

**The ideological interpellation process and cynicism in the Discourse
Analysis research / Processo de interpelação ideológica e cinismo na
pesquisa em Análise do Discurso**

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ABSTRACT

The process of ideological interpellation is considered one of the main elements that constitute the Historical-dialectic Materialism heritage in the French approach of the Discourse Analysis. When it is analyzed by Michel Pêcheux, it receives a singular dimension, based on the operation of the modalities of subjective functioning in the way the ideology interpellates the individuals into subjects. The identification, the counteridentification, and the disidentification are the three modalities that have the objective of characterizing the relation between the subject and the ideology, and this relation is crossed and determined by the discursive formations. These assumptions are the basis of this paper, and its objective is to think about how the Discourse Analysis has developed research when considering the cynical operation of the ideology. The studies that have made this articulation bring out the importance of the cynicism considered in the subjectivation of the subject, taking into account, mainly, the crises that have occurred in contemporary democracies. Another element that seems important in the consideration of the cynicism in the research in Discourse Analysis concerns the way the oblivion 1 and 2 work in the discourse theory. Thus, based on the theoretical elements mentioned, this reflection will bring theoretical elements to consider the cynicism as part of the discursive operation through a forging process.

KEYWORDS: Cynicism; Ideology; Discourse Analysis.

RESUMO

O processo de interpelação ideológica, considerado um dos principais elementos que constituem a herança do Materialismo Histórico-Dialético na abordagem francesa da Análise do Discurso, ao passar pela leitura de Michel Pêcheux, recebe uma dimensão singular, baseada na operação de modalidades de funcionamento subjetivo na forma como a ideologia interpela os indivíduos em sujeitos. A identificação, a contraidentificação e a desidentificação são as três modalidades que objetivam caracterizar a relação do sujeito com a ideologia, sendo que essa relação é atravessada e determinada pelas formações discursivas. Tendo como base esses pressupostos, o objetivo do presente trabalho é tratar sobre como a Análise do Discurso tem desenvolvido suas pesquisas ao considerar o funcionamento cínico da ideologia. Os estudos que têm realizado essa articulação trazem a importância de o cinismo ser considerado subjetivação do sujeito, tendo em vista, principalmente, as crises que vêm ocorrendo nas democracias contemporâneas. Outro elemento que parece ser importante na consideração sobre o cinismo na pesquisa em Análise do Discurso diz respeito à forma como trabalham os esquecimentos n° 1 e n° 2 na teoria do discurso. Desse modo, com base nos elementos teóricos mencionados, esta reflexão trará elementos teóricos para se considerar o cinismo como parte do funcionamento discursivo através de um processo de forjadura.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Cinismo; Ideologia; Análise do Discurso.

1 Introductory Considerations

Discourse Analysis, a theory that originated in the core of structuralist studies in the late 1960s, brings important (and necessary) elements to the comprehension of the constitution process of subjects and meanings. Michel Pêcheux, the philosopher

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responsible for the creation of this discipline within the Human Sciences, contributes to the epistemological field in which he is inserted through a singular gesture of comprehension of the relation between language, history and subject. Seeking support in Marxism, Psychoanalysis and Linguistics, the Discourse Analysis theoretical-analytical device appears as the effect of a revolutionary reflection in the logically established science from that time.

The author left a legacy dense of reflections, permeated by questions and rectifications, which were presented during the period that comprised the late 1960's until the early 1980's. For almost twenty years, Pêcheux was able to install in his circle a renovation regarding the comprehension of how meaning is established, calling it *discursive semantics* (HAROCHE, PÊCHEUX, HENRY, 2007 [1971]) possible from a *materialistic theory of the meanings* (PÊCHEUX, 2009 [1975]).

Part of the Pêcheutian work ethics is the constant questioning about its scientific practice, allied to a political practice. Hence, the philosopher leaves a field of questions to be thought by those who have followed him and, in spite of having been widely benefited with the theoretical basis constructed in France, *movement* is (and should be) always desired by the discourse analyst researcher. Movement, here, is thought as the fundamental element of the dialectic materialism (ORLANDI, 2016) and, also, as what characterizes the discourse, the subject and the meaning. For Orlandi (1995, p. 38), “signification is a movement, as is identity a movement”, and the author signals the acting of this movement in three ways: in the wander of the meaning, in the roaming of the subject and in the flow of the discourse.

