

Reading and text comprehension activities: an analysis of imperative verbs and interrogative pronouns in textbooks from a Portuguese Language collection /

As atividades de leitura e compreensão textual: uma análise dos verbos imperativos e dos pronomes interrogativos em Livros Didáticos de uma coleção de Língua Portuguesa

Adriana da Silva *

Graduated in Letters at the São João del-Rei Higher Education Foundation (1994), Master in Linguistic Studies at the Federal University of Minas Gerais (1997) and PhD in Linguistics at the State University of Campinas (2004). Currently works in the Postgraduate Program in Letters at the Federal University of Viçosa, working mainly on the following topics: metadiscourse, academic literacy and multi-courses.

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5429-8792>

Iane Maria Santos Martins **

Iane is on track for her undergrad degree in Portuguese at the Federal University of Viçosa, where she has been involved in extension projects dealing with literature and in an academic internship under the PIBID program (Programa Institucional de Bolsas de Iniciação à Docência). Recently, she has concluded research on Applied Linguistics about reading and comprehension of textbooks.

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4275-3217>

Received: December, 05th, 2020. **Approved:** December, 15th, 2020.

How to cite this article:

DA SILVA, Adriana; MARTINS, Iane Maria Santos. Reading and text comprehension activities: an analysis of imperative verbs and interrogative pronouns in textbooks from a Portuguese Language collection. *Revista Letras Raras*, Campina Grande, v. 10, n. 1, p. 122-142, jan. 2021. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10277951>

*

 adria.silva@ufv.br

**

 ianemartins99@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The textbook is the main teaching tool in Portuguese language classes. The present study seeks to describe and to analyze reading and the text comprehension exercises of two textbooks, one from the 6th grade and the other from the 9th grade, based on theories Applied Linguistics and Text Linguistics. For this analysis, fourteen narrative texts present in the books were selected and analyzed as to how the comprehension questionnaires are structured, checking how the words used to ask questions interfere in the skills that are developed or expected for the students in a classroom. The following aspects were highlighted: the importance of complementing more systematic and reflective exercises, the implementation of a more structured sequence of the exercises, the expansion of oral activities in the classroom, and also the importance of teaching linguistic elements for the promotion of understanding based on language and its use.

KEYWORDS: Reading; Text Comprehension; Teaching.

RESUMO

O livro didático ainda é uma das principais ferramentas de ensino nas aulas de língua portuguesa. O presente estudo busca descrever e analisar os exercícios de leitura e compreensão textual de dois Livros Didáticos, um do 6º ano e outro do 9º ano, a partir da Linguística Aplicada e da Linguística Textual. Para a análise, foram selecionados quatorze textos narrativos presentes nos livros e analisados como são estruturados os questionários de compreensão, verificando como as palavras empregadas para fazer as perguntas interferem nas habilidades que são desenvolvidas ou esperadas para os alunos em sala de aula. Evidencia-se a importância da complementação de exercícios mais sistemáticos e reflexivos, a implementação de uma sequência mais bem estruturada desses exercícios, a ampliação de atividades orais em sala de aula e também a importância de professores se basearem no ensino de elementos linguísticos para a promoção da compreensão baseada na linguagem e seu uso.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Leitura; Compreensão textual; Ensino.

1 Introduction

When we talk about how reading and text comprehension are taught in school, we often associate them with questionnaires proposed by textbooks (in Portuguese: Livros Didáticos, or LD), whose purpose is to encourage the students to observe the many diverse aspects of a text, such as characters, their actions, the kind of speech employed by the author, etc. There is a frequent dismissal of how these questions are structured: the students are given orders on how to perform the activity, which reveals a lot about what kind of incentive these students are being subjected to, how they are going to understand the text, whether in a more thoughtful manner or something more akin to a repetition of what is present in the textbook.

Thus, it is possible to argue that, oftentimes, the students is not impelled to reflect on the text, nor to use their background knowledge to foster a relationship between their knowledge and the author's message, through the text, in a contextualized manner. Nowadays, reading is considered an interactive process between interlocutors. However, for a long time, the common perception in the sciences, in schools, and in textbooks, was of reading based on the simple interpretation of the text, with the reader as playing a secondary role, a receiver only, capable of gathering from the text alone the necessary information and the intentions of the author.

Martins and Silva (2019), in a study entitled *A formação de leitores através dos Livros Didáticos* (Reader's training through textbooks) inquired further, paying special attention to the reading and text

comprehension activities present in two textbooks of the same collection, widely used in Brazilian schools, one for the 6th grade and the other for 9th-grade students. In this study, the researchers made a point of observing which items the questions referred to, for example, to the description of the characters, their actions, the text genre, and to what text they belonged to, etc.

According to this perspective, in this article, we aim to identify and describe the reading and text comprehension issues, as well as the linguistic elements that guide such issues, in addition to explaining what abilities the performance of such activities requires of the students, and discuss the importance each kind of question seeks to accomplish with regard to the students' reading skills.¹ It is a relevant study due to the fact that it can foster more knowledge about the application of theories on reading and comprehension, thus providing the opportunity for teachers, Letters undergraduates, and Applied Linguistic researchers to accrue data on how different linguistic mechanisms are addressed in textbook activities and which abilities are developed by the students in the process, thus allowing for a greater understanding of the teacher's supporting material. It must be noted that these linguistic aspects carry different reading perspectives, some with major emphasis on grammatical elements, others more concerned with more reflective and less structural approaches.

This research is within the Applied Linguistic field and employs a qualitative and interpretative methodology that seeks to describe and analyze the reading questions present in both textbooks (6th grade and 9th grade), published in 2015 and used in schools in 2017, 2018, and 2019, both pertaining to the same collection. As far as reading is concerned, Brazil still poses many problems regarding education, due to the fact that it is a complex phenomenon that depends on linguistic, extra-linguistic, political, cultural factors as well as teacher and student training, and so forth. In this paper, we present a snippet of activities proposed by the textbook, evaluating its reading questions, the instructions given in the questionnaires intended for exercising the reading comprehension of the collected texts.

