

Who can be a university student? A discursive analysis of the imaginary representation of public and private school students /
Quem pode ser um universitário? Uma análise discursiva da representação imaginária sobre alunos de escolas públicas e privadas

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ABSTRACT

In Brazil, public education is commonly stigmatized as precarious and insufficient, while private education is the provider of “quality education”. Therefore, through the lenses of Pecheuxian Discourse Analysis, this article aims to examine discourses about public and private school students, based on two similar reports, but whose idea of entrance exam is opposite: in one it is a “possibility”, as it is associated with effort and hard work; in the other it is a certainty, to the point of satirizing other professions. The articles are “‘If nothing works out’: young people dress up as cleaners, mechanics, and street vendors at a school party”, published by the newspaper Extra on 06/05/2017, and the other one, published in G1, “‘It is possible!’, says public school student who was admitted into Law and Medicine”, on 10/20/2017. Many believe that attending university is for the few, those from private schools who have better financial conditions. In the analyses, we have shown how discourses on public and private schools identify with the knowledge of the ruling class and align themselves with the capitalist system. As an Ideological State Apparatus, the school represents the place where ideology is performed, through contradiction, inequality, and subordination, according to Althusser (1985). Thus, subject and meaning are constituted as evident as the effect of ideological interpellation, materialized from their

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affiliations to certain DFs, hence the need for gestures of interpretation of discourses on pre-established social places, to understand that it is also possible to resist conditions that are unequal and excluding.

KEYWORDS: Education; Discourse Analysis; Ideological Formations.

RESUMO

No Brasil, a educação pública é comumente estigmatizada como precária e insuficiente, ao passo que a educação privada é vista como provedora de um “ensino de qualidade”. Dessa forma, sob o viés da Análise de Discurso Pecheuxiana, este artigo objetiva examinar os discursos acerca dos alunos de escolas públicas e particulares, a partir de duas reportagens similares, mas cuja ideia sobre vestibular é oposta: em uma delas é uma “possibilidade”, desde que associada com esforço e diligência, e em outra é uma certeza, a ponto de satirizarem outras profissões alternativas. As matérias são “Se nada der certo”: jovens se fantasiam de faxineiro, mecânico e ambulante em festa escolar”, publicada pelo jornal Extra, em 05/06/2017, e a divulgada no G1, “É possível!” diz estudante de escola pública que passou em Direito e Medicina”, em 20/10/2017. Muitos acreditam que cursar uma universidade é para poucos, aqueles oriundos de escolas particulares que têm melhores condições financeiras. Nas análises, demonstramos como discursos sobre escola pública e privada identificam-se com saberes da classe dominante e alinham-se ao sistema capitalista. Enquanto Aparelho Ideológico de Estado, a escola representa o lugar em que a ideologia se realiza, pela contradição, desigualdade e subordinação, conforme Althusser (1985). Assim, sujeito e sentido se constituem como evidentes enquanto efeito da interpelação ideológica, materializada a partir de suas filiações a determinadas FDs, daí a necessidade de gestos de interpretação dos discursos sobre lugares sociais preestabelecidos, para compreendermos que é possível fazer resistência frente a condições que se mostram desiguais e excludentes.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Educação; Análise de Discurso; Formações Ideológicas.-

1 Introduction

Scratched walls, sometimes in need of repair, broken tables and chairs, overcrowded classrooms, unmotivated teachers; many are the problems we find in public primary and secondary schools. Anchored in this scenario of difficulties, we encounter many reasons given to justify why education is so poor in our country. Certainly, there is no denying that the deficiency of the educational system has a huge impact on everyone involved in the school context. From public to private, the trajectory of many students can be constituted by a common point of arrival: admission to a university.

Sustaining the culture that higher education guarantees a good position in the job market, young people are influenced to continue their journeys in universities in order to achieve professional success. This, however, produces stereotypes that do not correspond to the data presented by the Brazilian Institute of Statistics and Geography (IBGE): in 2022, there were 8,6 million unemployed people in Brazil, of which only 29,276 thousand had a university degree. The number of unemployed is lower among those with a higher level of formal education, but it still exists, and covers a significant portion of the population.

We can add this data to the social prestige that some undergraduate courses have, in contrast to others; an example being the Medicine and Physics courses. According to data released

by the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS), which shows the candidate/place ratio for its 2023 entrance exam, some courses have candidates exceeding the number of places, while others have surplus places: Medicine has a ratio of 70.33 candidates per place, and Physics 0.5, meaning that even when choosing universities, certain courses are more sought than others.