The present study brings out a theoretical gesture in order to reflect upon the effects of cynicism in the subjectification processes. Its aim is to briefly tackle the way Discourse Analysis (DA) has been developing its research in considering the cynical functioning of ideology. Considering the determining role of ideology in the DA, it becomes necessary to question how the cynical form of the functioning of ideology would work in the analysis proposed by the theory. The reflection is justified considering that cynicism is, in the current social formation, a mode of functioning of ideology present in the social relations, especially in the juridical-political relations, affecting the functioning of the State Apparatuses (Ideological and Repressive, according to Althusser's theorization), and, consequently, the Democratic State of Law. This functioning reaches, therefore, the class

warfare, and it is because of it that the analyst's attentive regard should bring the question to the scope of their analysis.

2 Discourse Analysis and Cynicism

In order to begin the theoretical course proposed in this text, it is important to reference some of the main elements that theoretically-epistemologically constitute the Discourse Analysis. This device considers that from the contact between subject, history and language the discourse is constituted, and that it is in the contradiction between Psychoanalysis, Historical Materialism and Linguistics that DA is made (ORLANDI, 2006). For Maldidier (2003, p. 15 [author's emphasis]), the discourse is, in Pêcheux, “a true *knot*. It is never a first or empirical object. It is the theoretical place in which all its great questions about language, history and subject are literally intricate”. This theoretical knot, the discourse, is the materiality that gives it the possibility of existence of drifting points, of ruptures in the repeatable order. Hence, it is added to what is posed by Maldidier (2003), Pêcheux's speech (2006 [1988], p. 53): “every utterance, every sequence of utterances is, thus, linguistically describable as a (lexical-semantically determined) sequence of the possible drifting points, offering room for interpretation. It is in this space that the discourse analysis intends to work”.

The reference to Pêcheux's theorization in *Discourse: structure or event?* becomes necessary in order to understand how the language sustains itself in the process of constitution, formulation and circulation of meanings. Language is, in theory, understood as *relatively autonomous*, because the meaning that is established from it depends not only on the linguistic structure, but mainly on what happens in its exteriority. There is the possibility that meaning always moves from itself and becomes another, as Pêcheux (2006 [1988], p. 53) himself says in the previously cited work: “every utterance is intrinsically susceptible to becoming another, different from itself, discursively moving from its meaning to drift to another one”. Meaning is not attached to the word, but depends on the subject's binding to a certain discursive formation (DF), and this relation between subject and discursive formation is not averse to tension, to incompleteness, to failure. Language means through the crossing of the ideology; the subject is capable of interpreting based on an ideologically determined identification. Similarly, language means because the subject

is equipped with unconsciousness; the subject is able to interpret because they do not recognize its interpellation and is moved by desire. In view of the above, the concept of ideology in the theory means from that which puts itself as evident to the subject, whose existence is material, instead of being understood as an effect of a hiding process.

The drifting points of which Pêcheux tells us (2006 [1988]) are possible not only due to the opaque character of language, but also due its equivocality. Language is understood as the bearer of an absence impossible to be fulfilled and sutured (absence seen as the reality of the language), manifested through mistakes represented in the structure (cf. MILNER, 1987). Therefore, DA's core is in considering a linguistic structure that operates in accordance with two forces: the social-historical determination forces and the subject's psychic structure forces, predominantly unconscious. Thereby, a conflict characterizes the constitution of subjectivity, and from that arise the contradictions, constitutive of both. On account of this highly contradictive character, from the linguistic materiality, the emergence of more than one possibility of interpretation will be feasible, being understood as these *drifting points*. It is in these drifting points that the theory works and, through this angle, discusses the main concepts that mark the discursive functioning.

