisted of “evoking the sound of words as the kick-off of teaching reading” (ALBUQUERQUE, 2019, p. 94).

If on the agenda of discussions in the current political scenario there are literacy issues centered between synthetic or analytical marches, it is necessary to discuss the importance of the act of reading for the emancipation of the individual; and, for that, Jacotot resumes excellence in Universal Education for the formation of autonomous and creative readers. The clashes between the defenders of Castilho and Jacotot on Brazilian imperial soil in the 19th century resulted from different philosophical conceptions regarding the literacy process. Jacotot, with his principle of teaching the relatable whole, found resistance in a kind of philosophical networks of knowledge that substantiated the methods for teaching reading in the 19th and 20th centuries. The Universal Education proposed by Jacotot evoked creative freedom, starting from the *whole* in the teaching of the mother tongue using, also, the teaching of music. Jacotot had as a base the principle of the whole text as the start of the literacy process, towards what would be characterized by posterity as an analytical or global method. Jacotot was considered by several pedagogues as the creator of the analytical method for teaching reading through his Universal Education presented in the work *Mother tongue*, published in 1822.

It appears that this imperial clash in some way has repercussions in the practices of the current republican schools, when the ambivalence in the teaching of reading and writing is presented, again, based on the announcement of a phonic method that, however, uses arguments historically linked to the defense of analytical teaching.

Contrary to a centrality in the individual or even in the foundation of the literacy process (text, word, syllable, phoneme, etc.) faded from its social praxis, it is worth remembering the ever-present need in the literacy process for a “reading of the world” (FREIRE, 1989, p. 12) and the whole related to the reading of the word; a challenge that extrapolates the technical and methodological issues of concern with synthetic and analytical marches and that leads to the assumption of students in their condition as individuals who must be close to the right to humanly constructed cultural and material goods.

1. The auricular reading of the Castilho Method: synthetic march and music in literacy

António Feliciano de Castilho was born on January 26⁷, 1800, in rua da Torre de S. Roque, in Lisbon, currently rua de S. Pedro de Alcântara, and was the second son and first man of Domitília Máxima da Silva and of the doctor José Feliciano de Castilho, who worked at the Court service as a hospital inspector and professor at the University of Coimbra.

He was a Portuguese poet who joined public education and who, based on his experience with teaching islanders in São Miguel Island, made severe criticisms to the school models of his time, having several opponents. For António Castilho, reading and writing were part of the same coin, being essential to present the letters from elements already known to the spoken word.

Each idea is an image of an object, each spoken word represents an idea; each written word represents a spoken word; each word read is a phonic translation of a written word. Reading, therefore, depends on writing, as writing depends on speaking. To teach well, the study and recognition of the spoken word should be the starting point (CASTILHO, 1853, p. 26).

⁷ Although there are controversies between the dates located about the birth of António Feliciano de Castilho, we adopted the one presented in *Memórias de Castilho*, a work written by his son, Júlio de Castilho (CASTILHO, 1926, book I, p. 5).

Antônio Castilho considered himself the creator of a method that paid attention to the detailed analysis of the spoken word, since, after the auricular reading, it was decomposed into syllables to distinguish its elements. The motto of the Portuguese method was to start from the spoken word until reaching the isolated letters; to present the spoken word before writing; “the spoken word cannot be made a written word elementarily, but dividing itself elementally; it is divided into syllables; then, the syllables are subdivided into elements” (CASTILHO, 1999b, p. 114).

Based on the definition of Braslavsky's reading method (1971), Antônio Castilho can be placed as a defender of the phonetic method, precisely because he starts from the spoken word to decompose it into elements and, thus, claim the primacy of the spoken language of learning to read, moving from what is “heard and spoken” to what is “written and seen”.

When we analyze the currents that currently try to interpret this process, we will see that they all coincide in highlighting the role that spoken language plays as a precedent for learning to read, and that, to reach it, it starts from the language that is heard and spoken, to, then, reach the written and seen, according to the conventional symbols represented on a surface (BRASLAVSKY, 1971, p. 56).

In Antônio Castilho's proposal, the process of decomposition and analysis of words was tied to the process of composition and synthesis. As soon as the disciples were able to follow the march of decomposition, the master listed the isolated words so that they would join it into syllables and words; “decompose the words, compose them; has been on the path that leads from writing to reading, get on what leads to reading, they are, by this method, inseparable” (CASTILHO, 1853, p. 23).