This paper is divided into five parts: the first deals with theories on reading upon which this text is based; the second describes the methodological paths undertaken for the purpose of thoroughly creating the analysis and descriptions; the third focuses on the subjects addressed by the reading questions and text comprehension; the fourth highlights and analyses the instruction elements used in the activities and what relevance they possess when it comes to creating clear statements. Finally, the last section presents the final conjectures, pointing out the importance of mixing up activities that deal with structure with activities

¹ The linguistic elements that guide the questions are verbs in the imperative mood, as for example, *explain, observe, answer, etc.*; and also question words, such as, *what, which, how, etc.*

that focus on reflection, and the necessity of better follow-up activities, with clearer boundaries between themes, as well as putting forward the idea of giving more space for debates in the classroom.

2 Reading and multiple perspectives

In Brazil, textbooks are tools often used for supporting teachers in the teaching and learning process of the Portuguese language in Basic Education. Traditionally, most textbooks adopted by schools contain texts accompanied by questionnaires on text comprehension. Marcuschi (2008) states that these activities are important for developing the students' comprehension abilities, but adds that it is essential to stimulate not only the understanding of the formal aspects of the language but also the students' abilities to reflect on and critically think about what is being read. It is worth noting that this study takes into account the reading activities proposed by the textbooks (from now on, TB) as a guide and a way of promoting a dialogue between the students and the text, since these readers are still undergoing a training process and, for this reason, they still lack the necessary abilities to form associations that may increase the communicative potential of the texts. In this article, we consider valid reading only when there is thorough text understanding. While some researchers in the 70's, for example, viewed reading as mere decoding of the text, the current Text Linguistic perspective on the matter employed, and to which this text subscribes, the linguistic and extra-linguistic aspects must be considered. Therefore, there is reading only when there is comprehension (MARSCUSCHI, 2008; Koch and Elias, 2006).

The way teachers view reading, their thoughts on the matter, influence their pedagogic practices, and much has been said about these preconceptions. Thus, it must be noted that the different preconceptions of what constitutes reading are also present in the textbooks, due to the fact that the formulation of the reading activities is prone to repeat these different preconceptions. Pietri (2007, p.11) states that "reading is a practice bound to the school", meaning that in our society, the school is responsible for teaching how to read. Thus, it must be noted that there is a school-bound reading, but there is also another type of reading, which is built on the social upbringing.

It is valid to observe that, at school, the students repeat the readings put forward by the textbooks, the greatest source of material for teachers, and such students do not present many difficulties when they develop these practices. However, when they are put to the test outside the classroom, this reality changes, since, as it has been pinpointed in this text, the school-bound reading is, oftentimes, very different from the abilities required by a social - critical and reflective - reading.

It is of great importance to study the reading process, whether in textbooks or in the classroom, since, as Geraldi (2003) states:

Working with language, at school, has been increasingly characterized by the presence of text, both as an object of readings and as production work. If we want to outline the specificity for the teaching of the Portuguese language, it can be found with the texts. In other words, what is specific to the Portuguese classes is the work with texts. (GERALDI, 2003, P. 105).

The textbook uses the text as a basic tool for working with linguistic contexts, the communication happens through text, but Brazilians' struggle with reading still persists.

According to Marcuschi (2008), text comprehension is a phenomenon that presupposes that the readers are inserted in a particular context, upon which their world-view is built and they rely on understanding what is being explained. Marcuschi also links those ideas with issues related to the school environment and the literacy process of the students, discussing the perspective of the textbook as a genre and as a support tool, thus advocating the second idea. He exposes the fact that many of the comprehension exercises proposed by the TB are copying activities, in which the students find the answers within the texts themselves, without the necessity of thinking or creating links between writing and reality.²

Although it may be stated that the textbooks have come a long way since the creation of the PNLD (Programa Nacional do Livro Didático – National Textbook Program), but the aforementioned reality can still be found, crystallized in this material, showing the importance of this inquiry. We must stress that reading is a complex activity and, as defended by Koch and Elias (2006, p. 19), the readers' knowledge and worldview must be taken into consideration, because the way the text will be interacted with shifts according to the receiver. In another study, Koch also ponders over the importance of the context for understanding a text, conceptualizing it as "a set of assumptions, based on the receiver's knowledge, and motioned by the interpretation of the text (Koch, 2008, p. 64).

As highlighted by Koch and Elias (2016, p. 13), "language is interaction and its use reveals the relations we would like to establish, effects we aim to cause, behaviors we would like to trigger, determined verbal or non-verbal reactions we intend to provoke in our reader". Thus, there is an intention and argumentation that the reader must be apt to unveil through the text's linguistic elements. In Basic Education, we intend to create a citizen capable of performing this reading of the world, to go further than simply decoding the text as proposed by the National Curricular Parameters (Parâmetros Curriculares

² A term used by Marcuschi (2008) to refer to activities which do not stimulate the students' reflection, making them copy what was explicit in the text.

Nacionais - PCN) and also by the National Common Curricular Base (Base Nacional Comum Curricular - BNCC).

According to the National Curricular Parameters of the Portuguese Language, the student is expected to be an active reader when it comes to understanding the text, since reading "is not only extracting information letter by letter, word by word. It is an activity that entails selection, anticipation, inference, and verification strategies, without which proficiency is not attainable" (BRASIL, 1998, p. 69). This is the desired outcome for teaching reading to Brazilian students, but this has not been the case, as verified in this study. There is much talk of teachers' guilt in this process, but do the textbooks present any proposals to take the students to another level of text interpretation and not only a superficial reading? In this work, we investigate these reading issues to try to answer this question.

We should bear in mind that the text is not built on linguistic elements only, but also on extra-linguistic elements, such as images, sounds, movement, etc. Thus, the notion we have of text widens and encompasses many multiple semiosis, becoming multi-semiotic.

