DOSSIER

Literacy and Curriculum: between the establishment of meanings and the experiments that create fissures and make other ways of life possible.

The *Tempo de Aprender* programme and the silence of literacy in the process of reading and writing

O Tempo de Aprender *e o silenciamento do letramento no processo de alfabetização*

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to analyse the conceptualisation of language and learning in the proposal of literacy in the continuing education course of the 2020 programme *Tempo de Aprender* for the National Policy for Literacy (Brasil, 2019). The study is characterised as qualitative with a descriptive and analytic focus, and the methodology will analyse official documents. The empirical material for analysis corresponds to axle 1 (Continuing education for literacy professionals) and axle 2 (pedagogical support guiding the teacher education programme). In the context of the investigation, we highlight two analytical topics: (1) Where are the study phonological awareness, promotion of metalinguistic curiosity and playfulness, which were current in the literacy education courses for teachers? and (2) where are reflection about the literacy united to practices of reading and writing in academic productions in Brazil? In this paper we will emphasise the first topic. Results of the investigation abled the identification of some weakness in the proposal of the course, that is: hierarchisation of knowledge from smaller units to larger ones in the process of learning to read and write; standardisation of phonics instruction as a teaching proposal; and motor training to improve spelling. The highlighted topics demonstrated the silenced literacy in the process of learning how to read and write.

Keywords: Literacy. Programme *Tempo de Aprender*. Phonics instruction. Language conceptions. Teacher education.

RESUMO

O presente artigo tem como objetivo analisar a concepção de linguagem e aprendizagem presente na proposta didática de alfabetização do curso de formação continuada do programa Tempo de Aprender de 2020, tendo como pano de fundo a Política Nacional de Alfabetização (PNA) (Brasil, 2019). O estudo caracteriza-se como qualitativo com foco descritivo-analítico e a metodologia empregada contempla análises de texto documental. O material empírico selecionado para análise corresponde ao eixo 1 – Formação continuada de profissionais da alfabetização e eixo 2 – Apoio pedagógico para alfabetização do documento que orienta o programa de formação docente. No contexto da pesquisa, destacamos dois tópicos analíticos: (1) Cadê o

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estudo da consciência fonológica, a promoção da curiosidade metalinguística e a ludicidade que estavam presentes nos cursos de formação docente para alfabetizadoras? E (2) Cadê a reflexão sobre o processo de alfabetização aliada às práticas de leitura e produção de texto presentes em produções acadêmicas no Brasil? Neste artigo, a ênfase é no primeiro tópico analítico. Os resultados da pesquisa possibilitaram a identificação de algumas fragilidades na proposta do curso como: a hierarquização do conhecimento de unidades menores para unidades maiores no processo da aprendizagem da leitura e da escrita; a padronização da instrução fônica como proposta de ensino; e o treinamento motor para a correta grafia das letras. Os tópicos destacados colocaram em evidência o silenciamento do letramento no processo de alfabetização.

Palavras-chave: Alfabetização. Tempo de Aprender. Instrução Fônica. Concepções de Linguagem. Formação Docente.

Ways followed to form *Tempo de Aprender* programme

This paper[1] uses a piece of the investigation *Em tempos de reaprender o método fônico – algumas problematizações sobre o programa de formação docente – Tempo de Aprender* (Kappi, 2021)[2]. It aims to analyse the conception of language and learning in the teaching proposal for literacy in the referred course, with the National Literacy Policy (PNA) as a background (Brasil, 2019).

Tempo de Aprender programme and the Continuing Education Programme in Literacy Practices (Brasil, 2020) were developed from PNA guidelines: 'stimulation for reading and writing habits; underscoring literacy in the first grade of primary education; inclusion of motor and artistic practices; respect to particularities of specialised modalities; higher valuation of the teacher' (Brasil, 2019, p. 39), in a scenery of disputes and ideological clashes. This programme was instituted in the Decree n. 280 of 19th Feb. 2020 (Brasil, 2020) by Secretary of Literacy in the Ministry of Education (MEC).

PNA, instituted in the Decree n. 9,765 of 11th Apr. 2019, was a MEC's initiative to implement programmes and actions designed to 'promote reading and writing skills', based on two main parameters: 'successful experiences' and 'scientific evidence.'

PNA is based on this proposal of 'scientific progress,' relating this progress to education quality in the country. Considering this aspect PNA *Caderno* draws on results from external evaluations to justify its elaboration, showing problems in teaching and learning of reading, writing and mathematics. As a solution, it proposes a cognitive science as grounds for state-funded reading and writing programmes in Brazil. Objectives of the programme, along with the promise of 'higher reading and writing programmes,' include Targets 5 and 9 for the 2014-24 National Literacy Policy (PNE) (Brasil, 2014). Target 5 refers to teaching reading and writing for all children up to late 3rd

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[2] This piece of study is inscribed in wider investigation entitled *A implementação da BNCC e da PNA e os efeitos nos currículos das escolas públicas da região metropolitana de Porto Alegre/RS*. It belongs to the interinstitutional research called *A implementação da BNCC e os efeitos nos currículos das escolas públicas do Estado do Rio Grande do Sul* (CNPq-based) at the research group in the Studies of Curriculum, Culture and Society (NECCSO/UFRGS) in partnership with ULBRA Post-Graduation Programme (Canoas, RS).

grade in the primary school, while Target 9, achieving higher reading and writing skills for 15-year-old students or up to 93.5 percent of student population until 2015, in addition to, eradicating absolute illiteracy and decreasing the functional illiteracy rate in 50 percent until the end of the PNE term (Brasil, 2019).