Auricular reading consisted of the decomposition and synthesis of the reading object: the spoken word. Here are two examples of the decomposition of the word, initially worked in a globalizing context.

PROFESSOR = *F, e, r; m, em; t, u?*
 DISCIPLES = *Fer; men; tu: Fermento.*
 PROFESSOR = *Q, â; r, â; v, é; l, â?*
 DISCIPLES = *Ca; ra; ve; la: Caravela.*
This is what is called auricular reading in our schools.

Boto (2012, p. 57) defines auricular reading as a “biform repetition of the same process”, which begins with the decomposition of the reading object — the word —, so that the student recognizes its sound elements corresponding to the values of listening to letters.

Understanding that the reading ability derives from speech competence, Castilho's method, which is explicitly simple, effective and fast, combines, analyzes and dissects sounds of the spoken word, decomposing it into its phonic elements and recomposing it into its full meaning. Therefore, Castilho suggests intertwined practices of decomposing words into letters, assigning them their original sound, to reconstitute, at the end, the logic of the entire word (BOTO, 2012, p. 56).

Such method was based on the rhythm to be followed by the disciples with a clap or beat of a stick at each word, syllable or letter uttered, being indispensable the use of the compass meter - “machine that I created to mark on eyes and ears the times with any desirable speed, rhythmic cadence will be acquired much more easily and with much more perfection”

(CASTILHO, 1853, p. 16). The march was also present to mark the decomposition of the word into syllables and, of this, into letters.

This exercise, in which three things have to be harmonized, the movement of the feet, of the hands, and the voice, is necessarily irregular and almost tumultuous in its beginning, but as it is a very important part of the rhythm, it is convenient to be careful until getting the perfect syllable march; the compass meter can also be of great help here (CASTILHO, 1853, p. 20).

The phonetic march proposed by António Castilho consisted of an exercise of decomposing the word through auricular reading. After this exercise, eye reading was made, in which pictures of letter shapes and sounds were presented. As soon as the disciples were advanced in reading loose words, before moving from the second class to the third, the study of writing would be introduced, which would mutually assist each other.

When relegating the teaching of writing to the background, after learning to read, it appears that some renovations promoted by Castilho were not carried out in the materialization of his method.

Although it was intended to renovate, Castilho's Method assumed the learning of writing after the acquisition of reading, as it happened daily in the interim of Portuguese schools. For Castilho, there would even be a logical precedence for reading over writing (BOTO, 2012, p. 55).

In a practical way, the professor, followed by the disciple, would say a word, then repeat and divide it evenly into syllables, marking each syllable with a step and with a tap sound of the right hand on the left hand. After this initial decomposition of words into syllables, it would be decomposed into letters. The exercise that, until then, was limited to the ears and mouth, moved into a third stage, eye reading, in which the moving letters, fixed on the grid, would compose words, from the grouping of the moving letters.

To write, it would have to know how to handwrite. For this, the professor used black cards with letters painted with white ink, ordered in ascending order of difficulty, and the disciples with chalk, white pencil or stone pencil copied on the slate or black board. The order of the process follows.

The process for writing each of these words must invariably be as follows: only the disciple hears it, repeats it broken down into syllables clapping his hands; then he pronounces the first syllable in the manner of a drunk, that is to say, stretching his voice through all the elements that it contains; finally: those same elements or letters uttered, he writes them down, do the same with the second syllable, the same with the third, if any, and so on until the end, so that, however long a word is, attention is never loaded with more than one syllable (CASTILHO, 1975, p. 154).

There were several pedagogical quarrels involving the defenders of Castilho before the Frenchman Joseph Jacotot's arrays in imperial Brazil. Activities involving the relationship between professor and students, school supplies, times and spaces, are well represented in the presentation of Castilho's method. Perhaps this is why the author was so critical of Jacotot's Universal Education that, for him, it was full of aphorisms and lacked

specific explanations that involved the school routine and the materialization of the proposed analytical method.

Thus, it appears that Jacotot, with his principle of teaching the whole relatable and proposing a theory of emancipation in instruction through different ways, such as in the teaching of mother tongue and music, found resistance in a kind of philosophical knowledge networks that grounded methods for teaching reading in the 19th and 20th centuries.

2. Universal Education in Jacotot: creative freedom and evocation of the *whole* when teaching the mother tongue

Jean Joseph Jacotot (1770-1840) was born in Dijon, France, and was considered a revolutionary questioner of the results of the French Revolution and of the institutions of his time because he believed that these movements did not bring the means to achieve freedom and the emancipation of man, including in the intellectual field.

