

LEARNING FROM THE SUBALTERN: WHAT DOES MARIA LINDALVA TEACH US ABOUT HEGEMONIC-COMMON-SENSE-IDEOLOGY AND TEXT SELECTION FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING MATERIALS?

APRENDENDO COM O SUBALTERNIZADO: O QUE MARIA LINDALVA NOS ENSINA SOBRE A IDEOLOGIA HEGEMÔNICA DO SENSO COMUM E A SELEÇÃO DE TEXTOS PARA MATERIAIS DIDÁTICOS DE INGLÊS?

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ABSTRACT

In the scope of vocational critical language teaching materials, designing lessons that meet professional requirements at public technical high schools committed with the agenda of critical education for citizenship is something that deserves attention. If, on the one hand, the Critical Literacy framework substantiates practices that engage us with social changes (LUKE; FREEBODY, 1997), promote opportunities for developing critical views over dominant ideologies, cultures, economies, institutions and political systems (TILIO, 2013, 2017), and examine our loci of enunciation in order that we unlearn our privileges and learn from the subaltern (ANDREOTTI, 2007); on the other, the lesson materials available for technical high-school courses seem not to take these premises into account, especially the latter. In order to bridge this gap, I designed a lesson unit (*Society Matters?*), aimed at technical high-school 3rd graders, wherein Maria Lindalva's autobiography, a subaltern ex-landless activist, creates opportunities for discussions over the ideals of work, effort and success that challenge hegemonic-common-sense ideology. Resorting to constructivist bricolage (DENZIN; LINCOLN, 2005) involving her video-autobiography, the language teaching unit, the memories of my pedagogic encounters with learners from 2015 to 2018, and two different lines of interpretation that were recurrently raised throughout, I examined to what extent the interpretations over Maria Lindalva's narrative reflect and refract neoliberal capitalist ideologies, thus contributing to developing critical posture, as well as to the selection of texts for critical language teaching materials. The results showed the analysis that validates Maria Lindalva's achievements may be confronted by the viewpoint of her relationship with scarcity (SANTOS, 2017), which favored learners' developing critical posture; and, finally, that it was possible to take her narrative a step further showing what Maria Lindalva teaches us about selecting texts for critical language teaching materials.

Keywords: critical literacy; hegemonic-common-sense ideology; materials design.

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RESUMO

No âmbito dos materiais didáticos para o ensino crítico e vocacional de línguas, a escrita de materiais que vão ao encontro dos objetivos profissionais no ensino público médio-técnico integrado e comprometido com a agenda da educação crítica para a formação cidadã merece devida atenção. Se, por um lado, o Letramento Crítico consubstancia práticas de engajamento com a mudança social (LUKE; FREEBODY, 1997), a promoção de oportunidades para o desenvolvimento de um olhar crítico a respeito de ideologias, culturas, economias, instituições e sistemas políticos dominantes (TILIO, 2013; 2017), e o exame de nosso locus de enunciação para que sejamos capazes de desaprender nossos lugares de privilégios e aprender com o subalternizado (ANDREOTTI, 2007); por outro lado, os materiais didáticos disponíveis para cursos técnicos de nível médio parecem não levar em consideração tais premissas, especialmente a última. Com o intuito de preencher essa lacuna, escrevi uma unidade didática (*Society Matters?*) para aprendizes do 3º ano do ensino médio-técnico, em que a autobiografia de Maria Lindalva, uma ex-ativista sem-terra subalternizada, cria oportunidades de discussão acerca dos ideais de trabalho, esforço e sucesso que desafiam a ideologia hegemônica do senso comum. Por meio da bricolagem construtivista (DENZIN; LINCOLN, 2005) envolvendo sua vídeo-autobiografia, a referida unidade didática, as memórias dos meus encontros pedagógicos com os aprendizes de 2015 a 2018, e duas linhas de interpretação que foram levantadas no seu decorrer, examinei em que medida os discursos a respeito da narrativa de Maria Lindalva refletem e refratam ideologias do capitalismo neoliberal, contribuindo com o desenvolvimento da postura crítica e a seleção de textos para materiais didáticos de ensino de línguas. Os resultados demonstraram que as análises que validam as realizações de Maria Lindalva podem ser confrontadas com o ponto de vista de sua relação com a escassez (SANTOS, 2017), o que favoreceu o desenvolvimento da postura crítica dos aprendizes; e, finalmente, que foi possível avançar em sua narrativa para mostrar o que Maria Lindalva nos ensina sobre seleção de textos para unidades didáticas destinadas ao ensino crítico de línguas.

Palavras-chave: Letramento crítico; Ideologia hegemônica do senso comum; escrita de materiais didáticos.

INTRODUCTION

How to design English language teaching materials that meet the requirements of high school vocational courses committed with the agenda of critical education for citizenship? I have been trying to answer this question by means of the lesson units I have produced since 2010, when I became a language teacher, materials designer and researcher of a public federal institute of technical education. In the process of producing and applying these lessons, my relationship with Critical Literacy and Multiliteracies frameworks seem to be strengthening along the passing years.

On the one hand, multiliteracies pedagogy brings to my practice the dimension of the teacher as a designer of learning environments by means of any mindful mixture and organization of the knowledge processes (COPE; KALANTZIS,

2015). On the other hand, the critical literacy agenda impels me to engage with social change (LUKE; FREEBODY, 1997), to examine my locus of enunciation and the connections between language, power and knowledge while unlearning my privileges (as a white-male-christian-heterosexual-intellectual teacher, materials designer and researcher) in order to learn from the subaltern (ANDREOTTI, 2007), and to design materials that promote opportunities for developing critical views over dominant ideologies, cultures, economies, institutions and political systems (TILIO, 2017) so that learners are able to question and resignify naturalized ideological power relations (TILIO, 2013, 2017).