PNA emphasises historic and normative marks concerning the Emenda Constitucional n. 59/2009, which turns four- to five-year-old children education compulsory (Brasil, 2009). The Base Nacional Comum Curricular (Brasil, 2017), as a historic mark, takes as a reference the excerpt referring to consolidation of literacy in the first two grades in the primary school education, and Spelling in the third grade (Brasil, 2019). While PNA guiding document notes it is necessary to bolster literacy process at the first grade and preparing for literacy in preschool context, we leave fluent reading, comprehension of texts and spelling for the second grade in the primary school (Caldeira, 2023).

Taking these actions, from PNA (Brasil, 2019), MEC, by Secretary of Literacy (SEALF), in 2020 offered the Course of Continuing Education in Literacy Practices, from *Tempo de Aprender* programme (Brasil, 2020), aiming to implement and spread *paramount* cognitive sciences' contributions for literacy throughout the state-funded education system.

Contextualising *Tempo de Aprender* programme

PNA is a document guided reconstruction of school curricula for literacy and so a curricular base for teacher education in *Tempo de Aprender* programme. We understand the designed curriculum as '[…] a battleground of meanings and identities, marked by dispute among different groups to shape its hegemony and legitimation […] In the curriculum we produce and define what to be taught or what is worth being learned' (Pinho, 2006, p. 18).

From this perspective, we consider the curricular policy for literacy PNA lately applied takes teacher education as important investment (Caldeira, 2023). In this respect, it is necessary to take the curriculum from a poststructuralist perspective, 'as a battlefield for meanings […] taking it as a cultural artefact, thus inseparable from historic conditions producing it and it produced' (Pinho, 2006, p. 18).

As to justify the cognitive science of reading[3] as a set of relevant knowledge for literacy, from the 'explicit and systematic teaching of grapheme–phoneme relations as a way to guarantee the teaching of reading and writing' (Caldeira, 2023, p. 7), PNA points out that Brazilian failure in literacy occurs because the country does not develop policies based upon scientific evidence to teach reading and writing (Brasil, 2019; Caldeira, 2023).

With these evidence as a way of expressing its 'innovating character,' PNA proposed guidelines[4] to guarantee clear comprehension of policy conceptional elements to avoid imprecision and mistakes in reading or writing. Another important step policymakers considered is definition of principles for

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[3] Interdisciplinary field studying mind tend its relationship with the brain, as cognitive psychology and cognitive neuroscience (Brasil, 2019).

[4] Stimulation for reading and writing habits; underscoring literacy in the first grade in primary school; inclusion of motor and artistic practices; respect to particularities of specialised modalities; higher valuation of the teacher.

making literacy policy more effective. Furthermore, PNA provides six essential components for the literacy process to be successful: phonemic awareness, systematic phonics instruction, oral reading fluency, vocabulary development, reading comprehension, and text production. The first five 'essential' components were already proposed in reports like National Reading Panel and *Educação de Qualidade*, by the Cearense Committee for Elimination of School Illiteracy, being incorporated to PNA (Brasil, 2019). PNA incorporated the 'text production' component because of recent research in the field of literacy (Brasil, 2019).

Tempo de Aprender is an education programme in the field of literacy designed to face main causes of failure in reading and writing in the country, which include: '[...] *deficiency in teacher education* [...]; *shortage of material and resourses for students and teachers* [...]; *deficiency in attending teachers*; *and low incentive for performance of literacy teachers and educational administrators*' (Brasil, 2020, emphasis added). It is online[5], is intended for teachers[6], educational coordinators, schoolmasters, and teaching assistants, and is designed for preschool and 1st- and 2nd-grade state-funded, state, municipal, and district primary schools (Brasil, 2020).

Upon analysing *Tempo de Aprender* programme, we have observed the intention to overthrow earlier created proposals, pointing out that they were not enough to guarantee sheer reading and writing skills. There is no mention of the many ruptures and gaps coming from discontinuity of other programmes like Pacto Nacional pela Alfabetização na Idade Certa (PNAIC) (Brasil, 2012)[7], and Pró-Letramento (Brasil, 2007)[8]. Furthermore, it overlooks that external evaluation rates fail to demonstrate, in its wholeness, the process of reading and writing in Brazil by pointing them as evidence of failure in literacy teaching.

Causes of 'reading and writing deficiencies', *Tempo de Aprender* programme presented, are transformed in four axles shaping the course content: *continuing education for literacy professionals*; *teaching support for literacy*; *improvement of literacy evaluations*; and *higher valuation of the teacher* (Brasil, 2020), we mention below.

Actions and Objectives of *Axle 1 — Continuing education for literacy professionals* underscore the female teacher, seen as 'MEC most important partner' to join forces and improve literacy quality. The objective of action 1.1 *practical education for literacy teachers* is to provide teachers acquisition of knowledge, skills and strategies to help them face challenges of literacy cycle; the objective of action 1.2 *practical education for literacy administrators* is to help educational administrators give support in their schools and educational networks; and the objective of action 1.3 *interchange for literacy teachers* is to begin internationalisation process of sharing scientific evidence with literacy

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[5] The programme occurred in the first term of 2020 in the Virtual Learning Environment in MEC.