Exiled from his country, with the cessation of the Revolution of 1830, the master returned to France in an attempt to spread his teaching method, seeking the "Intellectual Emancipation" of those involved in education. This context is pointed out by Rancière (2015) as the reconciliation of order and progress, based on the pedagogical institution that saw the "old man" triumph under the silencing of egalitarian fevers and revolutionary disorders and voices like Jacotot's. The pedagogical principle of Universal Education created by Jacotot referred to learning something and relating this knowledge to everything else, due to the principle of equality of intelligences.

If you fall into the hands of a Paris law school student, and if this Paris law school student asks you to give our method, applied to the study of law, start with these terms: Young! It is necessary to learn something and relate everything else, from this principle: every men has equal intelligence (JACOTOT, 1852, p. 8).

Jacotot started from the whole of a text as a principle of the literacy process, being a precursor of an analytical or global method of teaching reading and writing. According to Aguayo (1959, p. 182), Jacotot was the creator of the analytical method for teaching reading through his Universal Education presented in the work *Mother tongue* (1834).

The student's contact with the *whole* of the book, music, poetry, among others, was the beginning of the path of teaching reading, against a synthetic march like Castilho's, which reserved this recognition of the *whole* only to students who went through the hardships of a logical syllabic sequence in their sonorization and representation of the sound in graphic signs.

Jacotot's defense of intellectual emancipation through the teaching of mother tongue and music based on the teaching of the *whole*, was in line with his *Panecastic Philosophy*. The definition of the term *Panecastic* comes from the principle of equality of speaking beings, based on the motto expressed in his Universal Education that "everything is in everything".

Rancière (2015) explains the composition of the term *Panecastic* from the combination of two Greek words, pan = whole and ekastos = each, "looking for the *whole* of human intelligence in *each* individual manifestation" (RANCIÈRE, 2015, p. 64).

At the first Brazilian Congress on Child Protection, held from August 27 to September 5, 1922, in Rio de Janeiro, Clemente Quaglio⁸ defined Jacotot's Universal Education in a work

⁸ From the project "Clemente Quaglio (1872-1948): canon of pedological science – historical-critical study", Monarcha demarcates aspects of the scientific production of this pedagogue. According to Monarcha (2011), Clemente Quaglio (1872-1948) was born in the province of Rovigo, Italy, and died in São Paulo; when he arrived in Brazil, in 1888, he settled in the city of Serra Negra, SP; in 1891, he joined the "great naturalization" offered

entitled “What is the method of teaching reading that most closely accompanies the child's mental evolution?”. Based on this discussion by Quaglio, in an event in 1942, the longevity of the discussion on literacy methods can be seen.

According to Quaglio (1925), Jacotot's Method was an attempt to replace the syllabic method by the proportional method (Analytical or Sentencing Method). Contextualizing Jacotot's *Panecastic* motto that “everything is in everything”, Quaglio demonstrated the principle of teaching through the reading of *Telemachus*, in which Jacotot proposed the “teacher to learn by heart a page of a reading book, an arithmetic rule, a piece of music, and that these special lessons were all related to successive ones” (QUAGLIO, 1925, p. 494).

With Jacotot's motto that “everything is in everything”, the student who still did not know the alphabet was initially put in contact with a book, a decorated page and a sentence; after that sentence, the apprentice would find some similar and equal signs and, after comparisons, he would relate to the whole.

For the literacy principle of Jacotot's analytical method, the sentence was used as a strategy when starting by comparing words and isolating elements recognized in them for reading and writing new words.

He put this sentence before his eyes: “*In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth; but the earth was formless and void*”. After reading the sentence to his student, he invited him to consider it carefully and to reflect. The learner will quickly find some similar and equal signs, such as a, i, u etc. (QUAGLIO, 1925, p. 495).

Thus, starting from the unknown of the *whole* book, the child would identify the different words and expressions, all the signs presented would be subject to discussion and denial. The Universal principle was established by showing a global writing to the child and, at a later moment, presenting the structures reduced into syllables or letters based on comparative relationships, breaking with the gradual chain of learning letters and syllables first, and, then, the words.

Every word, every expression, every sign of thought is subject to discussion and contestation. Learn the letters, then the syllables, then the words; you will be able to read, without using the universal education method, but if, after showing the letters to a child, he is informed of reports, words he does not yet know and the syllables he has learned, we will have done Universal Education (JACOTOT, 1834, p. 12).

