



Syllabaries for the teaching of reading and writing here and overseas (16th-20th Centuries)

Silabários para o ensino da leitura e da escrita no aqui e no além-mar (Séculos XVI-XX)

Silabarios para la enseñanza de la lectura y la escritura aquí y más allá del mar (Siglos XVI-XX)

Organization

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Presentation

Alphabets, ABC letters, primers, reading books and syllabaries were, in Brazil and other Western countries, especially from the 19th century onwards, the main materials used to teach reading and writing. Although these books had different names, they had similar characteristics and, often, the legislation aimed at school books did not mention their particularities.

The research, especially about these artifacts in Portuguese-speaking countries, has observed that they share similarities in several aspects, such as materiality, content and didactic organization. In Brazil, for example, ABC letters and syllabaries, as Frade (2010, p. 276) points out, “sometimes seem to designate the same material and, on other occasions, they seem to be another support”.

In our research experiences about school material culture in the area of the history of literacy, reading and writing, both in Brazil and in transnational contexts, we have observed that certain printed materials have attracted more attention from researchers, resulting in a greater volume of studies, such as primers and reading books. In comparison, other types of

books, such as syllabaries, are less investigated, which leads us to propose this thematic dossier within the scope of the *Cadernos de História da Educação* Journal.

The guests are from here (Brazil) and from overseas (Portugal and Italy) and were asked to analyze printed materials that, in their countries, were called syllabaries, allowing us to reflect about both the materiality and the methodological proposal of these books. The texts present in the dossier also address the complexity of the appropriations of syllabaries for teaching reading and writing in different contexts, from the 16th to the 20th century.

The first article, written by Justino Magalhães, entitled *intitulado “Da Arte de Silabar aos modernos silabários da língua portuguesa: a persistência da língua ensinada”*, traces the characteristics of syllabaries since the 16th century, seeking to understand their long duration in the material culture of schools, not only in Portugal, but also in French, English and Spanish-speaking countries. The author demonstrates that these printed materials aimed to standardize the language to be taught, in addition to establishing principles for schooling. Even today, although with more modern strategies and visuals, the typical exercises of traditional syllabaries remain present. Magalhães also presents elements that show how syllabaries were appropriated for teaching reading and writing, constituting the basis for the consolidation of a “school pedagogy”.

Next, we have two texts written by two researchers and one researcher from Italy, which shed light on Italian syllabaries.

Alberto Barausse, in *“Silabários e exercícios de leitura na Itália da pós-unificação até o final do século XIX: produção, circulação e métodos”*, presents a vast repertoire of syllabaries and first reading exercises in the Italian school and publishing context between unification and the end of the 19th century. Based on a variety of sources — such as lists of syllabaries and supplementary materials collected by the Provincial School Councils and school inspectors during investigations promoted by the Ministry of Public Education in 1869 and from 1875 to 1881, as well as printed and digital repertoires and catalogues —, Barausse highlights the characteristics of syllabaries and first readings from a linguistic and educational point of view, considering the study curricula of primary schools and the development of the publishing and typographic sector.

“Imparare a leggere e scrivere in Italia nel primo Novecento: il sillabario Api sui fiori di Marcellina Cappelli Bajocco” (Learning to read and write in Italy at the beginning of the 20th century: Marcellina Cappelli Bajocco’s syllabary *Api sui fiori*), by Nicole Panzera and Michelina D’Alessio, presents teacher Marcellina Cappelli Bajocco as a representative of a profile of early 20th-century Italian education. The research addresses her career as a teacher and author of a series of books consisting of a syllabary and reading books up to the fifth grade, entitled *Api sui fiori* (Bees on the flowers). The authors specifically investigate the syllabary intended for literacy, analyzing its structure and articulation to understand the content presented and the methods employed. Furthermore, Panzera and D’Alessio invite us to explore the path of production, reception and circulation of this material, considering its editorial trajectory and its educational impact.

In the Brazilian context, the last three articles explain the characteristics of syllabaries produced in Brazil in dialogue with international production, especially from the 19th century.