As we have observed, even though schools in Brazil are mostly public, they carry a great stigma because, as mentioned, public education in the country is commonly associated with precarious teaching and negligence by government bodies; while private education, and, consequently, paid education, is seen as the provider of 'quality education'. The reproduction of these discourses *is naturalized* under the effect of the ideological process of imaginary formations, which sustain projected images about the types of education and, as a result, about the types of students coming from certain educational institutions.

The school institution, according to Althusser (1985), is one of the Ideological State Apparatuses (ISA), and functions as a powerful way of imbuing subjects with the ideology of the ruling class and coercing them into submission. In other words, the Ideological School Apparatus is responsible for diversifying the workforce 'according to the requirements of the social-technical division, in its different "posts" and "jobs"' (Althusser, 1985, p. 20). At school, therefore, we learn what positions we will occupy in the capitalist system. Under the effect of ideological interpellation, these discourses are propagated, repeated, sedimented, and, in many cases, they are not noticed or questioned, becoming part of the imaginary formations about educational institutions.

From the perspective of Pecheuxian Discourse Analysis (DA), the theoretical and methodological approach of this work, ideological formations encompass attitudes of a group, which are neither individual nor universal, but 'relate to class positions in conflict with each other' (Ferreira, 2001, p. 13). Based on this, we have noticed that the discourses from public school students claim that having a university degree is a privilege for those from private schools, and that certain courses are 'elitist'. Whether it is because the cut-off mark is very high and it is difficult to get in, or because some students need to finish school and enter the job market, higher education is still a reality for only a few in this country. According to IBGE data, in 2022, less than 20% of the population completed their undergraduate degree. Considering this percentage, we can ascertain that most of university students come from public schools, almost 63.3% of the admissions (Senkevics and Mello, 2019, p. 23) – data that completely contradicts the discourses that circulate about the profile of students in higher education institutions.

Thus, news such as *'It's possible!'*, says a student from a public school who was admitted into *Law and Medicine*, is not consistent with the data presented, since these students are attending these institutions. In response to this incoherence, we were interested in some of the news stories published according to the criteria of newsworthiness, as defined by Charaudeau (2006), who says that for a fact to become a news story it needs to be new and, for this author, news is 'a set of information related to the same thematic space, having a character of novelty, coming from a certain source and being able to be treated differently' (Charaudeau, 2006, p. 132).

If the approval of students from public schools into university is not new, what would the criteria followed by this newspaper be? Similarly, the headline *'If nothing works out': young people dress up as cleaners, mechanics, and street vendors at a school party*, exposes another antagonistic reality. This time, the newsworthiness was due to the attitude of the young people who suggested that, if they were not approved in the entrance exam, they would take on the professions of cleaner, street vendor, mechanic, among others.

Considering the materiality of these discourses, how is the effect of transparency mobilized? We understand that the discourses acquire new meanings as they are used by the subjects, meanings that are always in a process of change and cannot be captured in their entirety, given the incompleteness of language.

For Pecheuxian Discourse Analysis, words are not glued to their objects, they take shape according to the subject-position occupied by the enunciators or readers, so there is no interpretation without a subject. According to Pêcheux (1995, p. 160) 'words, expressions, and propositions change meaning according to the positions held by those who use them'. These subject-positions are established in an ideological-discursive process in which we identify ourselves with certain places and, consequently, do not identify with others.

Based on these theoretical assumptions, we present a reading gesture on two similar articles, but in which the idea of the entrance exam is the opposite: in one of them, it is a 'possibility', provided that it is associated with effort and diligence, and, in the other, it is a certainty, to the point of satirizing other alternative professions. Thus, the aim of this article is to examine the discourses about public and private school students, based on the two articles mentioned above, *'If nothing works out': young people dress up as cleaners, mechanics, and street vendors at a school party*, published by the newspaper Extra, on 06/05/2017, and the one published on G1, *'It's possible!'*,

says a student from a public school who was admitted into Law and Medicine, on 10/20/2017, from the perspective of Pecheuxian Discourse Analysis. Knowing that discourses are uttered through the taking of socially established subject positions, the selected clippings will be observed in order to understand the possible effects of meaning present in the discourses, and to analyze the mechanism of functioning of the imaginary formations about public/private school students.

