

The meanings of school failure in teachers' discourse

Os sentidos do fracasso escolar no discurso de professores

Los sentidos del fracaso escolar en el discurso de profesores

*Manoela de Souza Silva Piccirilli**
*Regina Maria Ayres de Camargo Freire**

Abstract

Introduction: School failure has been constant focus of studies of several natures that search for different reasons for its occurrence. **Objective:** This article does not intend to develop one more hypothesis as to what school failure may be, but to analyze its meanings in the discourse of some elementary education teachers. **Methods:** This is a qualitative study conducted using Discourse Analysis theory and method, based on Michel Pêcheux. The procedure for data collection took place in a room for discussions among elementary education teachers and researchers. Discourse data were collected on a voice recorder and then transcribed in regular orthography. Fragments of the corpus were extracted for analysis. **Results:** During the first meeting, a search for homogeneity in detriment of students' singularities was identified; there was a process of production of meanings based on school ideals that are dominated by a capitalist educational policy that, in treating students as equals and not reflecting on their singularities, contributes to school failure. **Conclusion:** It may be considered, therefore, that the meanings of school failure in these teachers' discourse emerge as the effect of an educational logic regulated by a capitalist discourse that, in trying to control the child's knowledge, lets something interpreted as school failure slide.

Keywords: Learning; Education; Language

Resumo

Introdução: O fracasso escolar tem sido repetidamente abordado em pesquisas de diversas naturezas que buscam diferentes razões para sua ocorrência. **Objetivo:** Este artigo não pretende elaborar mais uma suposição do que venha a ser o fracasso escolar, mas analisar os sentidos deste no discurso de professores de

*Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo – PUCSP, São Paulo, SP, Brazil

Authors' contributions:

MSSP: responsible for research; methodology; data collection; article outline and critical review; RMACF: orientation; study design; methodology and critical review.

Correspondence address: Manoela de Souza Silva Piccirilli manoelapiccirilli@hotmail.com

Received: 08/07/2018

Approved: 12/28/2018

educação básica. **Método:** Trata-se de um estudo qualitativo realizado sob a ótica da teoria-metodológica da Análise de Discurso de linha francesa a partir de Michel Pêcheux. A coleta de dados se deu em um espaço de discussão entre professores de educação básica e pesquisadores. Os dados discursivos foram gravados e, posteriormente, transcritos de forma ortográfica regular. Fragmentos do *corpus* foram extraídos para análise. **Resultados:** Identificou-se no discurso dos professores uma busca pela homogeneidade em detrimento das particularidades do aluno; encontrou-se um processo de produção de sentidos pautados em ideais escolares dominados por uma política educacional capitalista que, ao colocar os alunos como iguais e não refletir sobre suas singularidades, contribui para o fracasso escolar. **Conclusão:** Pode-se considerar, portanto, que os sentidos de fracasso escolar no discurso desses professores surgem como efeito de uma lógica educacional regulada por um discurso capitalista que, na tentativa de controlar o saber da criança, deixa escapar o que é interpretado como fracasso escolar.

Palavras-chave: Aprendizagem; Educação; Linguagem.

Resumen

Introducción: El fracaso escolar ha sido repetidamente abordado en investigaciones de diversas naturalezas que buscan diferentes razones para su ocurrencia. **Objetivo:** Este artículo no pretende elaborar más una suposición de lo que venga a ser el fracaso escolar, sino analizar los sentidos de éste en el discurso de profesores de educación básica. **Método:** Se trata de un estudio cualitativo realizado bajo la óptica de la teoría-metodológica del Análisis de Discurso de línea francesa a partir de Michel Pêcheux. La recolección de datos se dio en un espacio de discusión entre profesores de educación básica e investigadores. Los datos discursivos fueron grabados y posteriormente transcritos de forma ortográfica regular. Los fragmentos del corpus se extrajeron para el análisis. **Resultados:** Se identificó en el discurso de los profesores una búsqueda por la homogeneidad en detrimento de las particularidades del alumno; se encontró un proceso de producción de sentidos pautados en ideales escolares dominados por una política educativa capitalista que, al colocar a los alumnos como iguales y no reflexionar sobre sus singularidades, contribuye al fracaso escolar. **Conclusión:** Se puede considerar, por lo tanto, que los sentidos de fracaso escolar en el discurso de esos profesores surgen como efecto de una lógica educativa regulada por un discurso capitalista que, en el intento de controlar el saber del niño, deja escapar lo que es interpretado como fracaso escolar.

Palabras claves: Aprendizaje; Educación; Lenguaje.

Introduction

This study aims to analyze the meaning of school failure in the discourse of primary education teachers. A discussion space that established “obstacles of literacy” as its theme was proposed from the perspective of discussing the literacy processes in a research group called “Literacy and its Avatars”.

It was identified during the discussions that one of the demands addressed the writing skills of students. Teachers took written productions of children to the meetings and the discursive parts that served as data for the analysis of this project originated from these discussions. What meanings school failure would have in teachers' discourse?

What fails when the student does not meet expectations?

The meetings intended to support a place where they could highlight the words and recognize issues that required teachers to open up new issues and meanings¹. Therefore, a theory-methodology was required to include social and historical relations. To this end, the Discourse Analysis, based on Michel Pêcheux, supported this work as a theoretical-methodological basis since it provides the possibility of finding in the language the senses that subjects assign to events, moving the ideology from consciousness and approaching it to unconscious, as a structure that produces effects that support the processes and practices of the subjects².

The proposal of Discourse Analysis is to analyze how the senses operate and influence in

the reality of the subject, as language in operation has subjects and senses affected by language and history. Therefore, there is no single meaning, but effects of meaning. That is, there will be a different meaning for each for each one who gets in touch with a text⁴.

In this sense⁵, the author suggests that there is a displacement of discourse analysis regarding the language/speech dichotomy, proposing a non-dichotomous relationship of language and discourse that reveals the language to Linguistics. Then language would be the specific materiality of discourse and in turn discourse would be the specific materiality of ideology⁵.