In *“História do ensino da leitura no Brasil e os silabários do século XIX”*, by Juliano Guerra Rocha, a series of analysis of syllabaries produced and/or published in the Brazilian press in the 19th century, with the aim of characterizing these publications based on their definitions and representations. Rocha conducted research in the *Hemeroteca Digital Brasileira da*

Biblioteca Nacional, in which he inventoried 34 syllabaries that circulated throughout the country in the 19th century. From this set, he selected three syllabaries by Brazilian authors to understand the ideas that were disseminated about the teaching of reading in Brazil. The author demonstrates that, contrary to what many studies suggest, the syllabaries were constituted as books with an explicit methodological approach, influencing and being influenced by the principles disseminated about the schooling of reading in the 19th century.

Terciane Ângela Luchese, in the article “*Amiamo molto l'Italia, quantunque lontani: um silabário italiano impresso em Pelotas/RS, a contribuição do professor Malan*”, presents readers with an analysis of a rare work discovered in the João Spadari Adami Municipal Historical Archive in Caxias do Sul/RS: the *Sillabario ad uso dei figli dei coloni italiani della provincia di Rio Grande del Sud per imparare contemporaneamente a leggere ed a scrivere* (Syllabary for use by the Italian colonists' children in the province of Rio Grande do Sul to learn to read and write in a contemporary way), by Italian professor and consular agent Gian Pietro Malan. The work was published by a famous publisher and bookstore in Pelotas/RS, probably in 1885 or 1886, and was written to support classes in Italian schools in the Rio Grande do Sul context. In Luchese's article, we understand who the author was and how the work was organized, in line with other Italian and Brazilian productions of the period.

Claudia Panizzolo's text, entitled “*O Syllabario Escolar de Miguel Maria Jardim e a doutrina mnemonisada para o aprendizado da leitura (1878)*”, analyzes the production, materiality and circulation of a syllabary still little known, called the *Syllabario Escolar*. This work was produced by Miguel Maria Jardim, born in Portugal in 1841 and naturalized Brazilian in 1877. Panizzolo presents the trajectory of professor Miguel Maria Jardim in the public education system of Rio de Janeiro, exploring his education and work based on extensive research in the *Hemeroteca Digital Brasileira da Biblioteca Nacional*. This collection allowed the author to identify the strategies for disseminating the *Syllabario Escolar* in several Brazilian provinces, in addition to pointing out the possible influence of Masonry as a sponsor of the work donations. The author then analyzes in detail the *Syllabario*, located in the National Library of Lisbon, investigating its conception of reading and learning. Finally, Panizzolo discusses the role of this material in the educational context of the time, considering the disputes that existed around literacy methods.

Finally, the articles in the dossier invite us to reflect about many aspects of syllabaries. In order to conclude, we would like to highlight two of them. The first concerns the materiality of these printed materials, most of which are in codex format, which demonstrates their connection to a specific visual aspect and editing. These syllabaries were not only books with tables containing the alphabet and syllables, but also proposals that guided a methodology for teaching reading and writing, mostly linked to synthetic methods of spelling and/or syllabification. Unlike the so-called syllabic letters and many syllabaries that were printed without an author, mentioning only the publisher or bookstore, the syllabaries analyzed in the six articles have an author who brought an approach that he/she considered to be modern or effective for learning to read and write. Furthermore, the productions here and abroad have, in a certain way, many similarities, since they sought a national identity and linked texts with a moral, ethical and civic nature, with the aim of forming a child obedient to God, the State, parents and teachers. In other words, it is not possible to think about the analysis of an editorial production without comparing it with what was circulating before and during the period in which it was produced, not only in its country of origin, but also in other countries. In this sense, the search will not be for a “zero point” of printed materials for teaching reading and writing,

which influenced all subsequent production, but rather to understand that there is an inherent polyphony and dialogism, in the philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin's terms, in the analysis that we intend to make of books intended for teaching reading and writing.

Furthermore, the dossier invites us to expand the research on syllabaries, not only in other Portuguese-speaking countries, but also in nations with different languages, both in Latin America and in other continents, in the West and in the East. Did these works receive the same name or a different one? How were they appropriated throughout history? In the Brazilian case, it is necessary to go beyond the perspective that the country merely imported ideas and models for organizing school materials. It is essential to further analyze how Brazil also exported concepts and methodological approaches for teaching reading and writing, both in institutionalized contexts, such as schools, and in domestic spaces or other diverse sociocultural environments.

Reference

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