[6] In this paper we use the word female teacher because there are more female than male ones in literacy classes. We note, however, this information does not want to disregard male teachers who also work in this field.

[7] Programme MEC offered. It was a literacy teacher education designed to teach 8-year-old children up to the primary school 3rd grade. It was a formal compromise federal, state and municipal governments assumed (Brasil, 2012).

[8] Pró-Letramento was a Continuing Education Programme for initial grades in the primary school. MEC offered the programme in partnership with universities in the National Network of Continuing Education attending states and towns and cities. All teachers working in initial grades in the state-funded primary schools have participated (Brasil, 2007).

professionals, through interchanges (Brasil, 2020). It is worth noting this axle values the female teacher, placing them as the main responsible for literacy improvement.

Actions and Objectives of *Axle 2 — Teaching support for literacy* are designed for educational resourses. The online Resourse system for Literacy (*Sistema on-line de Recursos para a Alfabetização - SORA*) is an action offering materials to help teachers plan classes. It aims to democratise access to adequate educational resourses for learning to read and write based on scientific evidence. It is activities designed for the teacher based on 'successful' practices applied in other contexts. The subitem 2.1 refers to a platform for access to materials and models of activities for reading and writing. The subitem 2.2, *Financial support for teaching assistants and funding for schools*, is designed for payment of outlay with teaching assistants and funding for school and for student. This action intends to improve the former *Mais Alfabetização* programme.[9] In subitem 2.3, *Reform of the National Teacher Book Programme* (*PNLD*) aims to improve quality and adapt PNLD materials for children's education and literacy to later evidence of cognitive science of reading (Brasil, 2020).

Actions and Objectives of *Axle 3 — Improvement of literacy evaluations* enable us to observe whether evaluations are adequate, considering 'essential' components for reading and writing, '*from the perspective of education based upon scientific evidence, to achieve higher educational indicators and guarantee quality education for all*' (Brasil, 2019, p. 20, emphasis added).

In Actions and Objectives of *Axle 4 — Higher valuation of the teacher*, the principle ruling the basis of actions and objectives is merit award, whom would be benefited professionals producing the highest performance in systematised evaluations of reading and writing skills, especially 2nd-grade students in primary schools. The performance would be checked by comparison of goals achieved in every school, through an external valuation of the performance of 2nd-grade students in primary schools, and results achieved would be the markers for schoolmasters, coordinators and teachers to receive the award (Brasil, 2020). The action to measure the students' performance would be by a partnership between the Secretary of Literacy and the National Institute for Educational Studies and Research (INEP). According to the course, it is a way to encourage schools to promote students' improvement. The action aims to improve the learning of reading and writing, giving financial incentives for teachers, schoolmasters and educational coordinators in the 1st- and 2nd-grade primary school who achieve good performance in reading and writing (Brasil, 2020).

In the research, we have analysed as an empirical material: Axle 1 — *Continuing Education for Literacy Professionals with emphasis on the action Practical Education for Literacy Teachers* (subitem 1.1); and Axle 2 — Educational Support for Literacy with emphasis on the action Online Resourse System for Literacy (SORA) (subitem 2.1), which belong to the written material.

We have identified important possibilities for analysis in these two axles, once the female teacher receives a guiding book through them: in Axle 1 subitem 1.1, there is a guiding book for the practice of teaching, with all orientations for the female teacher to work in class. As we can note below, it is an educational standard homogeneous proposal with no space for the teacher's planning

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[9] *Mais Alfabetização* programme was based upon the *Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional* (Law n. 9,394, 20. Dec. 1996). The programme was thought as a MEC strategy to encourage and support schools in teaching regular 1st- and 2nd-grade primary-school students to read and write.

or joyfulness; while in Axle 2 subitem 2.1, there is a structured teaching programme providing teaching resources for the female teacher.

Following PNA guidelines, the continuing education course designed for preschool and 1st- and 2nd-grade primary school in state-funded networks considers phonics instruction and master of alphabetic principle as a scientific methodologic proposal based upon studies of science, especially cognitive science of reading.

The course is divided in seven modules, the first one constituted of the general introduction of the course, and other six ones called *learning to listen*, *alphabetic knowledge*, *oral reading fluency*, *vocabulary development*, and *text production*. All these modules correspond to 'essential' components for literacy in PNA.

Modules of 'essential' components are organised in the following way: written materials and videos with educational orientations on the website explain the conceptual part of each component and written material for educational strategies and additional teaching resources. In this study, we have analysed written materials, because video analysis would involve other ways of investigation. Contents of every module are worked from the respective component and in the end a questionnaire is provided for participants to assess the course and receive a 30-hour certificate of completion.

Theoretical and methodological tools: a discussion

Considering that the establishment of this teacher education programme was shrouded in a process of power relations, being non-consensual product and producer of political orientations for literacy practices, once its construction was crossed by contexts involving specific texts and subjects, linked and conducted by a national literacy policy and complex relationships established during its production, we used studies of public policy cycle by Stephen Ball to examine how political discourses work, privileging someone's ideas, themes and talks over others (Rosa, 2019).