According to the National Curricular Parameters, literacy is about the social practices of reading and writing. Thus, new questions arise about what constitutes reading, given the fact that it is not only a decoding issue. Besides, with the new technologies and with a society increasingly inserted in different semiotic spheres, different reading practices are required, adding different layers of complexity to text comprehension. Based on the idea of multi-literacies, reading becomes even more dynamic as it re-thinks the different reading practices as cultural, considering semiotic aspects entailed in the writing and also considering ethic and aesthetic aspects of the texts (ROJO, 2009)³.

In this vein, reading is not restricted to print and static texts, but it also means a social practice that involves multi-semiosis, requiring from the textbooks a new work perspective. Technology brought new dynamics to the reading process and this widens, even more, the gap between social reading and school reading. It must be noted that the analyzed texts circulate among society, and once they are put into the TB, they are taken out of their context and presented in comprehension, grammar, and writing exercises. This wide use justifies their presence in the textbook.

Kleiman (2007), in a work published in the early 90's, still the 20th century, states that the schools always work with after-reading "comprehension questions", which are, usually, related to the information explicitly present in the text, questions that require copying from the text, and "personal questions", through which the reader is given the chance to become the subject of the reading. In the same vein, Marcuschi

³ The term "multiliteracies" refers to the reading of various channels through which communication takes place, and the individual is able to read multimodal texts, containing images, sounds, etc. (SILVA, 2016).

(2008) presents us with research data performed in the year 1999, pointing out that 70% of the comprehension questions are based on the text, but mostly these questions do not require reflection on the students' part, they only copy from the text.⁴ Has the average textbook used in the classroom in 2019 changed this reality? The reports of Undergraduate Students about the reading practices show that the reading practices in schools are not so different from what Marcuschi (2008) has showcased. Unfortunately, even after decades of so many educational policies, the problem still persists and the textbooks require much attention.

3 Methodology

Data collection was done in 2018 through the National Fund for Education Development (Fundo Nacional de Desenvolvimento da Educação - FNDE), in the section dedicated to Textbooks' Guide - PNLD 2017: Portuguese (BRASIL, 2016).⁵ The Portuguese language textbook collection which had the largest number of copies distributed by the Federal Government at the time and which was widely adopted in Brazilian public and private schools in the 2017 - 2019 triennium. Subsequently, we sought to identify which contents in these books could reflect the teaching process and the reading learning process. It was noted that the narrative texts that appeared often in all grades with more frequency and then more suitable to our research. Afterwards, we realized that the books had a reading activities session and text comprehension referring to the narrative texts we chose, which is why fourteen texts and fourteen activities were chosen as corpus for this analysis.

In addition, with further analysis, we understood that analyzing texts from the final four years of basic education would be unattainable in this research, at the same time we had the opportunity to observe the differences at the beginning and at the end of this school cycle, so that is why we settled for textbooks from 6th and 9th grades.⁶

Then we created categories to systematize the kind of questions found in the reading activities, making it possible to present the description and the analysis of the abilities they foster in the students. The systematization of the question resulted in the following table:

Table 1: Categorization of the questions present in the reading and text comprehension questionnaires.

⁴ The text collection was published in 2008, but the research dates back to 1999.

⁵ <https://www.fnde.gov.br/>

⁶ We must stress the fact that this study is the product of a Scientific Initiation Research performed in 2019.

a) Questions about the text main subject.
b) Questions about the characters and the characters' actions.
c) Questions about the environment in which the story occurs.
d) Questions about other elements from the text.
e) Questions about the vocabulary or interpretation of the sentences.
f) Questions about the reader's opinion (related to the text or the reader's worldview).
g) Questions about the genre or the communicative purpose of the text.
h) Questions about extra-textual issues.
i) Questions about linguistic aspects that are important for text comprehension.

In addition, and based on Marcuschi's (2008) remarks, it was noticed that traditionally TBs do not present reflective questions to the students and that the proposed activities usually were of the copying variety, in which the answer is explicit in the text and the commands given are restricted to *interrogative pronouns* and *imperative verbs* such as *complete*, *transcribe*, *identify*, etc. Thus, we also tried to classify these questions according to the commands they gave, aiming to understand whether the words used in the Textbook to formulate the questions would lead to reading and text comprehension, and to inquire if these linguistic command elements indicated that the questions were more or less reflective.

The three types of commands used in the questions have *interrogative pronouns*, as for example, *what*, *which*, *who*, *where*, *how*; *imperative verbs*, such as *identity*, *explain*, *describe*, etc; and alternative questions, such as, "Did character A have the intention of hurting character B?", in which the question itself gives the student the *yes* or *no* alternatives as an answer to what is asked. However, it was noted that the alternative questions did not have a specific word to guide the question and, therefore, only *imperative verbs* and *interrogative pronouns* were analyzed.

After these classifications, an analysis was made relating the data in Table 1 with those of the classification of the linguistic command elements, to identify the subjects presented in the texts of the textbooks and also the commands employed.

These two classifications allowed us to identify which mechanisms could be used to make the questionnaires more efficient in relation to their ability to guide the student's reading and understanding. Therefore, the theory of Koch and Elias (2010) on text comprehension was used, recognizing the existence of at least three types of knowledge required for the processing of a text, namely: linguistic knowledge, which covers the grammatical and lexical aspects of a text; encyclopedic knowledge, which concerns the

general knowledge that the reader has about the world; and interactional knowledge, which addresses questions about the relationship between the reader and the text, such as the formality or informality of the situation, the intention of the speaker and the context(s) in which the text is inserted. With this in mind, linguistic knowledge is understood to be the least prone to stimulate reflection, while encyclopedic and interactional knowledge indicates a more reflective process.