The idea of ideology in Discourse Analysis is based on the work - Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses - by the philosopher Louis Althusser.

Althusser⁶ calls Ideological State Apparatus (ISA), “a certain number of realities which present themselves to the immediate observer in the form of distinct and specialized institutions”. According to the author, ideologies were realized in institutions, in their rituals and their practices and the reproduction of the relations of production took place in them and class struggle is a consequence of it.

Thus, as Althusser reported, State and its Apparatuses only have meaning from the point of view of the class struggle. That is, as an apparatus of class struggle ensuring class oppression and guaranteeing the conditions of exploitation and its reproduction: “It is only from the point of view of the classes, i.e. of the class struggle, that it is possible to explain the ideologies existing in a social formation”⁶.

It is noteworthy that Althusser⁶ indicates the school as an ideological apparatus, as he understands that the school is a capitalist system, since it creates the productive forces to the labor market⁷. So, the school, that is, the ideological apparatus, is responsible to serve to the interests of the State and of the ruling class⁸. According to Althusser⁶, ideologies are not ‘born’ in the ISAs, but from the social classes at grips in the class struggle: “from their conditions of existence, their practices, their experience of the struggle, etc.”. So, Althusser⁶ suggests that there is no ideology except by the subject and for subjects within an Ideological Apparatus as a representative of the form in which the ideology of the ruling class must necessarily be realized, and the ruled class must necessarily be confronted.

He also reports that the labor power has to be skilled and therefore reproduced as such. In other words, the school ensures the capitalist system through the training of the labor force:

What do children learn at school? [...] they learn to read, to write and to add – i.e. a number of techniques, and a number of other things as well [...] directly useful in the different jobs in production [...]. Thus they learn the know-how⁶.

Later, when Althusser⁶ discusses *The reproduction of the relations of production*, he questions the school system. He asks why this would be the Ideological State Apparatuses in capitalist social formations and how it would be operated. In response to the question, he reports that the educational apparatus is dominant in capitalist social formations, since no other Ideological State Apparatus has the “obligatory audience” for many hours a day for five or six days out of seven. Some scholars discuss the role of education in the occupational field. That is, the years of schooling define the career paths of people, noting that education is relevant to a certain social stratification⁹. Therefore, they are relevant for children to learn the know-how and then leave school to reproduce the relations of production, that is, to acquire a learning in order to meet the logic of a capitalist labor market. Education promotes a professional qualification for individuals, enabling them to the social division of labor in the capitalist society⁷. Therefore, children who do not meet the qualification expected by the capitalist model are identified as a school failure.

One of the school failure concepts found in a review work is the guilt of children and parents indicating that their failure is a psychic problem, or rather, it is due to the loss of intellectual capacity¹⁰. On the other hand, other concepts of that study indicate school failure as a technical problem: the blame of the teacher conceiving “school failure as an effect of inadequate teaching techniques or the lack of knowledge of the proper technique by the teacher.” The study further reports that the school failure is linked to an institutional and political problem. Institutional as the school institution is understood as a “[...] social institution that reproduces contradictorily and changes the social structure”. From “the principle that school failure is a phenomenon present since the beginning of the public school system in Brazil.” And political: an emphasis on the power relations involved in school culture.

Other studies, conducted in different countries and even more recent, show that there is no standardization of the concept of school failure, since its understanding is implied in every context addressed¹¹. Thus, these studies found that school failure is used to justify poor school grades, grade retention, learning and behavioral difficulties, and school dropouts. However, other studies¹¹ did not present any concept of school failure.

These school failure concepts can be understood as discursive formations given that this concept in Discourse Analysis is characterized as a meeting point between language and history. That is, the meaning of a word is determined by the positions and situations of the person who assigned that meaning, so there is no meaning in itself except by the determination of the ideological formations².

Other authors¹² report that school failure is an issue that is continually researched due to the different hypotheses on a possible cause. Thus, these different concepts introduce a constant process of rearticulation and updating of the senses in the discursive formations. These authors believe that the ongoing work in order to understand the school failure is due to the ideological positions that they face in the attempt to explain or to cover up what streamlines the movement of interpretation: "The class struggle [...]".

Several approaches to the so-called school failure attribute a generic phenomenon to this term, and there is no consensus among authors. That is, "school failure" is used for different contexts and situations.¹¹ It is from this perspective that this study will advance, that is, agreeing that there is no specific cause for school failure. Expression resulting from an ideology, since everyone is subjected to this ideology. Since, "it is not their real conditions of existence, their real world, that 'men' represent to themselves' in ideology, but above all it is their relation to those conditions of existence which is represented to them there"⁶.

Pêcheux¹³ reports that the concept of "Ideology in general" makes it possible to think "man" as an "ideological animal", i.e., to think his specificity as *part of nature*. Since history is a natural-human system in movement and the motor of history is class struggle. Therefore, it is within this "natural-human" process of history that "Ideology is eternal" (*omni-historical*). Pêcheux¹⁴ also reported that the common feature of the structures - operation, ideology and unconscious - is the fact that they

conceal their own existence within their operation by producing what constitutes the subject.

All evident facts, including the transparency of language (those that make a word have a meaning), is an ideological effect, the elementary ideological effect. That is, the action of the ideological effects in all discourses¹³. An effect of fixing the meanings, a-historical, therefore, ideology is a mechanism built in discursive practice and resulting in the constitution of the individual into a subject by positioning the subject in the language - the symbolic social economy⁷. Thus, there is a need for a materialist discourse theory: the evidence of the existence of the subject as the cause or origin of self. Michel Pêcheux will discuss other "evidence", which he calls "evidence of meanings"⁴.

The ideological formation concept in discourse analysis is developed along with the discursive formation concept, since ideological formations are embodied in the language by discursive formations.

Pêcheux¹³ explains that the material character of meaning lies in its constitutive dependence on what he will call "complex whole of the ideological formations". This dependency can be explained in two ways. The first is that the meaning of a word or proposition is not transparent or literal. But rather determined by the ideological positions that are addressed in the socio-historical process, and Pêcheux¹³ proposes that words, expressions and propositions change their meanings according to the positions held by those who use them. Thus, the discursive formation determines what can and should be said.