The approach of the policy cycle Ball proposed enables critical analysis of the educational programmes and policies from their initial formulation until their 'implementation' in the context of practices and their effects (Mainardes, 2006).

Ball and Bowe (1994, *apud* Mainardes, 2006) have introduced the policy cycle as 'a continuous cycle constituted of three main contexts: the context of influence, the context of text production, and the context of practice' (Ball; Bowe, 1994, *apud* Mainardes, 2006, p. 50), which are interrelated with no temporal or sequential dimension; thus, they are not linear stages.

To understand this context of the policy cycle and take a critical look at different contexts of production in *Tempo de Aprender* programme, we highlighted Rezende and Baptista (2015) studies, in which the authors explain the contexts, considering elements characterising them in an inter-relational network.

> [...] It is in the *context of influence* that interest groups and social networks work in and around political parties, government and legislative process, seeking to get support for their arguments and legitimation for their concepts and solutions proposed for social problems. They are the result of disputes and agreement by groups acting in different places of text

production. Thus, political texts not necessarily have clarity and internal coherence, and must be read in relation to the specific time and place of their production. The *context of practice* is pointed out as an arena of conflicts and contestation, which involves interpreting and translating texts into reality as they are seen by 'readers' (Rezende; Baptista, 2015, p. 3, emphasis added).

For Mainardes (2006), these contexts provide arenas, places and interest groups, and each one involves disputes and clashes, while political texts are the result of disputes and agreement. In this sense, it is worth noting such groups acting in different places of text production compete for the control of political representations Mainardes (2006).

The construction of *Tempo de Aprender* programme has drawn on agents from the federal government allied to the ideas defended at that time, allied to PNA (Brasil, 2019). This shows that in the context of influence, there is decision-making over another, since interest groups legitimate their arguments proposing 'solutions for literacy problems.'

We have here pointed out three major contexts of influence for PNA constitution (Brasil, 2019): the National Reading Panel (2000), which chose few of research literature of literacy, using only research of experimental psychology based on 'scientific evidence' with systematic teaching of phonics instruction (Morais, 2020); the final report *Alfabetização Infantil: os novos caminhos* (Cardoso-Martins *et al.,* 2003) by a group of scientists at the request of the Parliament Committee of Education and Culture under the justification of 'absence' in debates in the field of literacy in Brazil; and the document *Aprendizagem Infantil: uma abordagem da neurociência, economia e psicologia cognitiva* the Brazilian Academy of Science published to underpin the report thesis *Alfabetização Infantil: os novos caminhos* (Cardoso-Martins *et al.,* 2003). In both reports, the phonics method is explicitly held. As we have noted, the context of influence for policymaking becomes evident, since the ones who oversee the management act according to their own political and ideological interests (Mortatti, 2019).

Much the same as the context of influence, the context of the text is constituted in space of disputes, agreement and negotiation among groups, being a space where discourses are constructed and produced (Mainardes, 2006). Thus, it is interesting to note at this moment reflections of Mortatti (2019) highlighting the antidemocratic authoritarian character for PNA production, a guiding text for *Tempo de Aprender* programme. For the author, Federal Constitution principles (1988) are broken, since making of this context of text production failed to enable participation of teachers and academic representatives, being administered by proxies of MEC internal instances.

This study of document analysis considers 'political texts' as action texts creating repercussions in the practice context. We have noted that this study does not analyse the practice context because of time to accomplish it. However, we have highlighted that Interdisciplinary Group of Research in Public Education (GIPEP)[10] (that has conducted this research about PNA reception in a town in Rio Grande do Sul) showed that effective movement for implementation of the policy failed to be

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[10] This group belongs to the National Research 'Alfabetização em Rede: uma investigação sobre o ensino remoto da alfabetização na pandemia Covid-19 e da recepção da PNA pelos docentes da Educação Infantil e Anos Iniciais do EF.' This researching network has outlined PNA implementation and the context guiding the teaching organisation of literacy during the online classes in different Brazilian regions.

realised, even with compliance with the policy in the education system of the town. Furthermore, the research has revealed many teachers had disagreed from the homogeneous character of the proposal (Porto *et al*., 2021).

Even if policies' authors outline some limits and meanings, which result in certain actions from those ones who practise them, 'policies […] are subject to interpretation and then to be "recreated"' (Mainardes, 2006, p. 53). The meanings authors attribute to policies are influenced by history and lived experiences, in addition to interests every group may provide. Thus, Bowe *et al*. (1992, *apud* Mainardes, 2006) note 'authors of political texts cannot control meanings of their texts. Parts may be rejected, selected, ignored, intentionally misunderstood' (Bowe *et al*., 1992, p. 22, *apud* Mainardes, 2006, p. 53), as it seems to have occurred with PNA.

Thus, we focus on policy cycle, starting with the context of influence and of text, since these were important policy cycle contexts as methodological tools, in so far as they allowed for a critical and contextualised analysis of political trajectory, enabling contribution for understanding process dynamics and dimension which involved production of the *Tempo de Aprender* programme — Course of Continuous Education in Literacy Practices.