Given the educational context I bring along (3rd year learners attending Environmental and Agricultural-Livestock High School Technical courses), as well as my theoretical affiliations (especially the ones devoted to issues of ideology and learning from the subaltern), the general objective of this article is to reflect and discuss how the pedagogic contact between my lower-middle-class learners and the autobiography of a subaltern narrator may be powerful in developing critical language teaching units inasmuch as her narrative challenges hegemonic-common-sense ideology.

The narrator is the ex-landless Brazilian activist Maria Lindalva, whose video strip went viral on Facebook and other connected social media networks in 2015, receiving positive comments and more than 15.900 shares by users of different political orientations¹. The footage of her autobiography is disclosed in the documentary *Human* (extended version, vol. 1), by Yann Arthus-Bertrand (2015), which can be fully accessed on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vdb4XGVTHkE>. The film proposes to draw “a portrait of nowadays Humanity”² by means of first-person stories from people of 60 different countries, regardless of their economic classes.

To prepare for this encounter, I designed a unit bearing a sequence of activities³ aimed to lead them progressively into her biography. By observing the great circulation potential of Maria Lindalva’s narrative on connected social media networks, I integrated her video footage to the unit and wrote the sequence of activities in the light of Cope and Kalantzis’s (2015) “8 knowledge processes of learning by design pedagogy”, whose goal was to engage learners’ critical interaction

1. For more information about the referred post, visit: <https://bit.ly/2knnO56>.

2. Information available at: <https://www.youtube.com/user/HUMANthemovie2015/about>. Access on June 17th, 2019.

3. The material is a teaching unit entitled *Society Matters?*, which I designed for students attending the 3rd year of Technical High School – Environmental Studies and Livestock courses. It can be accessed on <https://bit.ly/2SSMWjt>. The sequence that comprises Maria Lindalva’s autobiography ranges from page 2 to 4.

with social discourses that challenged hegemonic common-sense ideology. In the unit, the pedagogic sequencing around Maria Lindalva's autobiography covered both language teaching and usage analysis. Firstly, it appeared amidst other narratives of anti-hegemonic narrators (*experiencing the known and the new*); then, it enabled us to study some language choices she uses to narrate her life episodes (*conceptualizing by naming and theorizing*); later, it gave rise to some critical analyses on how she represents herself through language (*analyzing functionally and critically*); finally, it led learners to produce their own video-autobiographies based on how Maria Lindalva organized hers (*applying appropriately and creatively*).

After four years (from 2015 to 2018) teaching English through Maria Lindalva's autobiography with different learners of the same age group (16-18 year-olds) attending the Environmental and Livestock-Agricultural courses I mentioned before, I intend to discuss three aspects that I observed throughout: a) how her narrative challenges hegemonic-common-sense ideology without relinquishing its network capillarity; b) what lines of interpretation on her narrative my students and I had and exchanged during our encounters; and c) how these lines of interpretation may help other material designers to select texts for their critical language teaching materials. To accomplish this goal, I will firstly explain what I understand as hegemonic-common-sense ideology; then, I will analyze the subtitles of her video footage in order to show to what extent Maria Lindalva's narrative reflects and refracts (BAKHTIN, 2011) current hegemonic discourses; and, finally, I will examine how these discourses reflected and refracted by Maria Lindalva's narrative contribute to text selection throughout the process of designing critical language teaching materials.

For these reflections, I assume an affiliation to an Applied Linguistics (AL) committed to a mode of creating intelligibility over social problems wherein language plays a central role, known as *INdisciplinary Applied Linguistics (IAL)* (MOITA LOPES, 2006). Accordingly, I agree with the epistemological idea that every knowledge is political and situated (MOITA LOPES, 2006; PENNYCOOK, 2001), as well as with Rojo's (2006) and Adreotti's (2007) views that AL contemporary research ought to be ethically engaged with people who undergo deprivation of basic human rights in society.

1. BRICOLATING THE "QUILT" OF THIS STUDY

The methodological aspects of this study are based on the metaphor of the qualitative researcher as a *bricoleur*, who pieces together a "set of representations that

is fitted to the specifics of a complex situation”, and chooses interpretive practices throughout the investigation process according to what is available in their context and the limitations imposed by their settings (DENZIN; LINCOLN, 2005, p.4). The *bricoleur* researcher is required to deal with different voices, perspectives, viewpoints and angles that emerge therefrom. For this reason, the analyses I propose result from bricolating pieces taken from Maria Lindalva’s narrative of her own biography, the language teaching unit I designed, the memories of my pedagogic encounters with learners, and two different lines of interpretation on the ex-landless narrative recurrently raised throughout these encounters.

To carry out these analyses, I adhere to what Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 110-111) and Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p. 24) call “constructivist paradigm of qualitative research”, which assumes a relativist ontology, a transaction and subjectivist epistemology, and a hermeneutical and dialectical methodology. These three characteristics imply the presence of multiple realities (ontology), where participants cocreate understandings (epistemology) in a specific pedagogic territory: a school situated 150 km away from Rio de Janeiro city center where the interactions between teacher-learners, teacher-school environment, teacher-materials designing and teacher-research takes place (methodology).

On a more specific note, Guba and Lincoln (1994) state that the relativist ontology requires apprehending reality

“in the form of multiple, intangible, multiple mental constructions, socially and experientially based, local and specific in nature, [...] and dependent for their form and content on the individual persons or groups holding the constructions.” (GUBA, LINCOLN, 1994, p. 110-111).