Before discussing the second mode of dependence, Pêcheux¹³ recognizes that the discursive formation is the matrix of the constitution of a meaning. Then he addresses the second mode in which every discursive formation, by the transparency of the meaning constituted in it, conceals its dependence on the "complex whole in dominance" of discursive formations, itself imbricated with the complex of ideological formations¹³. Pêcheux calls 'interdiscourse', the "complex whole in dominance".

According to Pêcheux,¹³ the peculiarity of all discursive formation is to conceal the material objectivity of interdiscourse by the transparency of the meaning. That is, material objectivity that suggests that something always speaks before, elsewhere under the domination of the complex of ideological formations.

It understands that the observation of inter-discourse allows realize an association of sayings, as a memory, being able to identify its historicity, showing its political and ideological status¹⁴. Thus, it is important to note that the pedagogical discourse not only brings an association of sayings, but also a compulsion imposed by the State. That is, its conditions of production that will be discussed in the *corpus* as that which takes effect.

Method

Nature of research and ethical criteria

This is a qualitative study conducted from the perspective of the Discourse Analysis theory and method of French authors to data analysis. Participants received a Free Prior Informed consent after the approval by the Research Ethics Committee for the beginning of data collection.

Study Center

The research was conducted on the campus of a university during the weekly meetings of a research group called “*Literacy and its Avatars*”. This location was chosen since all teachers participating in this study meet with the research group to integrate the discussions about the struggles and obstacles of their routine activity.

Subjects¹

The research included primary education teachers from two State schools and one municipal school. The three schools in which participants work are situated on the northern edge of the city of São Paulo.

Inclusion Criteria

- To be a primary education teacher in the first grades of elementary school.
- To participate in the research project *Literacy and its Avatars*.

Procedures for data collection and analysis

The discussions raised during the weekly meetings between teachers and researchers were recorded and transcribed to compose the data to

be analyzed. Discussions were not directed, as it was a space whose proposal was to have open discussions. The topic of most of the meetings was the willingness of teachers to design a research on the difficulties that they face every day with the students. Two of the fifteen meetings were focused on other issues, which led them to be chosen to elaborate the discursive analysis and to search for the discursive formations that would subjectivate this group of teachers. The meetings focused on the writing of students constituting the corpus of this work.

Each meeting was recorded on audio with the consent of the teachers through the Free Prior Informed consent and according to the approval of the Research Ethics Committee of PUC/SP under the no. 18771713.8.0000.5482. Each recording, including the speeches of the participants of this research, was transcribed in regular orthographic form.

The subjects were given fictitious names in order to keep their confidentiality and they will be identified here as: Teacher B. and Teacher V. The names given to the students are also fictitious and researchers will be identified as P1 and P2.

Orlandi¹⁵ reports on the constitution of the corpus as one of the first points to decide when thinking about the analysis. The analyst suggests that the purpose of analyzing a corpus is not the completeness, and adds that “there is no closed discourse in itself but a discursive process from which one can take a fragment and analyze different states.”

Thus, the study used fragments, that is, discursive fragments as a procedure for data analysis on school failure triggered by discussions about writing. Firstly, the “raw language material as collected” was read¹⁵, then the “de-superficialization process”¹⁵ was started. A de-superficialization process means that the discursive object must receive a superficial analysis treatment to provide the analyst with clues as to how the discourse is textualized¹⁵. In this sense, the analyst must understand the so-called “forgetting number 2”, which gives the connotation that what was said could only be said in that way and then it will work to undo the effects of this illusion and construct a discursive object from the raw material. That is, analyzing what is said in one discourse and what is said in another, or in other conditions in which subjects are affected by different discursive memories¹³. To this

¹ Researchers who participated in the meetings are not characterized as subjects of the research, but their speeches may be included in the fragments as P1 and P2.

end, the researchers analyzed the fragments using the interpretation device, which as a characteristic in DA, should establish the said in relation to the non-said; what is said in one way to what is said on another; what the subject says in a place to what is said elsewhere trying to listen to how the meanings in their linguistic and historical materiality are constituted in words.

Therefore, interpretation is only possible because every statement is likely to become another. Thus, the place of that other statement (which is the place of interpretation) is the expression of the unconscious and ideology in the production of meanings and in the constitution of subjects¹⁵.

The interpretation is included in two stages of analysis, namely: 1) it is necessary to understand that the interpretation is part of the analysis, that is, the subject who speaks interprets and the discourse analyst must try to describe this interpretation of the subject that constitutes the meaning being analyzed; and 2) it is necessary to understand that there is no description without interpretation and it is necessary to introduce a theoretical device to intervene in the relationship of the analyst with the symbolic objects that he/she analyzes. Thus, the analyst will produce "a change in their relation of subject with interpretation: this change will allow them to work in the description with interpretation"¹⁵.

The author also reports that the analyst is expected to work in a position that is not neutral, that is, that crosses the effect of transparency of language, the literalness of meaning. Therefore, once these conditions are supported, the analyzes will be presented here in discursive fragments that will provide clues to discuss and analyze the meaning of school failure moving from an apparently inaugural position of the text and investing in the opacity of the language, in the mistake, in the failure and materiality.

Results

One of the teachers took writings from an instrument called Diagnostic Probing of Writing, commonly referred to by teachers as Probing. This instrument is associated with the theory on the Psychogenesis of the Written Language, by Emília Ferreiro and Ana Teberosky, which is widely available in Brazilian public schools. It is an instrument that analyzes the chances of writing for children.

The constructivist/interactionist "Ferreireana" theory proposed a new approach to the problem of writing system learning. Emília Ferreiro and Ana Teberosky discuss the idea of a cognoscent subject as suggested by the psychogenetic perspective of Jean Piaget. Therefore, "[...] a subject who learns through their own actions on the objects of the world and who builds their own categories of thought at the same time that organizes their world¹⁶.