The principle of emancipation defended by Jacotot, against a master who directed all the steps, leading the student to stupidity, was brought up by Quaglio, when he wrote that “the master shall not explain anything; the student must discover everything by himself” (QUAGLIO, 1925, p. 495). Master Jacotot, put himself in the position of “ignorant master” as a way to break with this stupidity of his students, ensuring that his little ones “play, compose and improvise” (JACOTOT, 1824, p.24).

In the work on teaching music from the principle of Universal Education, Jacotot was “willing to help with all the power in the model that some of them may have, to involve their citizens for the benefit of information and universal” (JACOTOT, 1824, p. 293).

by the Provisional Government of the Republic, led by Deodoro da Fonseca, and after assuming an isolated school in Serra Negra (1895), he was appointed deputy in “Luiz Leite” School Group and, finally, joined “Rangel Pestana” School Group, in Amparo, São Paulo. In his path, he projected himself “in national teaching as a scientific authority” (MONARCHA, 2011, p. 1).

The signaling of this involvement of the “whole” in the literacy process is coupled with a sensory perspective of the literacy process; and, in Hamilton's logic (2002), it represents a dialogue between the present and the past. The fact is that in this clash of the Brazilian Empire, many of the contemporary issues in the national pedagogical debate are observed — and which end up being reflected in the National Literacy Policy (2019). Above all, it is worth questioning the apparent supremacy of methods and techniques over all other factors involved in the challenge of learning to read and write. Mortatti comments on the alleged news of the phonic method with the following words:

The phonic method/phonic instruction is the new and scientific solution to the problems of literacy in Brazil, because it is the only one based on scientific evidence: this false assumption and the resulting arguments are invalidated by results of scientific research to prove that this method is not new in the history of literacy in Brazil, nor a solution to literacy problems, and its intended universal effectiveness was and has been questioned, in Brazil and abroad, based on the result of other scientific researches (MORTATTI, 2019, p. 28).

3. The challenge of reading the world while reading the word: PNA problems

Corroborating the theory of Magda Soares (2017), it is observed that the “old” discussion about teaching methods has not yet been overcome. Historically, in the pedagogical debate of today, there is a silencing and a reduction of governmental speech about the path of academic discussion on literacy methods, relegating it to the field of quarrels of pedagogical marches and masking the social whole, which can lead to a school orthodoxy driven by an emphatic and authoritative bias of a single method. From the perspective of a question — *Literacy: in search of a method?* —, the author responds fearlessly about the need to always be in search of a method, defending, however, a reflection on the conceptualization of method, and a dialogue between the search for the method and all the other factors that involve the process of literacy.

There is a historic attempt to reduce this social and political discussion from literacy methods to methodological strategies for marches. We seek to suppress disputes in the field of language, nation project, among others. In a perverse attempt to reduce the path of acquiring written language to a methodological logic, the social, political and historical project is lost in this path.

Revisiting this debate on literacy presented in imperial education, at a time of constitution of the Brazilian nation, language and people, corroborates the perspective of Magda Soares (2017), with regard to returning the discussion beyond pedagogical quarrels. Whatever the method, nation projects were at stake. The pedagogical dispute restricted to the methodological nature and centered between marches and modes of teaching hid, and still hides, the conflicts and struggles associated with the process of constitution of the Brazilian nation.

Restricting the discrepancies in the literacy process to the methodological aspect, reiterates a technicist bias of the theme, uncoupling the march of literacy from its social, historical, political and cultural context. This is what appears in the National Literacy Policy, under arguments allegedly based on scientific evidence. When questioning the extent to which “a scientific paradigm can radically alter the results of literacy?”, Frade (2019) states the following:

In the pedagogical act, we have a series of variables related, for example, to the social expectations about what literacy is for; to contact that individuals and groups have with the written culture; the way in which literacy teachers mobilize this knowledge or expand it; the procedures that are consolidated to teach reading and writing; time management of activities; the interpretation of continued participations, networks of relationships and interactions that occur in the classroom; ways to keep students participating; the forms of attention given to each student's inquiries; their learning times; the materials made available; among other variables (p.16).

In Castilho, learning the written code of the alphabetical system needs sonority, with the search for a joyful, rhythmic and regulated march under the guidance of the professor being observed in his teaching method. In Jacotot, a creative capacity gives the individual an opportunity to experience sounds under the primacy of the construction of knowledge. Such proposals, which seemed antagonistic in their time, nowadays need to be resized to recognize voices, rites and practices that have been silenced in our political and social context.