2 Theoretical considerations on Discourse Analysis

Discourse Analysis, henceforth DA, deals with the opacity of language, its meanings being multiple and with no neutrality, since it is in discourse that ideology manifests itself. With this founding theoretical concept, it is possible, according to Orlandi, to 'problematize the ways of reading, to lead the speaker or reader subject to ask questions about what they produce or what they hear' (Orlandi, 2005, p. 9). Subsequently, by establishing this non-naïve relationship with language, it becomes feasible to analyze other even deeper issues, such as those relating to the functioning of ideology.

Orlandi (2005) states that the proof of how ideology works is the fact that we are led to interpret in any situation. Since 'there is no meaning without interpretation' (Orlandi, 2005, p. 45), and since meanings are multiple, so are interpretations. Although there is the idea that meanings are transparent, evident, according to the author this is a movement to deny interpretation, so that meanings, produced between the symbolic and the historical, are naturalized. Thus, through this erasure, discourses are reproduced as absolute, erasing the historical thickness that they carry with them.

Discourse Analysis was founded in France, seeking to polish its precious theoretical object in the overlapping of three areas of knowledge: Linguistics, Psychoanalysis, and Historical Materialism. According to Ferreira (2010, p. 23), Pêcheux argues that only parts of these three areas come together and form a Borromean knot; at its center, where all sides interconnect, there is the subject, who is affected by them. Thus, when speaking and producing meanings, this subject does not only produce them based on language, the internal, but also in relation to the external.

DA, therefore, is a science of in-between, because it ‘refers to spaces inhabited simultaneously, established by contradictory relations between theories’ (Orlandi, 2002, p. 21).

Although language is fundamental to the field, DA considers it part of the whole. Language only has *relative* autonomy, according to Orlandi (2002, p. 37), so that part of the process of signification is carried out by the symbolic – and, consequently, by the two extralinguistic elements of the tripod. Both Psychoanalysis, with its fundamental collaboration on the unconscious, and Historical Materialism, which introduces ideological issues into science, are essential for the (re)signification of discourses and subjects, since subjects and situations are ‘re-defined and re-signified’ (Orlandi, 2002, p. 22), in each new event.

The Discourse Analysis of Pêcheux emerged amid a European trend that sought to understand language beyond the language/speech dichotomy developed by Saussure. According to Brandão (2006, p. 11) discourse makes it possible to operate between the ‘linguistic and the extralinguistic’:

Language as discourse is not a universe of signs that serve as an instrument of communication or support for thoughts; language as discourse is interaction, and a manner of social production; it is not neutral, innocent, or natural, which is why it is the privileged place where ideology manifests itself. It is the support system for ideological representations (Brandão, 2006, p. 11)

This is why DA is a science that is ‘not subjective of subjectivity’ (Pêcheux, 1995, p. 178), since it is through discursive materiality that ideological materiality manifests itself. The subject, too, according to Orlandi, ‘is decentered because it is affected by the real of language and also by the real of history and has no control over how they affect them’ (Orlandi, 2005, p. 20). In this respect, both ideology and the unconscious affect the functioning of subjects’ discourses. These three areas – language, ideology, and the unconscious – are the three circles that interconnect in the Borromean knot, and according to Ferreira (2010) leave a hole in each of them: ‘the hole of language, represented by equivocation; the hole of ideology, expressed by contradiction; and the hole of the unconscious, addressed in psychoanalysis’ (Ferreira, 2010, p. 23). These holes give rise to the subjects’ feeling of lack and incompleteness.

Ideology operates in theory through discourse, since ‘there is no discourse without subject and no subject without ideology’ (Orlandi, 2005, p. 17). We are always led to interpret, and according to the researcher, this is proof of the presence of ideology. Faced with a fact or situation,

the subject interprets, even if they deny the interpretation, considering meaning as evidence. Pêcheux based himself on Althusser to bring the concept of ideology into DA, although in his theory it has been re-signified.

Althusser advocates that ideology works to maintain the ascendancy of the ruling class. For this to happen, this class creates mechanisms that perpetuate its condition of domination through the Ideological and Repressive State Apparatuses. The former (ISA) act through 'repression or ideology, trying to force the dominated class to submit to the relations and conditions of exploitation' (Brandão, 2006, p. 23); part of the Ideological State Apparatus is the educational, information, religious, and family institutions, etc. For the theory, the Repressive State Apparatus (RSA) can act through the army, the police, the courts, the administration, among others that function through repression, although they also act ideologically.