Also, they teach that the subjectivist and transactional epistemology assume the investigator and the object of investigation to be interactively linked, “so that that the ‘findings’ are literally created as the investigation proceeds” (GUBA, LINCOLN, 1994, p. 111). And they add: in the hermeneutical and dialectical methodology, “the variable and personal (intramental) nature of social constructions suggests that individual constructions can be elicited and refined only through interaction *between and among* investigator and respondents” (italics from the original) (GUBA, LINCOLN, 1994, p. 111).

By following through these premises of the constructivist research paradigm, I adopted the following methodological sequence to bricolate the “quilt” of this study, as Denzin and Lincoln (2005) would metaphorize:

Table 1. Methodological sequence adopted to this study.

How to bricolate the "quilt"	
1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draw a line between Vološinov's (1973, 1980) and Blommaert's (2005) concepts of ideology, as well as Gramsci's (1992) and Blommaert's (2005) concepts of hegemony; • Demonstrate how hegemonic-common-sense ideology is established around the ideals of "work", "effort" and "success" based on Chun's (2017) map of ideological assumptions in dialogue with Hall and O'Shea (2013); • Introduce Milton Santos's (2017) concepts of "owners" and "non-owners" as analytical categories of the relationship between consumers and scarcity in the globalized world.
2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe Maria Lindalva's narrative; • Present learner's line of interpretation over her utterance (Bakhtinian analytical unit) through the concept of hegemonic-common-sense-ideology; • Present teacher's line of interpretation over her narrative based on the concepts of "owners" and "non-owners"; • Unveil the outcomes of these interactions between teacher and learners.
3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine the implications of these analyses for the selection of potential texts to feature their critical language teaching materials.

Source: elaborated by the author.

In terms of language theory, this methodological framework acknowledges the existing relationship between the verbal sign, social life and ideologies, for it is through the linguistic choices that shape her narrative that Maria Lindalva shares her autobiography. Hence, besides being influenced by the constructivist paradigm of qualitative research, this methodological framework is also backgrounded by Vološinov's idea that "the problem of the relationship between sign and existence finds its concrete expression" in the interconnectedness between the verbal sign, social life and ideology (1973, p. 21), thus being convergent with the *bricolage* constructivist research paradigm. For this reason, the "methodological prerequisites" to analyze language and ideology⁴ Vološinov proposes in his "Marxism and the philosophy of language" underlies the whole discussions I engage in this article, as disclosed on the next sections.

4. Here are the methodological prerequisites proposed by Vološinov: "1) Ideology may not be divorced from the material reality of sign (i.e., by locating it in the "consciousness" or other vague and elusive regions); 2) The sign may not be divorced from the concrete forms of social intercourse (seeing that the sign is part of organized social intercourse and cannot exist, as such, outside it, reverting to a mere physical artifact); 3) Communication and the forms of communication may not be divorced from the material basis. (VOLOŠINOV, 1973, p. 21).

2. HEGEMONIC COMMON-SENSE IDEOLOGY: DISCOURSES TO BE CHALLENGED IN LANGUAGE EDUCATION

What kind of discourse do I see as ideological, hegemonic and common-sensical? On a broad perspective, I would say that whatever discourse is ideological, but not every discourse is hegemonic and common-sensical. This assertion implies that when “hegemonic” and “common sense” become attributes of ideology, the result would be a type of discourse whose nature and reach are deleterious to society and (language) education, since it is committed to the idea of an education for reproduction rather than for critical thinking, the latter being dear to (language) education for citizenship. Hence, before illustrating my viewpoint about which discourses gather these characteristics, I will resort to some theorists in order to explain what I understand as “ideology”, “hegemony” and “common sense”.

From the point I stand as an *INdisciplinary* applied linguist language teacher, materials designer and researcher, I assume ideology not as a given, preconceived element in the social world, but as a set of ideas socio-historically built in shared and refracted discourses that range from the interindividual to the macropolitical social levels. For this reason, despite acknowledging the existence of innumerable understandings over this concept, I agree with Vološinov’s view of ideology as “a whole set of reflexes and interpretations of social and natural reality that takes place in human’s brain and are expressed and fixated by means of words, drawings, sketches or other sign forms”⁵ (VOLOŠINOV, 1980, p. 249). In this perspective, ideology is taken not only as a mental, but also as a material phenomenon, whose understanding is close to what Blommaert (2005) proposes to adopt.

By conceiving ideology as a “materially mediated ideational phenomenon”, Blommaert (2005, p. 164), like Vološinov, seems to propose that ideology becomes visible when it is materialized in social practices, especially in language. Not coincidentally, the “linguistic sign”, for the Bakhtinian tradition, is “the ideological phenomenon *par excellence*” (VOLOŠINOV, 1973, p. 13), because it “has the capacity to register all the transitory, delicate, momentary phases of social change” and is “implicated in literally each and every act or contact between people – in collaboration on the job, in ideological exchanges, in the chance contacts of ordinary life, in political relationships, and so on” (VOLOŠINOV, 1973, p. 19).

5. Original fragment: “Per ideologia intendiamo tutto l’insieme dei riflessi e delle interpretazioni della realtà sociale e naturale che avvengono nel cervello dell’uomo e sono espresse e fissate per mezzo di parole, disegni, schizzi o altre forme segnichi” (VOLOŠINOV, 1980, p. 249).