4 Regarding the reading questionnaires and text comprehension

From the proposed analysis categories (Table 1), two types of questionnaires were identified, the first based on characters and their actions and the other related to extratextual activities. As will be shown below, the textbooks presented more questions from categories *a*, *b*, *c*, and *d*, directly linked to the text and that they worked with aspects more visible in the narrative and more linked to copying. On the other hand, the questions based on the text itself emphasized the categorizations of types *e*, *f*, *g*, *h*, composed of questions that relate the text to the students' knowledge of the world, representing questions of a more reflective nature.

In the first type of questionnaire, the questions were complementing and evolving according to the development of the narrative, that is, the book asked about the theme in the text (*What is the narrated fact?*), who the characters were and which characteristics they had (*How is a certain character portrayed?*), what actions they took (*What did the character decide to do at a certain moment in the story?*) and, eventually, the consequences of those actions (*What did the character's behavior cause?*). It is possible to understand that almost all the information requested by this type of questionnaire was explained directly in the text, without provoking a critical reflection in the student. About this, Marcuschi (2008) states:

A very important aspect, which still persists today, is the fact that the absolute majority of the text comprehension exercises in textbooks consist of questions and answers. There are a few reflection activities. In general, these are standardized and repetitive questions, asked in the same sequence as the text. (MARCUSCHI, 2008, p. 267. Author's emphasis).

It is worth mentioning that Marcuschi's research was done in 1999, re-presented in a 2008 book, because it is believed that the reality of how reading was taught in Basic Education had not changed, many reports by students indicate that this is still a fact in the approach to the Portuguese language teaching. Carvalhares (2016), also researching textbooks, analyzed two books published in 2010 and concluded that the TB and manuals had begun to realize that the text is a process and reading is a practice built from interaction. However, the proposed activities still do not follow the manuals.

In this sense, this type of questions, although repetitive and only teaching how to copy from the text, can be very useful for familiarizing the student with the narrative typology, as it helps him to create a systematization of the elements that make up this typology. In relation to the commands of the activities, the interrogative pronouns such as *What, Where, Who*, etc., are linguistic elements widely used to make this reconstruction of the narrative possible, with a sequence of activities that proposes a general rethinking of the text. Thus, the use of these pronouns is very frequent and can be valid, since they allow a very objective inquiry about specific aspects that help in the composition of the prose.

Moreover, the activities that deal with the consequences of the characters' actions can be repetitive, but, if these consequences are not exposed in the text, they can also fail to stimulate the students' reflection, making them relate the narration with facts from real life situations. These questions can be seen as a kind of transition to the second type of questionnaire and understood as belonging to reflection activities, as they explore extra-textual knowledge accessible to the students, but not disconnected from the text. In these cases, allowing students to express their opinion on the consequences of the characters' actions is to associate their worldview with the text, checking if there is coherence in the students' dialogue with the text. The detail, however, is that in these cases the attention must turn to what Marcuschi (2008) called a problematic horizon. For him,

[...] reading and understanding a text is not a free-for-all activity. A text allows for many readings, but not infinite. We cannot say how many possible understandings there are of a given text, but we can say that some of them are not possible. (MARCUSCHI, 2008, p. 257).

Thus, the text questions must be formulated with the aim of teaching the students to think and to give their own meaning to the text, understanding what was explained, but also encouraging their own view about what they read, so that they can correlate it to their own experiences. In other words, the teacher must guide the student to a dialogue with the text and not only to attribute opinions that are not related to what was exposed by the prose. Fuza and Menegassi (2019), based on the studies by Solé (1998), claim that students need to see in the classroom a representation of the process of reading and text comprehension in order that they can understand what they are supposed to do.

Regarding the second type of questionnaire, it is important to note, first, that since it is a reading exercise, almost all activities are related in some way to the characters and the actions performed by them. However, what will be emphasized is the way the Textbook connects extra-textual elements with the texts without using questions that seek to characterize the characters and their actions. Some examples of the structure of these questions are: *How does the text you have read relate to another text?; What was the historical fact represented in the text?; Read the box and answer: Is the author's life similar to any event*

narrated in the text ?; Why does the character use a certain word to express what she feels?; What does the narrator denounce when describing certain elements of the environment?

In this way, five themes addressed in the questions of reading and text comprehension that discussed extra-textual elements were identified, namely: (1) intertextuality; (2) the historical and/or political contexts in which the text was inserted; (3) information about the author; (4) the feeling of the characters in the story and (5) the social problems pointed in the text. Of these five themes, the first three are quite pertinent to be discussed alongside the linguistic aspects that involve them and are part of what Koch (2010) calls knowledge systems, while the other two are more subjective and, therefore, more difficult to systematize, although they also influence text comprehension. It should be noted that these more subjective issues are also important, as they allow for a more free reflection of the student. Attention should be drawn to the fact that there is not only one model of reading, it is worth stating that reading can be flexible, based on textual and contextual aspects, and that the reading strategies work as plans that can be adapted to different situations (Joly et al., 2004).

With regard to intertextuality, Koch (2010, p. 78) states that “identifying the presence of other text(s) in a written production depends very much on the reader's knowledge, on his/her reading repertoire. For the process of understanding and producing meaning, this knowledge is of fundamental importance.” The author also defends the idea that, in some way, the texts are always related, therefore, there is no text that does not share any level of intertextuality with others. However, even when agreeing with this notion, it is possible to affirm that some texts are more intertextual than others, and to properly work with this term in elementary school, the use of explicit examples of the phenomenon should be consistent so that students can first identify it and then understand the breadth of the concept. Another interesting detail is that of the narratives analyzed, only the one that works specifically with intertextuality uses the verbal form *compare* in the commands of the activities, making this idea of dialogue between the texts very evident.

About historical and/or political contexts and the authors, information is asked to contextualize students in relation to the events of the world, or the biography of those who wrote the text, respectively, in order to make sure that this knowledge is accessible to students only after the activities started to focus on the text. Pietri (2007) argues that:

Passages that refer to historical issues, for example, require a more elaborate reading of the text, since the knowledge of the referred historical facts needs to be activated, or acquired, for the reading to be carried out satisfactorily. This may require research if this information is not yet known to readers of the text. (PIETRI, 2007, p. 38).