Louis Althusser (1985) conceptualizes 'ideology in general' differently from particular ideologies, which 'always express, whatever their form, class positions' (Althusser, 1985, p. 12). According to this author, ideology in general would be the 'theoretical fixation of the mechanism' (Althusser, 1985, p. 12), and to prove his thesis, he develops three hypotheses. The first is that 'ideology interpellates individuals as subjects.' In saying this, he explains that the recognition and the interpellation play a fundamental role in the functioning of the ideological mechanism, since by being part of it, both the subject and their actions will be regulated by the ideological apparatuses.

The second is that 'ideology has an existence because it always exists in an apparatus and in its practice or practices'. For him, ideology is material because it is materialized in actions and discourses, shaping them. The third hypothesis states that 'ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals with their real conditions of existence'. Men live through imaginary relations of representation of concrete reality; in other words, they create symbolic, abstract forms that 'presuppose a distancing from reality' (Brandão, 2006, p. 24), so there can be an 'imaginary deformation of the conditions of existence' (Brandão, 2006, p. 24).

Orlandi (2005) teaches us that ideology is not a 'set of imaginary representations, a worldview or a concealment of reality' (Orlandi, 2005, p. 48), ideology is a necessary condition for the interpellation of the individual into a subject and for language and history to make sense. Language is a symbolic representation for things in the external world and, as we know, there is no direct relationship between language and thought, language is opaque and not transparent. By

erasing the effect of interpellation of ideology, the subject erases the inscription of language in history, and the consequence of this, according to Orlandi (2005, p. 48), is the sensation of evidence of meaning.

Regarding imaginary formations, Pêcheux (1997) considers them within the circumstances of a discourse. According to him, all subjects have the ability, when speaking, to anticipate the place of the other to formulate the discourse. Thus, I can know “who am I to speak to you like this?” and “who are you to speak to me like this?”. According to the author, ‘what works in discursive processes is a series of imaginary formulations that designate the place that A and B each attribute to themselves and to the other, the image they make of their own place, and the place of the other’ (Pêcheux, 1997, p. 82).

According to Ferreira (2013), the concept of imaginary formation developed by Pêcheux was based on Lacan’s imaginary, the core of which is the question of language, in which subjects believe that there is an exact relationship between meaning and words. For Ferreira (2013), every imaginary formation results from previous discursive processes and is manifested in the anticipation made by the subjects, since ‘the place from which the subject speaks determines the force in the discourse, while the relations of meaning presuppose that there is no discourse that does not relate to others’ (Ferreira, 2013, p. 14).

Imaginary formations refer to the images resulting from ‘projections of physical subjects and empirical places’ (Ferreira, 2013, p. 14), and, when we encounter discourses, our imaginary formations are unconsciously triggered to carry out the process of anticipation and find an orientation.

3 ‘It’s possible!’ versus ‘if nothing works out’: the corpus to be analyzed

To conduct the proposal of this article, we will analyze two news stories¹ published in 2017, one by the newspaper G1 and the other by Extra; the first focuses on the approval of a student

¹ For this article, we chose the expression ‘news stories’ to describe the texts analyzed. The journalistic terms ‘news’ and ‘reportage’ are, sometimes, treated as synonyms, however, in editorial matters, as seen in the ‘Estado de S. Paulo Writing and Style Manual’, they have different approaches: ‘news’ is the name given to a shorter text, with a lower level of depth, in which the main objective is to describe the event that has occurred and its immediate consequences; a

from public education in all the Federal Universities of Belem/PA, and the second on a costume party that students from a private school in Novo Hamburgo/RS held under the name ‘If nothing works out’.

With the headline *‘It’s possible’ says a public school student who was admitted into Law and Medicine*, published on 10/20/2017 by G1, the article begins by stating that the young woman ‘became an example’ at the public school where she studied, since she was admitted into ‘all the public universities in Belém, in extremely competitive courses and the first time she took the ENEM’², namely Law, Medicine, and Veterinary Medicine. After this, the news story presents the difficult life that the young woman says she leads with her family and informs us about her 12-hour routine dedicated to her studies. It also highlights how much the student is valued at her school, including the fact that she gave a talk to encourage other student to believe in themselves and in their dreams, such as going on to higher education.