Hence, it is by understanding that the linguistic sign is a ubiquitous transitory social ideological phenomenon that I propose that whatever discourse is ideological, or, less radically put, that it is impregnated with ideologies. By this proposal, I also endorse Blommaert's idea that we should observe ideology from a "more complex and layered space in which ideational, behavioural, and institutional aspects interact along lines of consent and coercion" (BLOOMMAERT, 2005, p. 169), whose concepts are intrinsically intertwined with what Antonio Gramsci calls "hegemony".

Gramsci (1992, p. 156) characterizes hegemony as a balanced combination of "force" and "consent", so that force does not overwhelm consent, "but rather appears to be backed by the consent of the majority, expressed by the so-called organs of public opinion". This balance, according to the author, is reached when most members of society feel co-responsible for the contingent use of force for sustaining the established order, thanks to the corporate media, owned by economically/politically dominant groups, who detain the control of public opinion. By the same token, Blommaert (2005) proposes that coercion in ideological processes, more than consent, is what makes visible which anti-hegemonic practices are more rejectable and punishable by psychological and physical sanctions. Once consensus and consent are established, it becomes easier to disaggregate people who do not share the same ideology, be it by entirely undermining or discrediting their ideas, be it by passively acquiescing or deliberately ignoring events of human rights violation, such as racism, LGBTphobia, slavery, torture, assassination, etc.

Moulding public opinion means establishing a set of pre-packed tacitly agreed ideas and widespread conceptions of life and morale capable of being absorbed uncritically. To promote massive affiliation, these ideas and conceptions should be continuously changeable and open to the scientific notions and philosophical opinions that have entered into common usage. This is what Gramsci (1992, p. 173) refers to as "common sense", which I propose to be understood here as the visible portion of hegemony, or rather, in the light of Blommaert, as the ideological substance that mediates ideational phenomena in society. Consequently, by using the term hegemonic-common-sense ideology, I make reference to these tacitly agreed ideas and life conception materialized in language that circulate freely and are easily adhered to in society.

On the other hand, as Junot Maia (2017) observes in his ethnographic study on *Complexo do Alemão*, one of the greatest favelas in Rio de Janeiro, that we cannot lose sight of the fact that the popularization of digital technology network devices has been paving the way for anti-hegemonic narratives to circulate in society more

openly. However, they do not have the same capillarity as the discourse broadcast by the corporate media, which means that a humongous collective effort, involving jurists, intellectuals, artists, Members of Parliament, etc. ought to be made in social media networks to scratch the structures of the narratives and viewpoints broadcast by the corporate media (MAIA, 2017).

An example of such occurred in *#somostodosamarildo* campaign, analyzed in Maia's (2017) *Fogos digitais: letramento de sobrevivência no Complexo do Alemão* (2017). Broadly put, Amarildo was a mason who lived in the Rocinha favela in Rio de Janeiro, caught in a police operation in 2013 and tortured to death. The reason for his disappearance was broadcast by corporate media as a police protocol to investigate his supposed "involvement with drug dealing", according to a Police Department's unevidenced report. Case Amarildo provoked massive mobilization by different members of society who promoted an online campaign to demand thorough explanations from the authorities in charge. Were it not for the millions of cyber-supporters, comments and shares of *#somostodosamarildo* hashtag on different social media networks, the "criminal" token would have been stuck to his image in all layers of society, thanks to the devastating penetration power of hegemonic discourse featured by the hegemonic corporate media.

The implications of this online campaign contribute twofold to the arguments I defend here. Firstly, it supports the idea that it is possible, at some level, to identify which discourses resort to common sense to reinforce hegemonic ideologies, and which ones, otherwise, follow through anti-hegemonic paths. And secondly, it illustrates how every discourse is ideological, be it by reproducing the beliefs of powerful political/economic groups, or rather by bringing to surface a set of beliefs committed to the ones who suffer some sort of deprivation (ROJO, 2006), such as the poor, the underprivileged, the destitute, namely, the subalternized groups mirrored not only in case Amarildo, but also in Maria Lindalva's autobiographical narrative.

If, on the one hand, case Amarildo challenges the hegemonic-common-sense idea that "every black poor favela dweller is a potential criminal", Maria Lindalva's narrative flirts with the ideal of "success through work and effort" which is part and parcel of the "neoliberal capitalism" hegemonic-common-sense ideology.

Starting from the presupposition that "the battle over common sense is a central part of our political life", Hall and O'Shea (2013) observe that:

Slowly, but surely, neoliberal ideas have permeated society and are transforming what passes as common sense. The broadly egalitarian and collectivist attitudes that underpinned the welfare state era are giving way to a more competitive, individualistic market-driven, entrepreneurial, profit-oriented outlook. (HALL; O'SHEA, 2013, p. 11).

In the same vein, Christian Chun (2017) maps out the view of New York and London passers-by regarding the production of common sense over capitalism. Like Hall and O'Shea, Chun demonstrates how this "competitive, individualistic market-driven, entrepreneurial, profit-oriented outlook" is naturalized in discourses that regard capitalism as: a) a system that privileges hardworking (p. 61); b) synonymous with opportunity (p. 68); c) economic market freedom (p. 64); d) the only one possible alternative of success (p. 80); e) a fixed and static human nature entity (p. 70, 86); and f) imbricated with God, country and family (p. 78).

One way in which this ideology is reiterated and reified is by transforming consumerism into the individual's *raison d'être* in the globalized world. This gives rise to what Milton Santos (2006, p. 39) calls "reign of necessity", wherein "exclusion and social debt appear as if they were something fixed, immutable, and unbending". In this "reign", Santos (2006, p. 72) argues that necessity exists for everyone in different forms, which he simplifies into two situations: "owners" and "non-owners". In the former case, "consumers obtain a relatively pacific coexistence with scarcity" but are condemned to "accept the counter-finality contained in things and therefore also the deterioration of individuality". In the latter, non-owners "relation with scarcity is conflicted and even warlike", having "no place for rest" or negotiating power in their daily struggle for survival. Consequently, non-owners "exempt themselves from counter-finalities and cultivate, alongside the search for finite material goods, the quest for infinite goods such as solidarity and liberty" (SANTOS, 2017, p. 72).