In this perspective, the questionnaires seek to relate facts that occurred in the narrative with facts that happened in real life, guiding students to read information boxes available in books, making it

noticeable that, to understand a text, it is also necessary to understand the real events that supported the content of that text. At the same time, it may be necessary to know a little about the author's life so that the reader can access the information implicit in the text. Regarding the linguistic elements of command, it is possible to say that in the text activities that ask for this historical, political, or biographical information, expressions such as “Share ideas with colleagues” and “Read the box and answer” are used. All of these commands serve, therefore, to create a dialogue between the class in search of sharing information or expanding knowledge offered by the textbook itself.

Two extra-textual subjects appear very frequently in the most subjective questions. The first is the feeling of the characters, because, often, simple theoretical understanding is not enough to describe the sentimental issue present in the texts, and the activities that permeate this subject end up being anything goes. However, feelings do exist, they affect human beings and that is why they must be worked on at school. The expression of feelings in words is a characteristic of literature and the Portuguese language TB - being a support material not only for Portuguese but also for Literature - must address this theme. According to Diniz (2012, p. 28), for example, “A reader of literature can only be considered as such if he experiences the literary work through an aesthetic experience.” The author defends this experience as something individual, a relationship of affections that each reader creates with the text. The problem appears when the textbook imposes a correct answer to the questions asked about the feelings of the characters, preventing the students from reflecting on the feelings and sensations that the text arouses and creating a more sensitive link with the text and with the message conveyed, enabling interpretations from their own experiences.

It is also important to add that ignoring feelings, by acting as if the texts do not express them, is to greatly reduce their potential for communication. The solution is to work with textual aesthetics, looking for excerpts from the text, especially excerpts that work with figures of speech, making the exposure of these emotions more evident. Commands are also used, for example, “Put yourself in the character's place” to introduce the activities related to this sentimentality, precisely to stimulate the student's empathy, showing that he must take into account the other's position and then answer what is asked.

The second extra-textual subject, with a more subjective character noted in the questionnaires is related to the social problems present in the texts' plots. This happens because every text has a message that is conveyed through it, that is, it communicates something with those who read it and, in the classroom, it is very common for the object of this communication to be related to social themes since the school is also an environment to train ethical citizens and, therefore, should offer this type of information to students. However, what often happens are exercises to discuss these topics without a theoretical basis, mainly a

lexical and/or semantic linguistic theoretical basis, since the class is in Portuguese and there are mechanisms in the language, capable of supporting social discussions, which must be the teacher's domain.

The simple fact that the author selects the information that will or will not be included in the text, as well as the words that will be used to build the ideas they wish to explain, already reflects a worldview that needs to be understood by the reader so that they can, in turn, understand the text. The author has the power to propose discussions and direct the understanding that the reader will have, explaining the different linguistic and extra-linguistic required knowledge necessary for a more productive reading for the student, leading them to ponder possible text interpretations. The reader, in order to understand the text, must understand this position and engage in a dialogue with it, as defended, for example, Koch (2008), in his sociointeractionist theory of language, which points out the need for dialogue between interlocutors via text. It is worth mentioning that the Portuguese language teacher cannot be responsible for discussing and giving away all the answers to the students, but he/she needs to be aware of the responsibility to train and guide these individuals throughout the reading process.

5 The Linguistic Elements of Command in the Questionnaires

Based on Marcuschi's (2008) statement that there are many diverse types of question in textbooks, with some addressing more explicit elements in the text and others more reflective elements, there was a need to identify which linguistic elements commanded these questions, in order to find a system in these activities that would help in the formulation of activities that would make students think and have a dialogue with the text. Two types of commands were then analyzed: those made through *interrogative pronouns* and *verbs in the imperative*.

Both types of commands appeared in all questionnaires analyzed, however, on average, interrogative pronouns appear 14.1 times per text in both series, while imperative verbs appear 3.7 times per text in the 6th year and 5.1 times per text in the 9th year. Of these elements, some have already been mentioned in topic 4, as they are directly related to the discussions related to Table 1, however, some reflections on the linguistic elements still need to be made.

In the case of *interrogative pronouns*, a more marked use of this class of words was noted to reconstruct the elements of the narrative. However, the interrogative pronoun *Why* also appears in activities that are not so directly linked to the text. It can even be associated with verbal forms in the imperative such

as *justify*, *explain* and *give the reason*, by instructing the student to complement the more structural activities, which aimed at recapping what was narrated in the prose.

Another command identified with the interrogative pronouns was the frequent presence of the pronoun “what” associated with a noun, such as, *What excerpt*, *What argument*, *What characteristics*, *What is the meaning*, etc. This type of command is understood to be quite varied, as it is the element placed after the “what” particle that delimits the intention of the question and what textual item it wants to focus on. In activities that contain, for example, *what excerpt*, *what elements of the text*, *what facts prove*, etc., the questioning encourages the student to retake the text and identify that element explicitly in the narrative. On the other hand, expressions such as: *what intention*, *what importance*, *what meaning*, etc., make students not only return to a fragment but also reflect on what it adds to the understanding of prose as a whole, attributing a meaning that goes beyond what is explicit in the text. All of this information can be summarized in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Types and functions of Linguistic Elements of Command - Interrogative pronouns.

Types of Linguistic Element of Command.		Type of Linguistic Element of Command	Function
Interrogative Pronouns	What + ⁷	Elements of Copy - What section - What text elements - What facts prove that - Which arguments etc	Identify the elements explicit on the text
		Elements of reflection - What teachings - What importance - What is the meaning of	Make comprehension explicit and identify the meaning of what was read.
	Other Interrogative Pronouns	- How - What - To where - Which - To where - To whom - Who	Reconstitute elements of the narrative.
		- Why - Why	Clarify comprehension and signal meaning to what was read.