In the understanding of the language functioning, especially the semantic functioning, the question of subjectivity is essential. Hence, in the understanding of how the meaning constitutes itself, it is necessary to understand the constitution of the subject, which occurs via unconscious and ideological determination. The process of ideological interpellation, according to the Althusserian understanding, is moved to the discourse theory and gains operability through the discursive formation functioning, a notion recovered from Michel Foucault's theory. Allied with the Althusserian understanding of ideology, Pêcheux promotes a rereading of the notion of discursive formation in order to account for a conception affected by the ideological functioning, considering the theory's Historical Materialism as basis. The discursive formation is, thus, an effect of the ideology material functioning, which is configured as evidence of the meaning and not a falsification of reality; this notion is a central figure in DA's venture, for it works as an administrator of what is possible and needed to be said from a determined position in the class warfare, as previously debated. It connects, therefore, the linguistic level to the ideological level; it mobilizes the subject identification to an ideology that works on their interpellation.

The whole process narrated thus far happens without the subject's consciousness. There is no consciousness that the subject is an effect of an ideological determination, and that meaning is constituted as an effect of that determination. Confirming such presumption, Zizek (1996, p. 312 [author's emphasis]), when treating the ideology in Marxist terms, refers to the following: "the most elementary definition of ideology is probably the well-known phrase from Marx's *Capital*: '*Sie wissen das nicht, aber sie tun es*' – 'they do not know it, but they are doing it'.

Unfolding what was postulated by Marx in order to arrive to the Althusserian reading, we can affirm that the subject does not know what they do, but this lack of consciousness does not derive from a falsification of reality; in fact, with Althusser's theorization, one arrives at the ideology as a way of material existence that works through the State Apparatuses (ALTHUSSER, 2008). Ideology, therefore, does not hide or falsify the reality for the subject, but actually presents itself as evidence, as saturation that is available to the subjects (and, thus, the establishment of meaning could not be in any other way but that produced from what is evident to the subject).

The idea resumed by Zizek (1996) that *they do not know it, but they are doing it* is moved by Sloterdijk (2012) in order to discuss cynicism. Such utterance, hence, is important to tackle the cynicism and its relation to the way ideology operates in the social formation. Sloterdijk says that the cynical reason Works from the following logic: *they know very well what they are doing, but still, they are doing it*. According to Zizek (1996, p. 313),

Peter Sloterdijk puts forward the thesis that ideology's dominant mode of functioning is cynical, which renders impossible – or, more precisely, vain – the classic critical-ideological procedure. The cynical subject is quite aware of the distance between the ideological mask and the social reality, but he none the less still insists upon the mask. The formula, as proposed by Sloterdijk, would then be: 'they know very well what they are doing, but still, they are doing it'. Cynical reason is no longer naïve, but is a paradox of an enlightened false consciousness: one knows the falsehood very well, one is well aware of a particular interest hidden behind an ideological universality, but still one does not renounce it (ZIZEK, 2009, p. 313).

The cynical functioning of ideology is related, therefore, to a change in the social bond between the subjects of the contemporary social formation. The repression of the dominance relation with the end of Feudalism and the ascension of Capitalism originates a

neurotic social bond in a production society, whose fundamentals is repression. However, from the harmonic relation between statements that no one believes in and the omnipotence of the capital, what previously configured a social bond based on neurosis, is reconfigured in the post-industrial capitalism, situating itself, then, as a perverse social bond. According to Safatle (2008, p. 22), “cynicism would be solidary to the transformation of perversion, and no longer to the neurosis, in a necessary balance of our processes of socialization”. In this social bond, no longer present in the production society, but indeed in the consumer society, paradigm is imperative of enjoyment, and the subjectification has denial (instead of repression) as a defense mechanism. Denial promotes, therefore, the relation of the subject in the social formation through the masks present in the abovementioned quote, it being possible for the subject to position themselves as a legislator and enjoy from the suffering of the other. We understand, thus, that the cynical reason allows one to have consciousness and, even with consciousness, maintain the exploitation as a way of enjoyment from the suffering of the other over whom it is legislated in a society of weakness of institutions and of democratic appearance.