In this analytical documental approach, belief that is taken for granted is ceased, so that the familiar becomes strange. It implies questioning our own assumptions and the way we make meaning of things (Gill, 2002). Following this understanding, we could consider that this analytical perspective allows us to show how much uneasiness about the examined document historically and contextually affects analyses. Thus, certain unsatisfaction, certain instability, certain doubt, certain suspicion of what was given in *Tempo de Aprender* programme were important movements for document analysis.

Drawing on this conceptional and methodological tool, this research will seek to problematise *Tempo de Aprender* programme with focus on the Course of Continuous Education in Literacy Practices — in particular the action reasoning out Axle 1 — *Continuing Education for Literacy Professionals* and Axle 2 — *Teaching Support for Literacy*, both belonging to *Tempo de Aprender* programme.

Considering both analytical axles, in which we identify important possibilities of analysis, we examine the guiding documents of *Tempo de Aprender* programme with analytic focus on teaching to read and write, based on 'scientific evidence.' In the analysis, we have sought to problematise the conception of language and learning in the educational proposal in the referred course.

Analysing this material, we have identified recurring aspects such as hierarchisation of knowledge of smaller units to larger ones in the process of learning to read and write; standardisation of phonics instruction as a teaching proposal; and motor training to improve spelling.

Thus, upon analysis of axles, which made up the empirical material of the research, we considered two relevant analytical topics: Where are the study phonological awareness, promotion of metalinguistic curiosity and playfulness, which were current in the literacy education courses for teachers? and where is reflection about the literacy united to practices of reading and writing in academic productions in Brazil?

Hereinafter, we provide analyses corresponding to the first axle, where we will note lack of work with phonological awareness, playfulness and promotion of metalinguistic curiosity in the learning conception of *Tempo de Aprender* programme.

Where are the study phonological awareness, promotion of metalinguistic curiosity and playfulness, which were current in the literacy education courses for teachers?

We start with a fun of the nursery rhyme 'Cadê o toucinho que estava aqui?' (something like 'Where's the bacon that was here?), since the beginning, to point out that we seek, in the proposal of the Course of Continuing Education in Literacy Practices, achievements realised in the field of literacy in Brazil, and that, in the analysis of the proposed course, made invisible: Where are the study phonological awareness, promotion of metalinguistic curiosity and playfulness, which were current in the literacy education courses for teachers, as PNAIC (Brasil, 2012) e o Pró-letramento (Brasil, 2007) previously mentioned?

In these silenced education courses, we have found that the teacher education course of *Tempo de Aprender* programme proposes exclusively the phonics instruction for the learning of the written alphabet system.

Such teaching proposal has a straight relationship with PNA context (Brasil, 2019), having standardisation of the phonics instruction as an education proposal. Thus, in the course, work through phonics instruction is foregrounded, because for children to appropriate the writing system they first need to learn correspondences between grapheme and phoneme. In this educational proposal, children must follow a pattern established in the learning strategy: training about relationships between grapheme and phoneme, overlooking their metalinguistic curiosity.

Considering interest in examining demands by a group sharing conservative ideas — phonics instruction advocates —, the teacher education course calls into question research considering the local space and begins to cleave to results of research not approaching the Brazilian nation; on the contrary, backed up in international studies produced in the United States, England, Australia, Israel and Finland. This positioning scheduled the silencing of many research voices about children's education in primary schools in forty years.

Thus, the attempt to determine the meaning of literacy/reading and writing '[…] enters the contention for the real field of literacy. However, as one knows, this attempt does not occur with no problematisation, clash and resistance' (Caldeira, 2023, p. 11). For Soares (2018), in this educational conception, phonics instruction — synthetic method, there is an 'assumption that for the child to learn a writing system, s/he depends on carefully and artificially constructed external stimulation with the sole purpose of encouraging him/her to appropriate the writing technology' (Soares, 2018, p. 19). Still for her, the synthetic methods, not unlike analytic methods, 'are inscribed in the same teaching paradigm and psychological paradigm: associationism[11]' (Soares, 2018, p. 19-20).

As we may observe, necessary political and teaching clashes were inflamed during PNA relevant period, and PNA was lately revoked by the Decree n. 11.556, de 2023 (Brasil, 2023), which instituted *Compromisso Nacional Criança Alfabetizada* programme.

Thus, considering frailties — hierarchisation of knowledge from smaller units to larger ones in the process of learning to read and write; standardisation of phonics instruction as a teaching

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[11] From the perspective of associationism, recognising phonemes (sound segments) would be 'the miraculous key' to guarantee the association of them with their pairs, graphemes (written segments), and thus for the success of literacy. This theoretical perspective overrides the role of the written notation and the complex unstable play of sound segments in the writing system appropriation (Morais, 2006).

proposal; and motor training to improve spelling — current in the proposal of the course, we have selected two modules to analyse: *Aprendendo a Ouvir* and *Conhecimento Alfabético*, since both were about appropriation of the writing system.

Aprendendo a Ouvir module — distinguishing sounds

Aprendendo a Ouvir module is divided in nine classes (*Distinguishing sounds*; *Word awareness*; *Syllable awareness*; *Alliteration awareness*; *Rhyme awareness*; *Separating sounds*; *Segmenting sounds*; and *Replacing sounds*), which were thought to promote in children phonemic awareness, '*that consist in knowledge that phonemes relate to graphemes, in other words, that letters represent speech sounds*' (Brasil, 2019, p. 33, emphasis added), as one of the six 'essential' components proposed for literacy in PNA (Brasil, 2019). From this module to the present paper, we will note the *Discriminating sounds* class.