These concepts allow me to observe, for example, that the hegemonic-common-sense ideology that foregrounds the discourses of work, effort and success seems to be rooted in the belief that every single non-owner will be able to become an owner one day. As I will demonstrate later on, if we take into account, at first glance, that Maria Lindalva, is an ex-landless activist, who occupied some land in countryside Ceará, slept rough in plastic tents as well as at the entrance gate of the local television company, and managed to conquer her space through effort, she seems to be a perfect model of striving for success according to neoliberal capitalist ideology. Having said that, there is more to Maria Lindalva's narrative than meets the eye. For this reason, as an IAL language teacher, material designer and researcher operating in the paradigms of multi and critical literacies, I am urged to adopt pedagogic practices that engage learners to read beyond the surface of her narrative, and, thus, assume a critical posture towards the essentialisms around the ideas of work, effort and success.

3. DIFFERENT LINES OF INTERPRETATION ON MARIA LINDALVA'S NARRATIVE

By taking a close look at the *Society Matters?* unit, it is possible to observe that Maria Lindalva's autobiography gains prominence early in its introductory pages after three activities previously designed to foster discussions over the types, natures and possible solutions to social problems. Her video appears for the first time amidst four others, featured by anti-hegemonic figures who talk, in different languages, about consumerism, economic inequality, immigration and land eviction. All videos are English subtitled and Maria Lindalva, by turn, narrates how happy she is despite poverty, destitution and struggle for her own piece of land to survive.

In the process of design, I decided to bring Maria Lindalva's narrative forward for several reasons. The first one, as I mentioned elsewhere, was the capillarity of her video in social media networks, which reached people from opposing ideological standpoints, equally pleased by her words for different reasons. Secondly, it was the only video of the group spoken in Portuguese, which facilitated teacher and learners to explore the specificities of her utterance compared to the subtitles in English, and to carry out a more qualitative critical analysis, since learners could resort to her narrative in the original whenever needed. Finally, the substance of her narrative is in close connection with humanitarian issues and land conflicts dear to the Environmental and Agricultural-Livestock Technical Courses.

In the documentary, her video footage is edited into four parts. In the first part she narrates her lifestyle as a poverty-stricken, telling she has to choose between buying clothes or food. In the second, she tells of her struggle for remaining in the land she occupied, describing how she prepared the land and underwent the weather conditions living in tents with tarpaulins. In the third, she remembers the dialogues she used to have with her father proving him wrong about whether she would conquer her land. And in the fourth part, she talks about her lifestyle as a mother and 55-year-old student learning to read and write. I took advantage of this edition format using the transcripts of the subtitles as blocks of texts in an activity that learners were invited to read and match each utterance to its corresponding topic sentence⁶. In the sequence, an activity proposes a study on the uses of autobiographical verbs to convey nostalgia and describe past facts and situation with or without a reporting function.

Afterwards, learners carry out an activity in which they are motivated to critically reflect upon Maria Lindalva's narrative based on the following groups of questions:

6. Cf. *Society Matters?*, activity E, p. 3. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2SSMWjt>. Access: 14 sep. 2019.

Table 2. Guiding questions to analyse Maria Lindalva's narrative.

1)	Who is Maria Lindalva? Where is she probably from? What does she do for a living?
2)	What do we learn about Maria Lindalva's identity judging by the way she looks and speaks?
3)	What social roles has she played in different moments of her life? How do they influence the way she sees life?
4)	Which visual metaphors in Pawel Kuczynski's illustrations (cf. activity 1) mirrors Maria Lindalva's life? Explain.
5)	What different ideologies in conflict are present in Maria Lindalva's account?

Source: *Society Matters?*, p. 4, activity F. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2SSMWjt>.

I proposed these questions in order to cover different layers of her autobiography, starting at her identity and social relations, and ending at an analysis of the ideologies involved in her narrative. The different views my learners and I exchanged over Maria Lindalva's account reassured the great potential of her narrative I had anticipated at the designing stage. For this reason, I will now describe her narrative in more details and later analyze it, trying to show two different lines of interpretation that emerged from it: one affiliated with the neoliberal capitalist ideology and the other committed to the Critical Literacy agenda.

In the first part, Maria Lindalva introduces herself as a woman who undergoes poverty, as she reveals she uses tacks to mend her sandals and wears donated clothes, for the money she earns is insufficient to buy food and clothing together. She also claims to be someone who keeps "going ahead" and does not "envy anyone anything" in spite of her economic condition, as we can observe in the transcript below. For the transcripts correspond to the documentary subtitles, they appear devoid of linguistic regional variants.

Table 3. Transcript of Maria Lindalva's autobiographical narrative, part 1.

Subtitle	I'll tell you about poverty, for me. I don't always have... A pair of sandals is very expensive. I would rather buy food. Rice! It's very expensive. The sandals can wait another day. I fix them with a tack and I'm good to go. It's the same with clothing. Often, people give me clothes. Whole bags full! It's a delight! I put something on and I'm dressed. That's what my poverty is. But I just keep going ahead! I don't envy anyone anything. ⁷
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Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0a9Ddalazjl&t=186s>. Access: 15 sep. 2019.