The cynical subject, as expressed in Zizek’s understanding (1996) of Sloterdijk’s theorization (2012), knows of the distance between the ideological mask and the social reality. This subject understands the social-historical-ideological functioning in which they are inserted and the way they position themselves in this functioning; understanding their role, they decide to maintain the mask instead of resisting. We can recover an example of the contemporary Brazilian political conjuncture. Some politicians in position of power may say “Let’s end corruption”; while at the same time these same politicians are linked to criminal organizations. There is, hence, a distance between the ideological mask and the social reality; what the subject says does not represent their ideological determination: it is a lie with the appearance of truth.

We interrupt this text, based on what was above exposed, to resume what happened to Michel Temer, Dilma Rousseff’s Vice President, who, after taking office of the Presidency with the 2016 coup and leaving the post to Jair Bolsonaro, was arrested on March 21st 2019 and considered the *head of a criminal organization that exists for at least 40 years in Brazil*. The coup, we recollect, in spite of having juridical grounds on “fiscal pedaling” practiced by Dilma (and incidentally also by the Presidents that preceded her),

was justified by the need to “drain the swamp” of Brazilian corruption¹, given that, at the time, corruption was only associated, in the imaginary construction forged by the mainstream media, with a sole political party: the *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (Workers’ Party, PT). The “draining”, then, would occur by the hands of Temer². A few months after the coup, we find the following scenery, according to Reichow, Mello e Carleial (2018, p. 146):

Cuts on social rights began, as well as pivotal deregulations of the oil economy and, essentially, the visualization of PETROBRAS as a financial asset - leading to the sale of pre-salt oilfields, changes in the state company’s administration, and the institution of a new price policy. And with this implementation, again, of a neoliberal and privatizing model, interpretations that one of the motives for the coup itself was to surrender the pre-salt to international oil groups and, ideally, to privatize PETROBRAS began. (REICHOW; MELLO; CARLEIAL, 2018, p. 146).

The coup, popularly justified as a way to put an end to corruption, is installed in Brazilian politics as a resource for the exploitation of corruption. Such is the cynical functioning of ideology: “what is seen today is a relation, somehow harmonic, between statements that no one believes in and the omnipotence of the capital” (BALDINI, 2009, p. 04).

Proceeding with our theorization, we must ask: what would be the effect of this perverse functioning in the core of the theoretical-epistemological apparatus of the Discourse Analysis? It seems to be necessary, following Baldini’s studies (2009), to propose a form of relation between the cynical functioning of the ideology and Michel Pêcheux’s modalities of subjectification. For the author, in the contemporary practices, the relations of the subjects with their own statement would anchor “the marks of an alteration in their identification with the discursive formations” (BALDINI, 2009, p. 02), and this alteration would modify the identification of subjects with the ideology in the post-industrial capitalism. We are in agreement with Baldini (2009, p. 05-06) when the author insists on the necessity of considering a difference in affirming that “we are facing a new model of power, which operates in different ways, and that brings consequences to a

¹ With regards to this point, we resort to Indursky’s reflection (2017), in which the author analyses some utterances by federal deputies in the impeachment voting session in the Chamber of Deputies.

² It is important to highlight that the destitution of Dilma only took place with the support of a part of the Brazilian population displeased with the more than 13 years that PT occupied the Presidency. Dilma Rousseff does not have her name associated with criminal organizations and exerts her citizenship freely.

materialistic theory of the discourse, for what is operated is, fundamentally, a different relation of the subjects with the discourse”.

As cynicism would relate to the identification of subjects with discursive formations, it is necessary to briefly approach the modalities of subjective functioning that operationalize the relations of the subjects with them, a relation regulated by ideology. These three modalities, presented in-depth in Pêcheux (2009 [1975]), widen the conceptions of subject from the Psychoanalysis to the Historical Materialism. Grigoletto (2005) summarizes as presented in *Language, Semantics and Ideology*: (i) the identification, modality of a good subject, in which they identify themselves, unconsciously, with the discursive and ideological formation to which they are subjected; (ii) the counterdiscourse, modality in which the subject revolts, questions and challenges the ideological evidences of the discursive formation of their determination; and (iii) the disidentification, whose baseline is in the second modality, being it the taking of a non-subjective position.