Constructivist researchers found that children associate interpretations and hypotheses with writing, thus discovering "the process through which literacy takes place"¹⁶. Through the experiences of the authors, it was possible to show that the literacy paths are different from those assumed by the school, showing that for the child to understand the system of representation of writing, they must know: what writing represents and what is the structure of their mode of representation?

The answer is that the child needs to "discover" that writing represents speech, the sound of words. But according to Ferreiro and Teberosky, as children do not understand this representation at the beginning of the learning process of written language, children will try to adapt their own hypotheses to the information that they receive from the world.

When the child discovers that writing represents speech, they begin to formulate a hypothesis that is called Syllabic Hypothesis. This hypothesis is a qualitative leap, since the child restructures their previous assumptions with the information provided by reality. The syllabic hypothesis indicates that each letter represents a syllable. However, the authors of the theory of Psychogenesis of the Written Language make it clear that the writing of each child arising from the same hypothesis is not the same writing, and that there may be difficulties in recognizing the hypotheses if the teacher does not build a knowledge by observing the writing of their students¹⁶.

Ferreiro and Teberosky report that the syllabic hypothesis is a false but necessary hypothesis, as well as the constructive mistakes that will lead the child in the direction of objective knowledge¹⁶, that is, the alphabetic system.

The authors emphasize that numerous cognitive conflicts occur before the alphabetical hypothesis. The child conflicts due to the information received from the world, as well as due to the

hypotheses of the number of characters (letters) that he/she will build alone.

Thus, there is a transition level between the syllabic and alphabetic stages, which is called the syllabic-alphabetic hypothesis. At this stage, it is clear that the student begins to risk using vowels to form syllables and also begins to care in using the letters that actually correspond to the sound of the word¹⁷.

As stated by Emília Ferreiro, the author¹⁶ reports that the syllabic and syllabic-alphabetic writings have been seen as pathological by the school, as school ignores the evolutionary character of them.

Finally, the last hypothesis is the alphabetic hypothesis, in which the child already understands the alphabetical principle of the letter-sound relationship¹⁸.

The purpose to bring these references with regard to the literacy process as understood by the constructivist theory is to better situate the fragments of discourses that will follow, given that constructivism is part of the educational context of the country and of the social formations of teachers.

The Diagnostic Probing of Writing instrument is constantly applied in the classroom and has become frequent under the demands of governments. "Requirement of governments from different countries and different ideological positions"¹⁹.

This requirement is argued by the fact that it is possible to develop individual learning plans and observe their achievements from the understanding of each child's knowledge. However, there is a reservation of Teberosky for this argument:

Before discussing what teachers may and should teach, it seems important to know what are the ideas and the knowledge of the children and what expectations we can set in order to provide teaching-learning situations¹⁹.

This idea implies bringing to the discussion the confrontation of the political with the symbolic situating the discourse. It is possible to notice a school that distances itself from this reservation and there is the emergence of a teacher who, within an ideological state apparatus, responds to this educational political system. The teacher responds as a supporter of their class practice (class struggle) in ideology, giving "meaning" to the class interests to which they (teachers) serve,¹³ or that has served the educational political interest with their students to "identify them, sort them, compare them, put

them in order, in columns, in tables, gather them and separate them according to defined criteria, in order to put them at work [...]"²⁰.

In this perspective, this analysis showed that the Probing reaches the teacher as a requirement imposed by an ideological State apparatus that regulates and standardize the knowledge of the child and the way that teachers should conduct their work.

Throughout the analysis, certain regularities were observed in the functioning of the discourse of teachers, which, through the idea of discursive formation, allows us to understand the processes of the production of meanings and its relation to ideology¹⁵. It can be noticed in the analyzes presented in this study that, due to the conditions of production (application of the Diagnostic Probing of Writing to prove that the student is literate), there are discursive formations that derive from a model that ignores not only the student as a subject of knowledge, but also the teacher by imposing pedagogical practices that deny other uses and forms of reading that are not established by an official standard²¹.

Listening to teachers, professionals who face daily school obstacles, allowed us to identify that the meanings that cross school failure are part of a discursive/ideological formation that assigns to students a set of values determined by a capitalist discourse. That is, as representatives of this ideological apparatus, teachers reproduce a stabilized discourse. A discourse that ties failure to the student who does not reach a certain school ideal. Not being able to read and/or write correctly in a Probing, for example, is interpreted by the teacher as a permanent and definitive state, without alternative results. The teacher does not accept that the error is provisional and that the provisional nature is what identifies the student in their obstacles before the enigma that the writing represents for them. By crystallizing the meaning that students have for themselves, the teacher does not provide space to other meanings that, if opened, would move metonymically changing the capitalist discourse that subjugates the teacher in their reading. This lack of change in discourse may have relevant consequences in the literacy process as it determines a position for the child to take in a school standard advocated by examinations (Probing) and classifications (syllabic hypotheses) taking a spontaneous knowledge from that child. These

consequences may lead to blame the student for not learning and then pathologize them; or to blame the family environment; the lack of prior knowledge of the child before entering school, the devaluation of its uniqueness and the lack of reflection on the responsibility of the school in face of the alleged failure of the student.

Discussion

The following are discursive fragments.

Fragment 1:

(18²) Teacher V: This student, I'll try to get her Probing from last year as I believe that she may have that little thing that we don't know how to explain, right? But she is a (silence), she is being followed up with support for a long time and I'm starting to suspect that she is starting to be valued; however, at the same time, (silence) I know that there is no such repression, but the something happens (silence) and she freezes again. Well, Prô conducted this Probing on the nineteen and I know that (silence), well, I forgot the folder. But I have her latest Probing, before that one, in which she is not like this.

By saying that she believes "she may have that little thing", there is a doubt on the discourse of the teacher questioning if the child is "normal". She uses the diminutive "that little thing" as a grammatical way of softening her opinion on what affects the performance of her student. However, she replaces "I" by "we" to say that they don't know what is that little thing that the child may have and then asks for a confirmation: "we don't know how to explain, right?" Therefore, she shows that she does not know if the teacher and/or the school should be responsible for analyzing the development of their students. Should they be able to diagnose pathologies? Should it be assigned to teachers? Should this knowledge be a prerequisite for literacy? What could be different with this knowledge?