The learning strategy of this class aims to teach the child to distinguish sounds and identify the tone and position of the sound source. In the class guiding material, there are orientations for the teacher to show how an activity works. The order for this demonstration is initially ask a child to produce a kind of sound. In this case, it was clapping hands, and with her eyes closed the teacher shows where the sound comes from. Next she does the same with the children, using other sound resources, such as a whistle or stamping of their feet. The sequence may be noted in the activity called *Distinguishing sounds* (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Learning Strategy Distinguishing Sounds. *Aprendendo a Ouvir* Module

Source: Brasil (2020, p. 7).

This learning strategy is targeted on preschool and 1st grade classes under the justification that this age range needs to develop these skills before learning the writing system. We have noted this learning strategy in tune with phonics instruction work and research in neurosciences current in PNA (Brasil, 2019).

According to PNA neuroscience research (Brasil, 2019), there is an area of the brain called 'Visual Word Form Area (AFVP), situated on the left occipitotemporal region, [...] where regions of visual processes are connected with regions of phonological processes [...]' (Brasil, 2019, p. 26). As stated in neuroscience research, this area specialises in recognising letters as one learns to read and write, 'therefore, it is ideal to answer to the process of reading and writing' (Brasil, 2019, p. 26).

In this sense, we have noted the articulation of the education strategy designed for literacy with the cognitive science of reading, once they aim the development of visuomotor and audio-motor skills, linguistic, cognitive and brain processes involved in teaching and learning skills of reading and writing.

It is interesting to observe the importance given to brain processes, such as maturation, since 'one believes that to learn to read and write learners had to develop psychoneurological and perceptual-motor skills' (Morais, 2005, p.39), as in the preparatory period.[12] Thus, readiness served as a parameter, because students needed to present a 'readiness' state in skills such as: 'fine and gross motor skills, visual discrimination, auditory discrimination, visual memory, balance, laterality, etc.' (Morais, 2005, p. 39) to master the written code, as writing was not considered a system of notation.

As psychogenesis of written language has shown, to understand the System of Alphabetic Writing (SEA) the student must take account of SEA conceptual aspects. In this case, s/he must deal with each letter as a kind of equivalent substitute objects (as P, p, P, p are the same letter), apart from analysing the serial order of letters and make correspondence, term by term, among written and spoken segments. She or her must understand in the 'alphabetic principle' that in our language letters replace small sound segments or phonemes, not reducing to memorising which letters replace which phonemes (Morais, 2012).

Thus, according to the Figure 1 — Learning Strategy Distinguishing Sounds – *Aprendendo a Ouvir* Module, the learning strategy proposed in *Tempo de Aprender* programme refers to the work with phonemic awareness, one of the six 'essential' components for PNA literacy to support 'good curriculums' and 'good practices' of literacy based on scientific evidence (Brasil, 2019). As it may be noted in the provided learning strategy, mastering phonemes seems to be the first step to achieve the so-called alphabetic principle, and being able to distinguish where the sound came from and who produced it seems to be a strategy worth noting for this work.

We know that developing phonological skills, including distinguishing sounds, is significant for literacy. However, for Morais (2012), such condition is not enough for a child to achieve literacy

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[12] Lourenço Filho (1934), idealiser of the proposal in the '60s and '70s, would consider experimental research 'confirmed' the hypothesis about existence of a level of maturity — subject to measures — as requisite for learning to read and write in the preparatory period and *Testes ABC* (Mortatti, 2000). *Testes ABC* were *diagnoses* to check maturity necessary for learning to read and write applied previously to getting into the 1st grade primary school (Mortatti, 2000).

hypothesis. He further remembers that 'achieving a literacy hypothesis is not the same as being literate' (Morais, 2012, p. 91), therefore it becomes hazardous to work with the idea of phonological awareness as prediction for literacy success. For Morais (2020), we would be feeding a mentality like that of those advocates of the preparatory period and readiness tests, and we would ask children to grow a particular kind of phonological awareness to have the right to literacy.

Another aspect to be considered is the fact that this learning strategy of distinguishing sounds (*Aprendendo a ouvir* Module) fails to provide the playfulness dimension in learning in the children's education and 1st grade, as the female teacher guides the child in all her/his actions, and before that she explains and shows: *I'm going to close my eyes and point with my finger to the place from where the sound came and tell what produced it*. In the children's turn the teacher says: *Close your eyes and only open them when I will tell you. When you listen the sound point to the place. 'Where the sound came from,' 'what did produce it.'*

In this manner, we have noted that the 'class' proposal fails to reflect upon the oral parts of words, that could in its designed space — children's education/preschool and 1st grade — provide playfulness with sounds. For Morais,

> [...] the skill of identifying rhymes, seen before as 'more complex' for Brazilian children (than finding words with the same initial syllable, cf. Cardoso-Martins, 1991), develops easily and quickly when fun with songs, nursery rhymes or phonological games are developed in classroom (Morais, 2012, p. 90).