⁷ *What* was kept apart from the other interrogative pronouns because we noticed that its function was related to the word that followed it, making necessary examples of these words.

In addition, there are also other verbal forms, such as *Reread*, *See*, *Respond*, *Identify*, *Observe*, *Raise hypotheses*, *Infer*, *Interpret*, *Deduce*, *Verify*, and *Tell*. All of them have a meaning that helps in the sequence of reading and comprehension questions, that is, each one can help in a stage of the process of learning to understand the text, building a logical chain of ideas, which will be shown below. The textbook does not do this linking through the imperative verbs; however, all the verbs used to build this sequence appeared in the activities of reading and text comprehension of the analyzed material.

Reread, *See*, *Count*, *Identify* and *Observe*, as well as the aforementioned *Read the box* and exchange ideas, are the first verbal forms that should be used in the questionnaires, as they urge the students to remember some important element that should be taken into consideration when answering the questions. It is perceived in these commands an attempt to lead the student to reflect on the text and prepare before answering a question, which is very relevant for the creation of an active reader, since, as defended by Fuza and Menegassi (2019), the reading and text comprehension activities need to be done in a sequence that helps to build the student's understanding, and the process is gradual. These verbal forms also serve to emphasize, to draw attention to some part of the text. The identification, for example, made by the verbal form *Identify*, occurs through the copy of fragments of the text. It is worth mentioning that this type of linguistic element is not responsible for causing the student to reflect on the text, but it is important to draw the student's attention to a certain fragment of the text, so that they can then answer what will be questioned.

After the questions in which these verbal forms are used, it is important that the questionnaires guide students to resume the activities proposed by the textbook, using, for example, *Answer*. This verbal form seeks to direct the sequence of the activity, making the student understand that for him to understand a text it is important to return to what was read and search for extra-textual information, and after that he needs to start a dialogue with the text.

Regarding the other verbs, it is clear that they instigate a greater effort by the students, initiating a more reflective process. *Raise hypotheses*, *Infer*, *Interpret*, *Deduce*, and *Compare* make the student an agent of the understanding process itself. As Marcuschi (2008, p. 238) states about theories that view understanding as a result of inference, "[...] all understanding will always be achieved through processes in which activity plans developed at various levels and especially with the decisive participation of the reader or listener in collaborative action." In this way, these verbal forms command a process in which the student, after paying attention to the text, relates his own experiences with the narrative in order to understand it. Fuza and Menegassi (2019) argue that the reading process has three stages: 1) reading focused on the text, getting the text general idea by reading the text itself; 2) reading focused on the reader, in which there

is legitimacy in the way the reader sees the text; and 3) reading with a focus on the reader-text interaction, which opens a dialogue between what is put in the text and the way the reader attributes meaning to the explicit ideas. It is understood, then, that these verbal forms lead the student to create an interaction with what was read, since from the moment he reads the text and is able to infer, interpret, deduce and compare his ideas with what was narrated in prose, he starts to dialogue with the text.

Verify, Justify, Explain and *Explain*, as mentioned earlier, have a lot to do with the interrogative pronouns *Why* and *Why*, as they encourage the student to argue, to defend the reason that led him to understand the text as he understood it. These are words that make students show the logic built to connect the textual elements and the world experiences they have. They are conclusive instructions, as they seek to retake all the thought carried out and check if the reasoning is consistent with the text.

Yet another function was identified for *Tell* and *Share ideas*, since in addition to supporting the students' understanding, they give an order linked to orality, that is, they are verbal forms that propose dialogue and discussion in the classroom. In the textbook, for example, *Tell* was used to remind students of a narrative that shares intertextual elements with the explicit text, therefore, it is not a reflexive verb, as it is only necessary for the student to know the plot of the story. However, during the process of proposing an activity, asking a student to tell the rest of the class the story is interesting because it gives them enough space to interact with each other and also allows the students to exercise their capacity to summarize stories.

At the same time, *Sharing Ideas* reveals both this characteristic of dialogue and its reflectiveness, since sharing an idea requires information that is not so evident to others. It is also worth mentioning that this type of oral activity proposal makes students develop the ability to listen to each other, making understanding a trade-off experience. If, on the one hand, it is interesting that the most punctual questions are worked on in writing, making students understand the structure of the text and stimulating the necessary motor process for writing, the more reflective questions can and should further explore students' oral skills, since:

[...] the challenge is to overcome the notion that oral genres should come in second (or third and last plan), due to the belief that it would not be necessary to teach students to "speak", as they already know it. This is the old situation of diminishing oral practices in classes and even in textbooks, in which orality is restricted to reading texts or lecture practices/seminars, without demarcated evaluation criteria and explicit teaching goals (MIRANDA; PRINCIPE, 2017, p. 1092).

These imperative oral verbs would then be a way to expand the activities related to speech in the classroom, giving students the chance to communicate orally with others seeking to deepen the subject

discussed and practice the skills of narrating, to describe, to expose and to argue about diverse subjects and in dialogue with other students, without feeling the pressure of being evaluated or of being in a prominent spatial position in the classroom, as in the case of seminars.

There are also verbal forms related to feelings, such as *Put yourself in place*, which, as already mentioned, serve to create empathy in students. They are important to create a sentimental bond between students and characters. The organization of all these linguistic command elements is shown in table 3:

Tabela 3: Types and functions of Linguistic Elements of Command – Imperative Verbs.