Kohan (2019) defines the French Jacotot's proposal as an intellectual and individual emancipation, suggested in the 19th century, based on the principle of equality of intelligences. Thinking with Lilian do Valle (2003), it becomes essential, when studying philosophical works such as Jacotot's, to go beyond the mere methodological discussion (VALLE, 2003, p. 263). In the same perspective, Rancière (2015) observes the relevance of Jacotot's speech:

it is not a matter of method, as in traditional forms of learning, it is a matter of a philosophical nature: whether the act of receiving the word of the master – the word of the other – is a testimony of equality or inequality. It is also a political issue, that is, whether the education system assumes an inequality to be “reduced”, or an equality to be verified (p. 12).

In Raisky's words, in Jacotot's paradox, pedagogy should be at the service of the “intellectual emancipation of the individual (whatever the name given to that goal), but, at the same time, it should prepare it to play a social role, occupy a place in the world, in the economic and political order, because it will be the condition of its existence” (RAISKY, 2012, p. 117). Such conceptions surpasses the reduction of literacy to the sensory prism, being central the questioning:

So, why is there, in PNA, a speech more centered on phonic instruction skills, fluency and vocabulary, without its intense link with the texts? The impression is that these skills still appear in the PNA, without the link between these skills, in a kind of evolutionary chain, as if the understanding, for example, could not be worked on before the phonic instruction, as if the vocabulary did not also depend on access to texts (FRADE, 2019, p. 20).

As Cardoso, Guida, Sepúlveda, Paulet (2019, p. 94) also point out, the National Literacy Policy, “by guiding the denomination of scientific evidence from meta-analyses produced around a single academic tradition, decades of research carried out in different parts of the world is disposed of”. According to the authors, it would be a reductionist view in all senses, including in the methodological sense itself, which proposes to be the only one valued, exactly because it is assumed that “only neuroscience and cognitive science are sufficient sources, disregarding

other disciplinary perspectives” (CARDOSO; GUIDA; SEPÚLVEDA; PAULET, 2019, p. 94). Therefore, it is only necessary to agree with the diagnosis produced by the same authors:

We are under the aegis of a government that has operated in a binary logic, a mechanism that intends to oppose in order to crystallize a new truth. And PNA is based on this same logic: it denies what has been built to date, to start on new bases; it uses a partial diagnosis that disregards the advances achieved; it starts a new vocabulary (literacy, numeracy and parenting) disregarding consolidated technical terminologies; it puts all researchers, scholars and professors working in other paradigms in the same package; and it reduces the look of the literacy teacher to just one of the dimensions that are at stake with regard to the teaching and learning of reading and writing (p. 96).

Final remarks

Antônio Feliciano de Castilho created a method of teaching reading and writing with the presence of a master who would regulate all phases of the process, being its time and space delimited as a grand school orchestra. The theoretical proposal of analytical teaching presented by Jacotot entered into rivalry in the Brazilian Empire with the appropriators of the synthetic march defended by Castilho.

Thinking about education from a long-term perspective allowed us to discuss the way in which international arrays placed in the field of public education in the Brazilian Empire perfected paths of continuity and ruptures with our current Republic. Among comings and goings, raise questions about the social and political issue that involves reading, goes beyond the mere methodological issue of adopting a phonic or analytical method.

The lack of knowledge of multifaceted aspects that are absolutely disregarded in the National Literacy Policy document, restricts the issue of literacy to cognitive and methodological studies; and silences the social, historical and political awareness of the process, as if we were going to return to the Brazilian Empire to resume a perspective of the debate that was there, at that specific historical moment. It is, therefore, a return to the past, a return to the middle of the 19th century.

Since it is returning, we could, at least, rescue Jacotot's present: the challenge of reversing the explaining logic of a master who is the only holder of the knowledge and steps of the literacy process rationally carried out, facing a process that enables the student to emancipate in the composition of the symphony of the process of associating the sounds that surround him — sounds that go beyond the textbook and the classroom.

We intend, therefore, in this article, to confront the pedagogical debate of the Brazilian Empire on the policies of teaching reading and writing with the current National Literacy Policy (2019), in force in Brazil today, since, in both cases, there is a reductionism of the literacy problem, taken exclusively by the debate between marches, synthetic or analytical, sometimes centered on the text, sometimes on the individual, and which silence the sounds of the individual's transforming capacity in relation to its social reality. Literacy is an achievement that should be available to everyone as a subjective public right; but that, as such, is far beyond the quarrel of teaching methods.

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