Consequently, we further agree with Morais (2012) it is necessary to overcome the reductionist approach that 'children should reflect upon oral parts of words without seeing their written forms' (Morais, 2012, p. 92).

This learning strategy — distinguishing sounds — intends to develop phonemic awareness from 'auditory discrimination.' This fact has made us to question on the systematic learning following these principles in teacher course *Tempo de Aprender* programme, starting with productivity of the activity in the context of the contemporary school, through the little interactive way it is conducted. Considering that preschool and 1st-grade children are strongly influence by playfulness, this proposal might begin with plays with words, promoting lived experiences to challenge the child to reflect upon words in a playful way (Morais, 2019a).

Alphabetic Knowledge Module — naming letters

The Alphabetic Knowledge module is divided in six classes: *Naming letters and its relationship — letter–sound*; *Spelling rules*; *Reading words*; *Reading words with spelling signals*; *Reading sentences*; and *Creating words*, which consist in knowing letter names and their sounds. In the course it is hold that *knowing these rules will enable students to be proficient in reading and writing* (Brasil, 2020, emphasis added). From this module to the present paper, we will note the analysis of the *Naming letters* class.

The learning strategy of this class, *Naming letters* (Alphabetic Knowledge Module), continues previously-learned skills, i.e., when the children would learn to segment and distinguish sounds, the

following step would be to relate speech sounds with written graphemes. The activity begins with the female teacher explaining the alphabet is made up of 26 letters and that day the class would learn one, the letter 'a.'

In the learning strategy the order is that the teacher shows the cardboard with the letter 'a', indicates its sound, provides a card with the character starting with 'a,' in this case the 'Bee,' and writes the letter 'a' in the air and on the board to teach its graphic form. Finally, she reads a line of Paulo Briguet's poem 'A abelha amarela,' emphasising the sound of the letter a (/a/). Such sequence may be observed on the activity called *Naming letters* (Figure 2).

Figure 2: *Naming Letters* Strategy. Alphabetic knowledge module.

Source: Brasil (2020, p. 67).

After all these actions by the female teacher, the orientation is that she repeats it with the children. In this second moment, the activity consists of the teacher asking the children: '*what letter is this?*', '*which is its sound?*', '*let's write the letter in the air?*' This pattern of activity, in which letters and taught gradually and in isolation, follows with all letters of the alphabet.

In this strategy, the guiding principles of the cognitive science of reading are current in PNA (Brasil, 2019), in which reading and writing must be taught in an explicit systematic way. Thus, following PNA (Brasil, 2019), it is assumed that 'reading must be an object of explicit learning in its different dimensions and that, to achieve a good reader's skills, the activity must be regularly and frequently repeated so that it becomes automatic' (Brasil, 2019, p. 26).

We have also noted relevance given to explicit teaching of reading through phonemic awareness and word decoding, resulting in automatic word recognition. In this literacy approach, it is as if skills were gradually articulated in a way that the beginning reader becomes more and more 'proficient' in reading, once 'automatising skills of word recognition frees up room in her/his brain for understanding processes' (Brasil, 2019, p. 28).

However, there are many questions contradicting relationships between sounds and letters when they are worked equally and in isolation with vowels and consonants. For Lemle, when teaching the relationship between grapheme and phoneme, the teach 'must be able to explain that the position of the letter in the word must be considered for the correspondence between sounds and letters' (Lemle, 2005, p. 20). Imagine that the child has learned to identify the letter 'l' and pronounce it according to a model in which its position is not considered. S/he may question, for example, why [anzol] ends with [l] rather than [u] as we pronounce it [anzou]. The teacher may mistakenly correct the way the child speaks, convincing her/him s/he was pronouncing it the wrong way, which would be a mistake for the author.

> Telling people they speak badly is a language mistake, human disrespect and is politically wrong. It is a language mistake, once it ignores the fact that sound units are affected by its environment, i.e. neighbour sounds affect one another. Human disrespect because it demeans the person is qualified as someone who makes a mistake. Politically wrong because when you demean someone's or a community's linguistic self-esteem you contribute to frighten them (Lemle, 2005, p. 20).

We also note that in this module, the child is taught to name and write alphabet letters in isolation, as if letters and words were not written in the school and familiar everyday lives, and displayed on signs, posters and many other spaces where children live. Ferreiro and Teberosky (1999), in their study, provide a critique of learning proposals that do not understand children normally get into the literate world. For them

> [...] it is quite difficult to imagine a 4-5-year-old child, who lives in a town or city where s/he necessarily finds written texts anywhere (in their plays, in posters, in her/his clothes, on the TV, etc.), knows the nature of such cultural object before being 6 years old and meeting a teacher. It becomes quite difficult to imagine, knowing what we know about children of that age: children who question about every phenomenon they observe, who ask the most difficult questions to answer, who build theories about the origin of mankind and universe (Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1999, p. 29.

Considering this, we can say this learning proposal underestimates a child's potential metalinguistic reflection. Thinking that to learn children must go the described educational sequence of coming to the text at last is being unfamiliar with today's children, who draw on different devices in search of answers to their doubts.

The highlight given to the activity is to follow the model from learning routines. For experts advocating the cognitive science of reading in PNA (Brasil, 2019), such learning routines 'are essential for students to engage in literacy activities, as they promote feelings of autonomy, belonging, competence and meaning' (Brasil, 2019, p. 32). At the same time, for them, 'they [students] give opportunity for teachers to note and listen to students while they are learning' (Brasil, 2019, p. 32), being an essential component for learning to read and write.