These questions can be interpreted by the fact that the school is surrounded by technical knowledge arising from the health field that understands the difficulties of schooling as pathological²². This

² The numbers in front of each sentence indicates the order of audio transcription.

is part of the history of school failure and it is possible to see the language inscribed in this story.

The teacher's oscillation, which can be noticed in her moments of silence, is present in this act by the adversative conjunction "but", noting an opposing relation to the need to know about her student in the sense of having some "little thing" that is causing her to "freeze again".

Still concerning the silence, it can be noticed that it is a silence stated as if she wanted to talk about what could happen to the child, but the silence is "not stated - the lack of speech"²³. This lack causes anguish in the educator for not having answers ranging between a pedagogical knowledge and a medical knowledge, as if it were possible to take care of all the obstacles lived in the classroom. This belief is part of an ideology of the capitalist system that supports the idea of completeness. Thus, the teacher is silent when she leaves a logically stabilized situation²⁰.

Fragment 2:

(414) Teacher V: I believe that she is already getting interested in buying the book as she is noticing that she is beginning to read. She is already noticing it. She is already feeling it, she is able to see that there is something going on.

It can be noticed that there is no pause when producing the sentence "I believe that she is already getting interested in buying the book as she is noticing that she is beginning to read". However, it is possible to pause while decondensing the sentence: "I believe that she is already getting interested. In buying the book as she is noticing that she is beginning to read." The interesting thing is that the student is the one who is noticing, and not the teacher. The student is the one who is noticing that she is beginning to read and that something is going on. That is, there is no failure in this case. However, the teacher cannot notice it, since the material chosen by the student is not what will answer to whether she is literate or not. She must "probe" to notice it.

Fragment 3:

(48) Teacher B: She is not necessarily dominating it as, for example, let's see the *Cks*. If you see this word, it has nothing to do with *Secas*, but if take a good look at it: *C K*. It has value. It has value. There are many students who use a sound of *ga*, from the word *gato*, for example. So they

write *gato* with a *H*, since they believe that the *H* makes the *ga* sound, for example. Syllabic with value. Here, well, the teacher must conduct several activities to make the student uncomfortable in this value, in that case, right?

“She is not necessarily dominating it” denotes that the child’s writing has to be something necessary, as “If you see this word, it has nothing to do with”. To “whom” it should be necessary? Who must “see this word”? The relative pronoun “you” was placed indefinitely in the discourse followed by a deictic term “see”. Although it has an indefinite pronoun in the discourse, it can be concluded that B is referring to herself. However, the subject acts while being acted upon by the system of the ideology existing in an ideological apparatus⁶. Thus, the above question - To whom it should be necessary? - there may be an answer that it must be necessary to maintain an ideology of an ideological State apparatus that regulates a “material ritual”⁶.

Fragment 4:

(54) P1: What are the words in here?

(55) Teacher V: *Serpentina, carnaval, samba and escola. Serpentina, carnaval, samba and escola.* Pay attention to the sound of it. Can you notice it? Yes, yes (end of speech inaudible).

(56) P1: So, why do you think that she used those letters and not others?

(57) Teacher B: Hmm.

(58) Teacher V. and Teacher B. (both said at the same time): There is no justification.

(59) Teacher V: It could have been... (she is interrupted by Teacher B)

(60) Teacher B: Maybe, this is what she remembers of the spelling.

(61) Teacher V: It could have been that she might have looked at the... (Laughs) The alphabet over the board and she liked some letters more than others (Laughs), then she used those letters. When there is no value, she does not assign any value. Sometimes she uses the letter of her name and more letters of her name (she is interrupted by Teacher B).

(62) Teacher B: This is due to the repertoire that she knows. That’s the reason.

The question of P1 to Teacher V about her opinion on the choices of letters used by the student caused an interjection in Teacher B (57) “Hmm,” instead of answering or reflecting on that question. At the same time, Teacher V and B answer (58) “There is no justification” to the question. The answer (58) indicates that the lack of a reason is not on part of the child, but from the teachers. By moving

from an expected context, that is, of an ideal written production, the teachers find no justification for this event, a lack of justification, since the pedagogical discourse imposes a unique direction.

Again, Teacher B interrupts Teacher V as a means to “prove” that there is no justification to the choices of the child. As seen in (60) “Maybe, this is what she remembers of the spelling”. That is, she has already memorized this information. In turn, Professor V struggles to find a physical test to prove that the child chose those words, as reported in “It could have been that she might have looked at the... (Laughs) The alphabet over the board and she liked some letters more than others (Laughs), then she used those letters”. The teacher did not seem affected by the student’s interests on specific letters of the alphabet. She understands it to be a random choice, without a reason, even being the letter of the name of the child. In other words, it is not relevant (62) “This is due to the repertoire that she knows”. “That’s the reason”.

This sentence implies that children’s repertoire is not taken into account before entering school and that choosing the letter of their own name is worthless. There is an opposition to the constructivist theory of the Probing technique applied by the teachers, since “everything changes if we believe that no child reaches zero at the first grade. Not even the most disadvantaged children. If we understand that there is knowledge socially transmitted that precedes the school [...]”¹⁶. Thus, the study questions the basis of the teacher to literate their students, since there seems to be no use of the theory that supports their practice. Or is there any theory that would overlap an authoritarian discourse, holder of knowledge?

Fragment 5:

(67) P1: But look, for example in this specific case here. This *Ser*, of the *serpentina* word, she actually started the word with a *C*.

(68) Teacher V: Indeed, she started with *C*, but take a look at the others. *Pode, foi* (keeping her voice at the same tone)

(silence)

(69) Teacher V: Yes, I understand that she was just guessing. It was a (she is interrupted by P2)

(70) P2: Or it was a word that got her attention (she is interrupted by Teacher B)

(71) Teacher B: In my opinion, I think so too. If there is only one, I will consider it a coincidence (laughs).