In the second part, Maria Lindalva accounts for the day she arrived at Frei Humberto's Camp in countryside Ceará together with other activists, and her struggle for a piece of the land she occupied. According to her, they had to "clear

7. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0a9Ddalazjl&t=186s>. Access: 16 may 2018.

the land” for making it inhabitable and then set up “tents with tarpaulings” – a type of shelter made of black plastic and sticks. She also mentions that the camp became target of stigmatization by local residents and that she used to cook outdoors. At times, she adds nostalgically, rainwater would take her clothes away and soak the sheets she and other settlers had hung up outside. Then, after bringing up memories of her plantation and the donkey she kept on her plot of land, she ends this part on a positive note, saying she is “happy living like that”.

Table 4. Transcript of Maria Lindalva’s autobiographical narrative, part 2

Subtitle	When we first got here, there was nothing. No one here. It was wilderness. We cut the trees, burned the brush, cleared the land. We built a tent with tarpaulins. And we lived in it. We heard cries, “Look at the camp! They are squatters!” We didn’t care. We cooked in the middle, on a camp stove. With our cookpots, in every kind of weather. It would rain all over everything. Our sandals, our clothes... But we didn’t care. We’d wake up and the sheets were soaked. We’d hang them out, clean them up a little. When the sheets were dry, we’d put up our hammocks again. They would swing us in the wind. It was great! So good I still remember today. We cleared the field and got ready to plant. Fine! Each family had a plot of land. We had a big open space, and a little fenced-in space. That’s where I keep my little donkey. There it is. And we’re happy. I’m happy living like that.
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Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0a9DdalazjI&t=186s>. Access: 15 sep. 2019.

In the third part, Maria Lindalva remembers the dialogues she used to have with her father, in which she assured she would purchase her own piece of land one day. Confronting his skepticism, she tells him she would raise money through selling the corn and beans she would produce. As we can see in Table 5, Maria Lindalva let us know that she did not purchase, but conquered her land by sweating “blood and tears to get it”, sleeping “on the ground, in the middle of nowhere”, squatting “with the landless activists” and appearing “on the news, on television”.

Table 5. Transcript of Maria Lindalva’s autobiographical narrative, part 3.

Subtitle	While we hoed the garden, I’d say to my father, “Someday, I’ll buy myself a little land.” “With what?” “I will work in the field. I will sell my corn and my beans, and I’ll buy some land to live on.” My father said, “Daughter, when you are ready to buy, the land won’t be for sale anymore.” And I said, “What? Wait and see! I’ll buy myself a little plot of land. Where I can live.” I always told him I would. Later, I reminded him, “I told you I would own some land! It’s a little plot all measured out, and it’s all mine.” He replied, “Stubborn mule! You were right.” I had to fight for it, but it’s my land now. I sweated blood and tears to get it. Blood and tears. I slept on the ground, in the middle of nowhere. They showed me on the news, on television. I squatted with the Landless activists.
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Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0a9DdalazjI&t=186s>. Access: 15 sep. 2019.

In the last part of the video footage, Maria Lindalva narrates her present life as a student. She studies at night and says that she can read the alphabet and write her own name on the board prompted by Mrs. Esmerina, her teacher. Her children, she adds, help her do the homework and the housework. Finally, she closes her narrative by saying: "55 years old and I'm learning to read".

Table 6. Transcript of Maria Lindalva's autobiographical narrative, part 4.

Subtitle	Every night I go to school. The teacher sits down. She writes my name on the board. So many letters! I didn't even know what an A was. Now I can read the alphabet. I even know how to write my name. "Mrs. Esmerina?" My teacher's name is Esmerina. "Do you want me to write my name?" And I do it. I do the M, the A, the S... I write the letters that I know. She says, "Good! You wrote Maria Lindalva!" I say, "Thanks to God." "What next?" I ask, "An L?" "Right." So I write it. And so on When it's time to go to school, I get ready, I take a bath. The kids demand dinner. "Your sister will feed you!" School is in the evening. And I go every night. When I get there, I have a little snack. Then I study, and after, I go home. I always have homework assignments. I ask my daughter to help me. She's better at homework than I am. I learned to read people's names, the names of animals and birds. My children show me how to do it. They are the ones who teach me, when I have assignments at home. They show me. And I'm thinking, "55 years old and I'm learning to read."
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Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0a9Ddalzjl&t=186s>. Access: 15 sep. 2019.

In the documentary, it is possible to notice that Maria Lindalva not only narrates her achievements, but also events of human rights violation. Although her narrative gives rise to several lines of interpretation, I decided to focus on two of them, for they were the ones who constantly emerged during the discussions with learners along these four years. The first one addresses Maria Lindalva's achievements; and the second, her relationship with scarcity. I selected these lines of interpretation because they were most frequent along the analyses the learners and I exchanged and carried out throughout the years.

I call the first line of interpretation "Maria Lindalva: the Brazilian who never gives up", resorting to a common-sense expression widely reproduced in this country to praise those poor people who struggle to survive. Maria Lindalva as "the Brazilian who never gives up" allows for a mode of seeing her narrative from the standpoint of her achievements: her plot of land, her children and her work, let alone the solidarity she relies on in her community and at school. Accordingly, Maria Lindalva would be regarded as the person who managed to succeed in life by means of her own individual efforts despite all adversities that appeared on her way. This line of interpretation discursively constructs Maria Lindalva as someone who

pursued her goals and did her utmost to achieve them, thus deserving to enjoy the outcomes of her efforts, i.e., “success”.