In face of this, we agree with Caldeira (2023) as she shows how these supports guiding the teacher course in *Tempo de Aprender* programme, considering PNA teaching conception, 'intend to establish the meaning that literacy corresponds to a coding and decoding technique, initial task that, lately, will produce children able to learn other things by reading' (Caldeira, 2023, p. 9).

In our analysis, we have noted that there is no emphasis to the proposal of language interaction in literacy, considering Smolka's 1989 studies, in which the 'text (discourse) is the language meaning unit and should be taken as the object of reading and writing, establishing the text as the learning content, which enables real interlocution between the teacher and students [...] to read and write' (Mortatti, 2006, p. 11).

For Mortatti (2000), themes of linguistic interactionism approaches 'literacy as a discursive process, focusing on learning relationships as essential in this process and moving the discussion from *how* to *for what* to teach to read and write' (Mortatti, 2000, p. 275).

Smolka's studies 1993[13] point out that 'pedagogically [...] it is essential to note and consider situations and conditions in which one processes and produces school information about writing. (Who uses writing in the classroom? What for? How? Why?) (Smolka, 1993, p. 61). So we emphasise relevance of the work with phonological awareness involving the relationship metalinguistics–playfulness, in which students may understand principles of the system of notation of the alphabetic writing playing with words and texts and sharing their learning with other students.

It is important, therefore, to return to the initial question entitling this section: where are the study phonological awareness, promotion of metalinguistic curiosity and playfulness, which were current in the literacy education courses for teachers?

Closing Remarks

From the conducted analysis, *Tempo de Aprender* programme is inscribed in a logic marked by tension between continuity and discontinuity of theoretical conceptions about the field of literacy in political disputes. Conceptions of language and learning in literacy public policies seem to compete to be more effective imposing one only line of study, which challenges the role to guarantee the constitutional right of schools and teachers to choose methodologies they consider adequate and necessary for literacy classes (Morais, 2019b).

According to the conception applied in the course, the alphabet as a code impedes reflecting upon the way how a child learns and, thus, theoretical explanations about how this process occurs are not formulated, provides only a how-to guide. This form of learning also impedes reflecting upon literacy practices, challenging studies brought to Brazil by Magda Soares and theorised by other authors, in which notes that learning to read and write is linked to what is called literacy, taken not only as teaching to read and write, but also spelling (Soares, 2020).

While there is an apparent playful version in the learning proposal for teaching the phonics instruction, strategies teachers 'would use' in classroom emphasise repetition of activities in a fixed

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[13] The first edition of Ana Luiza Bustamante Smolka's *A criança na fase inicial da escrita: a alfabetização como processo discursivo* was in 1989. However, in this paper we will use the 5th edition (1993), once this was the edition we had access.

order, failing to provide any leeway to make the proposal meaningful for children. Metalinguistic curiosity is gradually silenced, in so far as the course focuses on education, failing to value the learning process.

Thus, we point to Cardoso-Martins's 1995 studies about the important role phonological awareness could perform in learning to read and write, warning that a purely phonological strategy is not enough for a complete development of reading and writing. It is not enough nor achieves one of the key objectives of the school, that is 'enabling students to participate in various social practices using reading and writing (literacy) in social life in an ethical, critical and democratic way' (Rojo, 2009, p. 107).

Therefore, as Morais (2019a) further notes, many children have natural curiosity about words and reflect upon words' oral parts, making relationships among letters even before writing conventionally. This curiosity may be stimulated with the kind of phonological awareness involving finding out rhymes, as Bryant *et al*. (1990, *apud* Cardoso-Martins, 1995) suggest. For them, preschool children's ability to find rhymes is related to the subsequent success in learning to read and write. From this, the child grounds her or himself in her/his ability to separate the phonological segment shared by rhyming words.

It is worth noting that studies by Cardoso-Martins and others (1995) explain that the ability to find rhymes comes from the notion of global similarity, therefore not guaranteeing spelling analysis, except when the child is already able to decode letter–sound logics.

As we have explained here, the phonological awareness helps in many other skills; therefore, the issue of this study is to critique the current phonics instruction, since in such learning conception, the proposed teaching activities are inscribed in a perspective of a repetitive and 'ritualistic' work, without a consistent linguistic base, without many possibilities of playfulness nor promotion of metalinguistic curiosity, so much present in academic studies in Brazil since the eighties.

Thus, closing the analysis, we conclude the methodology used in the proposal of the course contradicts what has been investigated and discussed since the eighties scenery that radically changed the literacy field in Brazil in terms of advance and recognition of the subject learning to read and write by her or himself.

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AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Author 1 - Author of the master's research that gave rise to this article. In this article, the first author worked on the contextualization of the *Tempo de Aprender* teacher training course, on the construction and processing of data and on their analysis and interpretation.

Author 2 – Advisor of the master's thesis. In this article, working jointly with the first author in the contextualization of the teacher training course *Tempo de Aprender* and in the analysis and interpretation of the data processed for the dissertation, as in the article the data received a different analysis from the original text of the dissertation, scrutinizing the data from the original text.

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