(72) Teacher V: It is a coincidence. (emphasizing)

(73) Teacher B: If there are more, if it is an incident, then I would say no. She is doing an analysis on writing, right? The phoneme.

In the first sentence, the researcher is trying to show to the teacher that her student reflected on writing. By using deictic expressions (67) “But look, for example” and “In this specific case here”, the researcher directly points to the production of the student indicating the event. Later, V opposes to it by reporting (68) “she actually started the word with a C”, “but ...”, indicating a restriction in keeping looking at it and in discussing the success of the child, using the adversative conjunction. Thus expressing that the perspectives of each one, researcher and teacher, were opposites. The perspective of the teacher was focused on the failure, that is, the mistake of the student. As the child missed all other words, the teacher just did not care if the child wrote the word with the expected logic. Therefore, using a metaphor in Brazilian Portuguese, the teacher understand the only word correct as (69) “she was just guessing”. Then, on the sentence (70), researcher 2 proposes a new meaning to the writing. But soon after, there is the answer of B reporting that she believes that this is a coincidence (71).

It may be noted the use of the personal pronoun “I” in the discourse of both teachers. Both said “In my opinion” and “I understand”, which can characterize a particular and autonomous position. However, “language represents the position of the subject of the discourse in a specific society”²⁴. This means that the subject speaks from a position marked socially and ideologically and not from himself/herself. In this case, the teachers speak from a given position in a certain relation of positions within an ideological apparatus, inscribed in a relation of classes²⁵.

The school is the ideological apparatus in which the teachers are enrolled, which brings to the discussion the presence of an authoritarian discursive functioning. The use of the pronoun “I” is resumed here. If the subject speaks from a position marked socially and ideologically, that means that the pronoun “I” allows the interpretation that the teachers are speaking on behalf of the institution through a pedagogical discourse.

The presence of an authoritarian discourse is most clearly expressed when Teacher V imposes (72) “It is a coincidence” without the opportunity to open to new meanings. This authoritarian discourse

can also be observed in (73) “then I would say no”, when reporting that there will be an analysis of the writing if the child hits more than one word, otherwise the answer to the student will be a no.

There are typologies of discourse. “One of the most common is the one that reflects the institutional distinctions and their standards”¹⁵. Then there are many discourses, such as the political, legal, religious, journalistic, pedagogical, [...]. Orlandi¹⁵ sought to distinguish different modes of functioning of the discourse, having constitutive elements as criterion of its conditions of production and its relation to the mode of production of meanings. Therefore, he describes authoritarian discourse as follows: ‘that discourse in which polysemy is restricted, the referent is left aside by the relation of language that is established and the speaker stands as exclusive agent, also leaving aside their relationship with the interlocutor’¹⁵.

The designation of authoritarian discourse confirms the analysis of the representation of the discourses in this fragment. There was a stabilization of saying in this fragment, as the child was left aside as well as the relationship with the interlocutor (the researchers) for their “position of subject with authoritarian discourse”²⁴. The authors explain that this type of discourse is characterized by assigning roles in which the subject-teacher are identified as “knowledge holder” or “leader”²⁴. Thus, there is an imaginary and complex game ignoring the discursive and ideological formations of the students, only emerging the “product” that may be exposed in relation to society. That is, a ruling power²⁴.

Fragment 6:

(74) Teacher V: *Serpentina*. The word here is *serpentina*.

(75) P1: It was the only word in which she put C and E.

(76) P2: But, for example, what else C represents in the word *Serpentina*. Is the C itself, isn't?

(77) Teacher V: Even so, she does not have it. She does not have.

(78) P2: Do you think so? And that's because you do not follow up, do you? Just for one word, right?

(79) Teacher V: You can't have it (keeping the voice) with just one word, a word alone.

(80) Teacher V: Look here, *Carnaval*. She could have used *Ca* as well, couldn't she? *Ca*? If she had used (end of the speech is inaudible) (...), a letter *K* or a *C*.

(81) Teacher B: An *a*.

(82) Teacher V: Or an *A*, she would use an *A* here. Sometimes, students may write *carnaval* with *a*, *a*. So, if she had used *a*, *a*, we would notice it.

(83) Teacher B: That's right.

(84) Teacher V: It already has a value. (silence) She does not add it. Pay attention to the sound of it. And I later I'll ask to you what you... I find it complicated when you take it (does not finish the sentence).

When analyzing the first sentences of this fragment - (sentences (74) to (79)) - by a way that aims to understand what a text means and not how it is meant, it can be concluded that the interlocution between teacher V and the researchers is at the level of a text without cohesion or coherence. Since there is a discourse not allowing the other who is listening to understand what is on the scene. What are they talking about?

It is noted that the question of researcher P2 casts doubt on whether V is really questioning the letter C. The educator does not respond to what was questioned and brings to the scene a sentence that, in an attempt to "understand" what was said by V means in relation to what was questioned, it moves from the proposal of seeing the text as a historical object²⁶. In this sense, the prevailing perspective goes in the direction of looking at the text as a discourse aimed to interpret the production conditions of the subjects analyzed here in situations in which they are called to position themselves.

In the situation here, it can be noticed that V, in the face of situations in which should position herself, brings discourses that escape from what is on the scene and "ask" for complement. In the sentence (77), the teacher produces a sentence that asks for a complement evoking a subordinate clause: "Even so, she does not have it. She does not have." What does not she have? What the student should have according to the teacher? And what does she means when she says "She does not have it"? What does she means with "it"? What is she talking about?

The incomplete sentence is also the object of analysis of the DA. When there is a lack of signifier in the metonymic chain, the subject cannot emerge and, consequently, is adrift since without the next signifier they will lose the point of anchorage and, thus, the intradiscourse enters into dispersion²⁷. These authors also say that when the subject is faced with something that is lacking, with a restricted content, that subject will find refuge in the great Other and uses ready-made interdiscourse formulas to defend himself/herself. This can be noticed in the

discourse of V. As faced with lacking signifier, she uses something already stabilized and known, and that is possible to be said in that situation.