This interpretation, which, by the way, was proposed by the majority of learners in this activity, is in close connection with the neoliberal capitalist ideology mapped out by Chun (2017) in his work, especially those referring to capitalism as “a system that privileges hardworking” (p. 61) and as “a synonymous with opportunity” (p. 68). In this sense, Maria Lindalva indeed worked hard, appeared on corporate media television and, thus, conquered her own land. Another point is that the nostalgic way Maria Lindalva narrates her experiences, by reinforcing to the viewer how happy she has always been in life, seems to overshadow the difficulties she underwent throughout the years, even though she deliberately brings this issue out. Hence, learner’s choice to foreground the positive aspects of her narrative and send backwards her predicaments could be an evidence of how the ideology of happiness and success through effort is naturalized. Coincidentally though it may seem, a similar discursive movement occurred in the social media networks by those who bear a more conservative political posture, whose comments hovered around the assumptions that “starvation and misery are reserved for those who are unwilling to work hard” or that “happiness is spiritual rather than a material entity”, which serve as a philosophical ground to justify and endorse the existence of social classes, hunger and poverty in society. This fact may account for the capillarity potential of her video footage on social media networks.

In my view, interpreting Maria Lindalva’s narrative solely on the bias of “the Brazilian who never gives up” means resorting to hegemonic-common-sense-ideology discourse that deliberately muffles the deprivations she underwent to conquer her land and work – basic human rights the State apparently was not there to guarantee along the past years. It also means relying on a single dimension of her narrative that rests upon the accounts of her achievements without taking into consideration the process – something close to a Machiavellian mode of conceptualizing the world based on the idea that “the end justifies the means”.

Bearing these ideas in mind, after carefully listening to learners’ reading their views on Maria Lindalva’s narrative, I asked them if they considered her to be successful. When they nodded affirmatively, I enquired if they would like to be successful like her. This time, most learners gave me a firm “no”, allowing me the opportunity to propose a second line of interpreting her narrative, which I call “Maria Lindalva: the non-owner”, based on Santos (2017, p. 72).

By alluding to Maria Lindalva’s conflicting warlike restless relation with scarcity in the struggle for surviving, this line of interpretation allows for

acknowledging that her alleged happiness and life achievements were constructed at the cost of systematic human rights violations she went through. In this sense, Maria Lindalva had to struggle for a place to live because she had been denied the right to housing. She is forced to “opt” for buying food and not clothes, because she has been denied the right to a standard of living adequate for her health and well-being. She is learning to read and write at the age of 55 because she was denied the right to education when she was between 4 and 17 years old, probably because she had to work in order for her family to make ends meet, or at least not to starve. Being an illiterate throughout these years, she may not have had the right to a free choice of employment that offers fair working conditions, which implies that she has been denied the right to a just and favorable remuneration.

In this perspective, Maria Lindalva’s narrative evidences recurrent episodes of human rights violation for long signed and agreed worldwide, and published in The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (U.N., 1948), more specifically in article 23, paragraphs 1 and 3,

Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.

[...]

Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection. (U.N., 1948).

In article 25, paragraph 1,

Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control. (U.N., 1948).

And in article 26, paragraph 1,

Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit. (U.N., 1948).

I am aware that the “non-owner” analytical line may be taken as less glamorous than “The Brazilian who never gives up” one. Nonetheless, after those four years in class discussing Maria Lindalva’s narrative with my learners, I was able to ascertain how the naturalization of ideological relations of power constitutes an effective apparatus owned by the neoliberal capitalist hegemonic ideology. This

naturalization via common sense is so powerful that led my learners to foreground the effort, achievement and success of a subaltern ex-landless woman and leave unnoticed the situations of human rights violation she underwent. Acknowledging this fact helped me reflect upon some characteristics of texts that may facilitate learners to assume a more reflexive, suspicious and nuanced posture, and, as a result, to extrapolate the limits of simply decoding them at surface levels. This leads me to suggest some implications of this study to the task of selecting appropriate texts suitable for critical language teaching materials.

4. WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM MARIA LINDALVA ABOUT TEXT SELECTION FOR CRITICAL MATERIALS DESIGN?

Developing learners' reflexive, suspicious and nuanced attitude toward the ideologies that suffuse the globalized world is probably one of the main goals of teachers and materials designers that follow the *Interdisciplinary Applied Linguistics* agenda and are adept at the Critical Literacy framework. However, materializing this objective in a lesson unit is challenging *per se*, since the majority of mainstream English coursebooks either reproduce hegemonic-common-sense ideologies⁸ or neglect bringing social debates to surface assuming that it would mean abandoning the technical aspects of their own so-called specific purposes (i.e. professional contexts, reading techniques and vocabulary/grammar teaching), as if they were two separate entities. In this established scenario, Maria Lindalva teaches that the critical teacher-designer must assume a counter-hegemonic posture and look for texts that allow for exposing and discussing contrasting views of a specific social phenomenon. This process could take hours, days, namely, time most Brazilian teachers unfortunately do not have because they have to work long periods in order to make ends meet.

Another point is that designing critical language learning materials may be hindered if the teacher-designer is aloof of the political trends and movements going on at the school(s) they work, in society and in the world around. And this process could become even more difficult if they are not conscious of their own social and language ideologies, their identities and roles (especially) as an educator

8. The reinforcement of traditional patriarchal family as an idealized model, the presence women and colored people occupying menial professional positions, the reproduction of a conflictless harmonious world, the disneyfication of foreign cultures, and the naturalization of social inequality as a stage in the social-economic ladder are some of the hegemonic-common-sense ideologies that permeate best-seller English coursebook materials, as we can find in Rogério Tilio's doctorate thesis (2006).

of the public education sector, as well as their perceptions regarding established assumptions over the English language and its capillarity in our society (MULICO, 2019a, 2019b). In this respect, Maria Lindalva teaches that the achievements of the subaltern should be acknowledged, but the analyses made of them should never be limited to merely reinforcing episodes of success. For example, by saying “55 years old and I’m learning to read”, Maria Lindalva teaches us, language teachers, materials designers and researchers, that we should develop a keen awareness of the subaltern’s relations with scarcity, by foregrounding their socio-historical processes of life deprivation, thus allowing ourselves to engage in the experience of the otherness. In Bakhtin’s terms, this implies refracting the hegemonic common-sense ideologies contained in the neoliberal discourses of “work”, “effort” and “success”, and reflecting the subaltern’s experiences in the mirror of neoliberal “success”.