Resuming Baldini’s proposal (2009, p. 07), the author affirms: “what the matter of the cynical functioning seems to explicit is exactly an affiliation of the subject to a certain discourse, but in a way that there is, in principle, certain distancing, certain ironic approximation, a commitment of a different kind”. Considering, thus, the role of the discursive formations, assuming that the discursive formations “determine *what can and should be said* (articulated under the form of a harangue, of a sermon, of a pamphlet, of an exhibition, of a show, etc.) from a given position in a given conjuncture” (HAROCHE; PÊCHEUX; HENRY, 2007 [1971], p. 26 [authors’ emphasis]), it seems that the knot that connects ideology and cynicism materializes in the language: the subject’s relation with their statement marks the failure of the ideological interpellation process, authorizing to the subject a mistaken position regarding the discursive formation that interpellates them and the discursive formation that represents them in the social formation (such is the material functioning of cynicism). This parody operated by the subject in the functioning of the discursive formations ultimately affects, hence, the functioning of the imaginary formations. Therefore, the subject creates a forged image of themselves in order to somehow enjoy the suffering of the other, maintaining a relation of dominance by appearing to be an impossible truth. Since the discursive formation is linked to the class warfare, the identification that the subject tries to control through oblivion 2 and their

ideological determination (here we are talking about two different discursive formations³) are also linked to different positions in the class warfare. The relationship with the DF that forges it is not paraphrastic, but parodic.

When we bring attention to the discussion about the relation between cynicism and oblivion 2, we are basing ourselves on the proposal by Indursky (2017). The author, while analyzing the votes of the deputies in the Chamber of Deputies session concerning Dilma Rousseff's impeachment process (the same deputies that approved the changes on PETROBRAS and the sale of the pre-salt, as previously mentioned), tackles the cynical functioning of the ideology mentioning that there is "a certain autonomy of the subject in the sliding of oblivion 1 towards oblivion 2", that is, we interpret that this functioning can be understood as *the subject does not know what they are doing* (oblivion 1) towards *they know what they are doing, but still, they are doing it* (oblivion 2).

The subject does not speak what they can and should say from the ideological determination. Baldini (2009, p. 08) argues that, in the cynical identification, the subject *does not adhere to their saying*, "since they are never totally there where they speak, since they are only in half in what is said. It is further a discourse of derision, since no assertion can be assumed without being rapidly combined with another, which becomes its double". We understand that, recognizing their disengagement of a discursive formation, the subject speaks what can and should be said in order to appear engaged to a determined discursive formation, like play of imagery in which one tries to control the meaning that can be established from what one says (relation with oblivion 2, as formerly explained). Such practice necessarily affiliates it to another DF, given that it is not outside the ideology functioning via discursive formation.

The subject, in the production society, represses the exploitation relations; on the other hand, in the consumer society, they recognize these relations, deny (refuse) this existence and enjoy the suffering of the exploited. The identification with a discursive formation is followed by a refusal, and we understand this refusal as the functioning of a *forged identification*, a *forgery*, materially fabricated in what it says via oblivion 2.

Final Considerations

³ We are lead to believe that they are two different discursive formations, but maybe other theorizations can point towards different subject-positions. The present work does not intend to deepen this point.

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Based on the aim proposed, it was possible to recover the DA theoretical elements necessary to reflect about the subjectification proposal via cynicism. The cynical functioning of the ideology impacts how the subject is subjectified, and we understand this functioning, as narrated in the theoretical path presented, as a materially operationalized forgery process through the action of oblivion 2.

We conclude the present reflection mentioning that the articulation between cynicism and discourse shows to be very productive in the frame of the studies developed in Discourse Analysis. It is possible to cite some studies that have been advancing in this theme, engaging an analytical dimension to the theorization about cynicism: Baldini and Di Nizo (2015), Vinhas (2017), Cassana (2018), Ernst (2018), and Pruinelli (2018). DA as a scientific weapon not only theorizes and analyses about the theme, but also works as a necessary scientific weapon in the current social formation that lives a lie with the appearance of truth.

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Data de recebimento: 19/05/2019

Data de aceite: 17/06/2019