To be adrift is the condition of every statement to become another and to move from its meaning to another meaning "unless the prohibition of proper interpretation to the logically stable is exercised on it explicitly"²⁰.

The dispersion has the appearance of "non sense of orality"²⁸. That is, by not being able to represent her own enunciation for herself, in order to position herself intentionally, the enunciator assures herself in the interdiscourse resulting from the Other²⁹.

The text analyzed has a prohibition of their own interpretation over the logically stable, to the logic of an ideology in which the student and the teacher must follow what was institutionally determined and which does not allow authorship²⁰.

In this way, the teacher returns the discourse to what would be possible to say bringing coherence to the text. That is, bringing to the discourse to the already-said. This analysis can be seen in the sentence (80) "Look here", turning the discourse to the practicable and stable, to the already-said somewhere in some theory. Look here, *Carnaval*. She could have used *Ca* as well, couldn't she? *Ca*? If only she had used it. "But it turns out that the child "does not use", so the child is no exception to the rule. And now what? The teacher will follow which discursive space to handle this situation with this event?

The fragment shows that the teacher follows the stabilized and standardized meanings and is not opened to changes of meaning. As a result, she also "takes away" the opening of new meanings and interpretations from the student. Thus, repeatedly, the teacher has the role assured as an applicator or commentator of a knowledge originated elsewhere. According to this operation, "by removing from the teacher the autonomy that makes him/her an author, we are also removing the authorship that is intended to reach the student"²⁹.

Final considerations

This study aimed to analyze the meanings of school failure in the discourse of primary education teachers of a public school in the north of São Paulo from the perspective of theoretical and meth-

odological support of French Discourse Analysis, by Michel Pêcheux.

Writing on this topic represented a challenge for this research, since this topic is widely discussed and studied from different perspectives. By sharing the results of this research, the researchers hope to provide the scientific community with an alternative way of thinking on school failure from the discourses of teachers in their discursive materiality.

However, by offering a voice to educators, by creating a space for discussion, where the meanings are worked in their materiality and in their relation to historicity, their positions may move and, thus encourage new interpretations about their students and about the dilemmas of education constructing ways with the children as proposed by the Probing technique. Offering a space to educators subverts the logically stabilized standard of a capitalist education. Thus, it can be assumed that if educators find other gestures of interpretation of the literacy process, they will also change the meanings of what is supposed to be school failure.

Finally, addressing this topic through discourse, with the support of a discipline of interpretation that sees beyond the linguistic surface, could give an innovative character to the topic, since the position taken in this study was to move from a theoretical evidence about what is conventionally called school failure to work with and for the subject, that is the teacher, in this case.

References

- Guimarães MS. Contribuições da psicanálise na escola: o professor se confrontando com sua própria palavra. Proceedings of the 7th Formação de Profissionais e a criança-sujeito; 2008; Col. LEPSI/FE-USP; São Paulo. 2009 [acesso em 2014 jun 30]; 8-11. Disponível em: http://www.proceedings.scielo.br/scielo.php?pid=MSC0000000032008000100062&script=sci_arttext&tling=pt.
- Barbosa Filho FR. Língua, Leitura, História. Décalages [periódico na internet Art. 21]. 2015 [acesso em 2018 jun 05]; 1(4):1-30. Disponível em: <http://scholar.oxy.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1081&context=decalages>.
- Zandwais A, Tutikian J. Apresentação. Rev. Conexão Let. Estudos Linguísticos e Literários e Suas Interfaces Com a Filosofia Marxista / Programa de Pós-Graduação do Instituto de Letras da Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul. Porto Alegre. 2014 [acesso em 2018 jul 09]; 9(12): 7-9. Disponível em: <http://seer.ufrgs.br/index.php/conexaoletras/article/view/55094/33507>.
- Monte-Serrat DM. Letramento e Discurso Jurídico [tese]. Ribeirão Preto (SP): Faculdade de Filosofia Ciências e Letras de Ribeirão Preto; 2012 [acesso em 2014 abr 02] doi:10.11606/T.59.2013.tde-14032013-104350 ; Disponível em: <http://www.teses.usp.br/teses/disponiveis/59/59137/tde-14032013-104350/pt-br.php>.
- Orlandi EP. A análise de discurso e seus entre-meios: notas a sua história no Brasil. Cad. Est. Ling. [periódico na internet]. 2002 [acesso em 2014 mai 05]; 42: 21-40. Disponível em: <https://periodicos.sbu.unicamp.br/ojs/index.php/cel/article/view/8637139/4861>.
- Althusser L. Aparelhos Ideológicos de Estado. 7. ed. Rio de Janeiro: Graal; 1998.
- Santos LJ. Sujeito e Sentido na Análise de Discurso. Rev. Ao pé da Letra. [periódico na internet]. 2013 [acesso em 2018 jul. 09]; 15(1): 153-167. Disponível em <https://periodicos.ufpe.br/revistas/pedaleta/article/view/231811/25955>.
- Linhares LL, Mesquita P, Souza LL. Althusser: a escola como aparelho ideológico do estado; PUC: Educere [PUCPR, anais evento]. 2007 [acesso em 2017 fev. 05]; 1494-1508. Disponível em: <http://www.pucpr.br/eventos/educere/educere2007/anaisEvento/arquivos/CI-204-05.pdf>.
- Jesus RE. Mecanismos eficientes na produção do fracasso escolar de jovens negros: estereótipos, silenciamento e invisibilização. Educ. Rev. [periódico na internet]. 2018 [acesso em 2018 jul. 09]; 34: 1-18, e167901. Disponível em: http://www.scielo.br/pdf/edur/v34/en_1982-6621-edur-34-e167901.pdf.
- Angelucci CB, Kalmus J, Paparelli R, Patto MHS. O estado da arte da pesquisa sobre o fracasso escolar (1991-2002): um estudo introdutório. Educ. Pesqui. [periódico na internet]. 2004 [acesso em 2012 set. 25]; 30(1): 51-72. Disponível em: <http://www.scielo.br/pdf/ep/v30n1/a04v30n1.pdf>.
- Pezzi FAZ, Marin AH. Fracasso escolar na educação básica: revisão sistemática da literatura. Temas Psicol. [periódico na internet]. 2017 [acesso em 2018 jul. 09]; 25(1): 1-15. Disponível em <http://pepsic.bvsalud.org/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1413-389X2017000100001&lng=pt&nrm=iso>.
- Paula FS, Tfouni LV. A persistência do fracasso escolar: desigualdade e ideologia. Rev. Bras. orientac. prof, [periódico na internet]. 2009 [acesso em 2012 set. 28]; 10(2): 117-127. Disponível em: <http://pepsic.bvsalud.org/pdf/rbop/v10n2/v10n2a12.pdf>.
- Pêcheux M. Semântica e discurso: uma crítica à afirmação do óbvio. 4. ed. Campinas: Editora da UNICAMP; 2009.
- Orlandi EP. Análise de Discurso. In: Orlandi EP, autor. Introdução às ciências da linguagem - Discurso e textualidade. 2. ed. Campinas: Pontes; 2010. p. 13-31.
- Orlandi EP. Análise de Discurso: princípios e procedimentos. 11. ed. Campinas: Pontes; 2013.
- Weisz T. Como se aprende a ler e a escrever: ou prontidão um problema mal colocado. Texto elaborado e organizado a partir da obra de Emília Ferreiro (Telma Weisz). In: *Revendando a proposta de alfabetização/Coordenadoria de estudos e normas pedagógicas*, Secretaria da Educação; (Org.) Elba Siqueira de Sá Barretto e Marília Claret Geraes Duran. Série Projeto Ipê. São Paulo: Cenp, 1985.