In the light of the above-mentioned Bakhtinian concepts, selecting texts to feature critical language teaching materials entails identifying the ideologies they reflect and refract, restlessly struggling with common sense, not to mention developing a powerful analytical ability to read between, inside and outside the lines. For such, it is vital that we examine our locus of enunciation and unlearn our privileges (ANDREOTTI, 2007), which may include looking onto and into ourselves, i.e., our own race, gender, origin, economic class, professional position, and other identities. In this respect, by revealing “I would rather buy food” and “the sandals can wait another day”, Maria Lindalva teaches us to inquire to what extent a text we are considering to our language unit reflects naturalized ideas and reinforces established social views. If it is the case, we ought to design activities that engage learners to problematize these established views and propose alternatives. This requires that we examine our own set of ideological beliefs in order to question which ideas disclosed in the examined text we identify, validate or reject.

After identifying the ideologies a text projects, I would suggest analyzing whether its language is accessible to the learner and how easy its ideological lines are recognizable. This suggestion is grounded on the assumption that developing critical literacy entails enabling learners to question and resignify naturalized ideological relations of power (TILIO, 2013, 2017). The first step for such, in my view, lies in the course of interaction between the reader and the text, which means that there is no going beyond if surface understanding is hindered. The problem, as I observed throughout this article, is when language teaching remains crystallized on its surface level. This time it is not Maria Lindalva who teaches us something straightforwardly, but her teacher, Mrs. Esmerina, when scaffolding Maria Lindalva’s writing her name on the board. She reminds us that we should be aware

of the experiences our language learners have, their potentials and desires, without losing sight of their professional and critical citizenship needs. She also teaches that learning a language implies doing something with it, for it is the substance that mediates ideational phenomena (BLOMMAERT, 2005) through which we can examine the connections between language, power and knowledge (ANDREOTTI, 2007). Whatever this “doing something” may be, the ideological effects of language in discourse regarding power relations and knowledge may be addressed in the activities we design.

A final suggestion concerning the implications of Maria Lindalva’s narrative to materials designing has to do with electing which protagonists encapsulate the identities that are in line with critical language teaching for citizenship education. These protagonists, if any, should help teachers to be engaged and engage learners with social change (LUKE; FREEBODY, 1997) by developing critical views over dominant ideologies, cultures, economies, institutions and political systems (TILIO, 2017). In this respect, Maria Lindalva as the protagonist of the unit *Society Matters?* brings a practical dimension of how her presence was pivotal for helping learners see beyond the lens of neoliberal capitalist common sense over the concepts of “work”, “effort” and “success”. Such a thing occurred thanks to the sequencing imprinted in the lesson unit that progressively led learners into the protagonist’s autobiography, thanks to *activity F* that made the lesson climax coincide with a critical reflection toward Maria Lindalva’s narrative, thanks to the exchanging of viewpoints allowed by this activity that emerged during the dialogues learners and I had from 2015 to 2018.

Eventually, I should like to conclude this article with a brief summary of the suggestions for selecting texts for critical materials design. The following guidelines disclosed on Table 7 are not intended to be exhaustive. They sustain the idea that selecting a text for a critical lesson unit depends primarily upon the teacher-designer’s capacity to be critical over the society they inhabit and the pedagogic assumptions they defend.

Table 7. Guidelines for selecting texts for critical materials design.

1.	Look for texts that allow participants for exposing and discussing contrasting views of specific social phenomena.
2.	Inquire to what extent the text you are considering to your language unit reflects naturalized ideas and reinforces established social views.
3.	Examine your own set of ideological beliefs. This will allow you to identify the ideas you validate and reject in a text.

4.	Also examine your locus of enunciation and make an effort to unlearn your privileges, for example, in terms of race, gender, origin, economic class, professional position and other identities. The text you choose and the activities you design reflect what you represent as a human being and refract what you reject ideologically and pedagogically.
5.	Be aware of the political trends and movements going on at the school(s) you work, in society and in the world around. The text you choose and the opportunities you create in the activities you design will probably mirror your ability to read the world critically and show your learners the way to do the same.
6.	Read the text between (inside and outside) the lines in order to identify the ideologies it reflects and refracts. Like the previous guideline, the way you understand the text will help or hinder you design activities that enable learners to develop their analytical abilities.
7.	Analyze whether the language disclosed in the text is accessible to your learners and how easily its ideological lines are recognizable. Understanding surface meaning is the first step towards plunging into its ideological aspects.
8.	Select protagonists, if any, that encapsulate identities that are in line with the assumptions dear to critical language teaching for citizenship education. Exposing reality in the light of a subaltern's may be helpful to make learners identify and question hegemonic-common-sense ideology.
9.	Design activities that enable learners to see beyond the subaltern's immediate life achievements and foreground their social-historical processes of life deprivation. This will probably help them develop a keen awareness of the subaltern's relation with scarcity and, consequently, engage them in the experience of the otherness.

Source: elaborated by the author.

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