Types of Linguistic Element of Command.		Type of Linguistic Element of Command	Grade	Function
Imperative Verbs	Recapitulatives	- Share ideas - Tell - Read the box - Identify - Observe - Read again - See	- 6th and 9th - 6th and 9th - 6th - 9th - 9th - 9th - 9th	Serve as a reading guide and/or a way to point out where the student should look for information to help them better understand the text.
	Guiding verbs	- Answer	- 6th and 9th	Guide the exercise.
	Action verbs	- Raise hypotheses - Infer - Interpret - Deduce - Compare	- 6th and 9th - 6th and 9th - 9th - 9th - 6th	Make the student reflect and start a dialogue with the text.
	Argumentative	- Attest - Justify - Explain - Give the reason why	- 6th - 6th and 9th - 9th - 9th	Clarify the reasoning used to understand the text.
	Orals	- Tell - Share ideas	- 6th and 9th - 6th and 9th	Develop oral activities in the classroom.
	Sensitive	- Put yourself in the place of...	- 6th	Create empathy in the student, working with the emotions provoked by the text.

Table 2 also shows that some imperative verbs appear only in 6th-grade textbooks, some only in the 9th and sometimes in both. The same description has not been applied to the interrogative pronouns, because they do appear in the books pertaining to the 6th and 9th years. This data allows us to think that

these more structural questions in the text, which seek to reconstruct the narrative, are very similar both at the beginning and at the end of the last years of elementary school, disadvantaging the development of other student's reading skills. In this sense, through these data, it is possible to infer some more information about these linguistic command elements.

Many recapitulative verbs appear only in the 9th grade, demonstrating that the textbook in this series resumes the text more frequently than the 6th-grade book, that is, students are invited to return in some passage of the text so that they are able to answer the questions. At the same time, the search for extra-textual information is done more frequently in the 6th-grade book, pointing out a need to really inform the student, who, being younger, probably still does not have the necessary worldview to answer the questions.

Besides, the verbal forms *Deduce* and *Interpret*, which also only appear in the 9th grade, can be understood as a more in-depth way of understanding, as they make the student explain what he understands about a certain element present in the text, creating a dialogue with what was read. It is interesting that this type of verb is more present in the 9th-grade book, because, as these are more reflective questions, the teacher must take into account the level of understanding that he/she wants to have from the students. As 9th-grade students are older, they must have a greater comprehension capacity than 6th-grade students. For this reason, it is valid to require that they create deeper dialogues with the text, being beneficial the more frequent use of verbs that encourage these dialogues.

It is worth adding that in all the analyzed material, only one linguistic element of sensitive command was found, *Put yourself in place*, and it appears in the 6th year textbook. It is also important to consider that issues related to respect and relationships with others need to be developed in all stages of education, expanding readings, discussions, and arguments that go beyond the limits of texts and permeate social issues. In the analyzed books, these questions only appeared in the 6th year; however, it is also important to discuss this topic with students of all years, in order to maintain this type of learning.

In this sense, it is clear that the imperative verbs used in the 6th year seek to expand the students' knowledge of the world so that they are able to understand the text, while, with regard to the 9th year, the concern is to really create a dialogue between the text and the reader, showing that the students need to evolve their ability to understand.

It was noted, in this study, that the commands are different, requiring a more complex reading, due to the fact that they are in the last year of the school cycle and they are asked to reflect more and perform fewer copying activities. This is important, since reading is not standardized; its work must evolve in the textbook as well, as well as the complexity of the students' actions and reflections necessary for improving

their skills as readers. It is a perspective that should be adopted in textbooks and also by teachers when using these materials in the classroom.

Closing remarks

The importance of the textbook in Brazilian schools is undeniable. However, the manner they are used is still very debated, given that some teaching experts and college professors defend that it should not even be used in the classroom, as it compromises the teacher's autonomy. In Brazil, with its large social gaps, it is common to defend the textbook use. However, it is necessary to be constantly rethought as to its usefulness to teachers and students. As it has been stressed in this article, textbooks work a vast array of texts and genres. This can be seen as a positive trait from the point of view of the many themes and text structures they work with, for it is interesting that many subjects should be covered, and it is also important that multiple aspects should be taught in class, since the use of texts in the real world is also diverse. However, it is necessary, when working with the text, to encourage the students to reflect about the meaning and the argumentation. That is the reason why it is expected that the questions posed to the students are logical and guide them throughout the text comprehension process, helping them interiorize the dynamics of being an active reader, able to interact with the author through the text.

The linguistic elements of command, for example, are a tool that explains this progress in understanding the elements of the narrative. With the exception of "Why" and "Why" and "What" in some cases, all other interrogative pronouns were more frequently used to reconstruct the narrative, while most imperative verbs proposed a greater discussion of the text. Thus, although there are more or less reflective exercises, the activities end up mixing in the questionnaires and complementing one another, as it is important to ensure a basic understanding of the text before stimulating reflections, otherwise, the student may even risk expressing an opinion on the text, but will do this without a firm basis.

Imperative verbs can also help the reader to determine the order of the questionnaires, as they make it possible to: 1) recap the text, highlighting a specific part; 2) create a moment of pause for the student to think and prepare to assume a position of dialogue with which was read; 3) instigate the student to really have a dialogue with the text; 4) work on the argument, making the student see the logic used by the author, thus helping to understand the text; 5) create moments of oral exercises and interaction in the classroom; and, 6) work on issues related to the feeling of identification and empathy.

This article analyzed the questions of reading and comprehension of a textbook collection widely used by public and private schools in 2019. This is a small sample, but studies like this can lead teachers-

in-service and teachers-in-training to be more concerned about the use of the textbook while teaching reading and text comprehension activities. This type of reflection can lead to an improvement in reading activities in Basic Education, leading teachers to even extrapolate the didactic material, complementing with activities of their own. It is necessary to remember that reading is a process of construction of meaning that depends on linguistic and extra-linguistic factors. It is not just an activity of decoding a text, but it involves reflection, the interaction between interlocutors. Therefore, it has to be worked in its entirety in class.