17. Marinelli LG. Sondagem de alfabetização: uma análise das hipóteses de escrita. *Revela – Rev. Eletr. Acad. da FALS, FPG e FPS* [periódico na internet]. 2012 [acesso em 2018 jul. 09]; (13). Disponível em: http://fals.com.br/novofals/revela/REVELA%20XVII/REVELA13_exp4.pdf.
18. Andrade PE, Andrade OVCA, Prado PST. Psicogênese da língua escrita: uma análise necessária. *Cad. Pesqui.* [periódico na internet]. 2017 [acesso em 2018 jul. 09]; 47(166): 1416-39. Disponível em: <http://www.scielo.br/pdf/cp/v47n166/1980-5314-cp-47-166-1416.pdf>.
19. Riolfi CR, Schuler D, Barzotto VH. Comparação de duas experiências de sondagens na alfabetização: Brasil e Alemanha. *Educ: Teor. e Prat.* [periódico na internet]. 2010 [acesso em 2013 dez. 10]; 20(34): 133-150. Disponível em: <http://educa.fcc.org.br/pdf/eduteo/v20n34/v20n34a09.pdf>.
20. Pêcheux M. *O discurso: estrutura ou acontecimento*. 5ª ed. Campinas: Pontes; 2008.
21. Sawaya SM. Desnutrição e práticas pré-escolares de leitura e escrita. *Estud. av.* [periódico na internet]. 2013 [acesso em 2014 mai 12]; 27(78): 89-102. Disponível em: <http://www.scielo.br/pdf/ea/v27n78/07.pdf>.
22. Pato MHS. *A Produção do Fracasso Escolar: histórias de submissão e rebeldia*. São Paulo: Casa do Psicólogo, 1999.
23. Freire RM. Se silêncio, que silêncio: em cena a clínica fonoaudiológica. *Distúrb. Comum.* [periódico na internet]. 2009 [acesso em 2018 jul. 09]; 21(1): 101-105. Disponível em: <http://revistas.pucsp.br/index.php/dic/article/view/6946>.
24. Tfouni LV, Toneto DJM, Adorni A. A dimensão político-pedagógica da “comunicação sem equívocos” frente aos desafios da escola para todos: novos lugares interpretativos para a prática docente. *Rev. Ling. & Ensino* [periódico na internet]. 2011 [acesso em 2014 jan. 04]; 14(2): 427-53. Disponível em: <http://www.rle.ucpel.tche.br/index.php/rle/article/view/34>.
25. Pêcheux M, Fuchs C. A propósito da Análise Automática do discurso: atualização e perspectivas [1975] In: Gadet F, Hak T, orgs. *Por uma análise automática do discurso: uma introdução à obra de Pêcheux*. 3. ed. Campinas: Editora da UNICAMP; 1997. p. 163-251.
26. Orlandi EP. *Texto e discurso*. *Organon – Revista do Instituto de Letras da UFRGS* [periódico na internet]. 1995 [acesso em 2018 jul. 09]; 9(23): 111-8. Disponível em: <http://seer.ufrgs.br/index.php/organon/article/view/29365/18055>.
27. Assolini FEP, Tfouni LV. *Letramento e trabalho pedagógico*. *Rev. ACOALFAlp: Acolhendo a Alfabetização nos Países de Língua Portuguesa* [periódico na internet]. 2006 [acesso em 2017 nov. 20]; 1(1): 50-72. Disponível em: <http://www.revistas.usp.br/reaa/article/view/11446/13214>.
28. Tfouni LV, Pereira AC. *Letramento, heterogeneidade e alteridade: análise de narrativas orais produzidas por uma mulher não-alfabetizada*. *Alfa: Rev. de Linguist.* [periódico na internet]. 2005 [acesso em 2014 jan. 05]; 49(1): 31-49. Disponível em: <https://periodicos.fclar.unesp.br/alfa/article/view/1369/1071>.
29. Baldini LJS. *A autoria é algo que se ensina? 16º Congresso de leitura do Brasil (COLE); 10 a 13 de jul. 2007; Unicamp. Campinas. 2007* [acesso em 2013 nov. 20]. p. 1-7. Disponível em: <http://maratavarespsictics.pbworks.com/w/file/74442503/autoria.pdf>.