It is essential to promote more activities, capable of creating a more fruitful dialogue between students, teachers, and texts presented in textbooks. It is necessary to understand that if, traditionally, a school is a place that defends written activities to the detriment of oral ones, due to the fact that orality is more present in people's daily lives and viewed as something not to be worked on so hard, the ability of truly interacting critically and respecting different worldviews is not innate either and must be a part of the school environment. In short, working with orality and reflection while doing reading activities can foster a more active stance by the reader/student part, ensuring that the students will become active readers, relying on more than the passive role of those who patiently wait for answers from books and teachers.

References

BRASIL. Parâmetros Curriculares Nacionais – Terceiro e Quarto Ciclos do Ensino Fundamental: Língua Portuguesa. Brasília: MEC/SEF, 1998.

_____. Base Nacional Comum Curricular. Brasília: MEC, 2018.

_____. Guia de livros didáticos – PNLD 2017: Língua Portuguesa. Brasília: MEC, 2016. Disponível em: <<https://www.fnde.gov.br/index.php/programas/programas-do-livro/pnld/guia-do-livro-didatico/item/8813-guia-pnld-2017>>. Acesso em: 05/10/2020.

BUNZEN, C. *Livro didático de língua portuguesa: Um gênero do discurso*. 2005. 168 f. Dissertação. (Mestrado em Ensino/Aprendizagem de Língua Materna) Universidade Estadual de Campinas, Campinas. Disponível em: <http://repositorio.unicamp.br/bitstream/REPOSIP/269229/1/BunzenJunior_CleciodosSantos_M.pdf>. Acesso em: 15 jun. 2020.

CARVALHARES, W. L. O Livro didático de português: abordagem discursiva de exercícios de compreensão de texto. 2016. 172 f. Tese. (Doutorado em Letras e Linguística) Universidade Federal de Goiás, Goiânia. Disponível em: <<https://repositorio.bc.ufg.br/tede/handle/tede/8702>> Acesso em: 05/10/2020.

DINIZ, L. G. *Entre o obrigatório e o proibido: a literatura e o leitor em livros didáticos de língua portuguesa para o Ensino Médio*. 2012. 145 f. Dissertação. (Mestrado em recepção e práticas de literatura)

Universidade de Brasília, Brasília. Disponível em: <<https://repositorio.unb.br/handle/10482/11145>> Acesso em: 16 jun. 2020.

FUZA, A. F.; MENEGASSI, R. J. Ordenação e sequencição de perguntas de leitura: proposta de trabalho para crônica e pintura no livro didático. *Alfa*. São Paulo, v. 63, n. 3, 2019. Disponível em: [<https://doi.org/10.1590/1981-5794-1911-8>]. Acesso em: 15/06/2020.

GERALDI, J. W. *Portos de passagem*. 4ª ed. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2003.

JOLY, M. C. R. A.; CANTALICE, L. M.; VENDRAMINI, C. M. M. Evidências de validade de uma escala de estratégias de leitura para universitários. *Interação em Psicologia*. Curitiba, v. 8, n. 2, 2004. Disponível em: [<http://dx.doi.org/10.5380/psi.v8i2.3262>]. Acesso em: 15/06/2020

KLEIMAN, Â. *Oficina de Leitura: teoria e prática*. 11ª ed. Campinas: Editora da Universidade Estadual de Campinas, 2007.

KOCH, I. G. V. *Desvendando os segredos do texto*. 7ª ed. São Paulo: Cortez, 2002.

_____. *O texto e a construção dos sentidos*. 9ª ed. São Paulo: Contexto, 2008.

_____; ELIAS, V. M. *Ler e compreender: os sentidos do texto*. 2ª ed. São Paulo: Contexto, 2006.

_____. *Escrever e argumentar*. 1ª ed. São Paulo: Contexto, 2016.

LINS, M. A. C. *Atividades do portal do professor e o desenvolvimento do letramento digital: uma análise de sugestões de aula de gêneros digitais*. 2017. 141 f. Dissertação. (Mestrado em Letras) Universidade Federal de Viçosa, Viçosa. Disponível em: <<http://www.locus.ufv.br/handle/123456789/14354>> acesso em 16 jun. 2020.

MARCUSCHI, L. A. *Produção textual: análise de gêneros e compreensão*. 1ª ed. São Paulo: Parábola Editorial, 2008.

MARTINS, I. M. S.; SILVA, A. da. *A formação de leitores através dos Livros Didáticos*. 2019. 32 f. Relatório de Iniciação Científica. Universidade Federal de Viçosa, Viçosa.

MIRANDA, F. D. S. S.; PRINCIPE, G. S. Debate oral, multimodalidade e escola: problemáticas e possibilidades no ensino de gêneros orais por meio do modelo da sequência didática. *D.E.L.T.A.* São Paulo, v. 33, n. 4, 2017. Disponível em: [<https://doi.org/10.1590/0102-445076053913104446>]. Acesso em: 15/06/2020

OLIVEIRA, M. B. F. de O.; SZUNDY, P. T. C. Práticas de multiletramentos na escola: por uma educação responsiva à contemporaneidade. *Bakhtiniana*. São Paulo, v. 9, n. 2, 2014. Disponível em: [<https://doi.org/10.1590/S2176-45732014000200012>]. Acesso em: 03/10/2020

PIETRI, É de. *Práticas de leitura e elementos para atuação docente*. 1ª ed. Rio de Janeiro: Lucerna, 2007.

ROJO, R. *Letramentos múltiplos, escola e inclusão social*. 1ª ed. São Paulo: Parábola Editorial, 2009.

SILVA, T. R. B. da C. Pedagogia dos multiletramentos: principais proposições metodológicas e pesquisas no âmbito nacional. *Letras*. Santa Maria, v. 26, n. 52, 2016. Disponível em: [<https://doi.org/10.5902/2176148525319>]. Acesso em: 05/10/2020

SOARES, M. *Letramento: um tema em três gêneros*. 2ª ed. Belo Horizonte: Autêntica, 2002.

SOLÉ, I. *Estratégias de leitura*. 1ª ed. Porto Alegre: Artmed, 1998.