On the other hand, the news story *‘If nothing works out’: young people dress up as cleaners, mechanics, and street vendors at a school party*, published by the newspaper Extra on 06/05/2017, shows the event held at a private school, in which students from the third year of high school dressed up as ‘alternative’ professions in the life of someone where ‘nothing worked out’. With many photos evidencing the execution of the party, the article also presents the ‘harsh’ criticism received by the school and its *online* retraction, in which the school argues that ‘at no time did it intend to discriminate against certain professions, especially since many of them are part of the administrative staff and are essential to the smooth running of the institution’. The school also justifies that the event was for the students to ‘relax’ and to think about alternatives in case they failed the entrance exam.

The two news stories talk about higher education and students; however, they approach them from opposite perspectives: the first deals with entry into traditionally prestigious higher education courses by a young woman from a public school, and the second deals with openings in

‘reportage’, however, is a longer text, with a more elaborate investigation of the events, usually containing multiple sources and consultations with specialists. The term ‘story’ is accepted as a synonym for both news and reportage, and will be treated as a synonym for news in this article.

² Exame Nacional do Ensino Médio (ENEM), the National High School Exam, is the examination used as an admission for enrollment in many public institutions for higher education in Brazil.

socially 'undervalued' professional areas for private school students. The discourse used in these stories is quite different.

In the first, there is the use of the noun 'possible', which, as seen in the Michaelis dictionary, indicates in certain entries something 'that can be achieved; that can be done', a topic that is pointed out several times by the student interviewed during the article; in the second, there is the expression 'if nothing works out', established by the conditional 'if', which precedes a conditional adverbial subordinate sentence, which brings up a necessary hypothesis for something to happen. In the case of this statement, the sentence is completed with the information that the young people dressed up as cleaners, mechanics, and street vendors, so one of the possible meanings is that if nothing works out, these will be their professions.

In order to analyze the imaginary about public/private education, it is important to highlight the position occupied by the students of these institutions. In Discourse Analysis, when a subject speaks, they speak from somewhere. This social position occupied by the discursive subject affects what they enunciate, since it determines their 'force in discourse'. According to Eni Orlandi, 'the subject, in discourse analysis, is a position among others, subjectivizing itself to the very extent that it projects itself from its situation (place) in the world to its position in discourse [...]'. (Orlandi, 1999, p. 17).

By occupying a position of speech, an identity is assumed. According to Ernst-Pereira (2009), questions related to identity are answered discursively, as the meanings produced construct what the 'subject is or will become' (Ernst-Pereira, 2009, p. 165). According to the author, these parameters are generally based on so-called normal standards. When we identify ourselves with one of them, we automatically distance ourselves from the other, and become what the other is not, in 'a process of classification, which attributes unequal values to the different' (Ernst-Pereira, 2009, p. 165).

These social positions are anticipated in the ideological mechanism, since, according to Althusser, in order to maintain the functioning of capitalism, the means of production and the workforce must be reproduced, and in addition, there must be a qualified diversification of the latter, which will be 'diversified: according to the requirements of the social-technical division of labor, in its different 'positions' and 'jobs'.' (Althusser, 1985, p. 57). In order for each subject to recognize

their position, and for the exploitation of one class by another to take place, the Ideological State Apparatuses are used – and one of them, as already mentioned, is the school.

The ISA act to maintain the ideology in force, and in their institutions ‘know-how in forms that ensure submission to the dominant ideology or mastery of its practice’ (Althusser, 1985, p. 58) is taught. Althusser also argues that the role of the school is to teach theoretical curricular subjects, but also the rules of ‘good behavior’, which, according to the author, are ‘connivances that must be observed by every agent of the division of labor according to the post he is destined to occupy’ (Althusser, 1985, p. 58). In this way, in addition to the reproduction of qualifications, the reproduction of norms of submission is ensured.

By ‘teaching’ students which places in the world they should occupy, schools act to maintain the prevailing ideology. According to Ernst-Pereira (2009), this process of marking the equal and excluding the different is performed through discourse. In this way, the conflicting approaches to higher education can be analyzed in the two news stories, considering the imaginary formations as discursive mechanisms, which project images of subjects and empirical places, and by identifying with one of them, the subjects exclude the different.

3.1 A discursive analysis of the corpus

In order to perform the analysis, we selected clippings from the two news stories. The discursive sequences DS1, DS2, DS3 refer, as already mentioned, to the news story published in the newspaper G1, and feature the discourse of the young woman, a public-school student, who was admitted for three public Federal Universities, in the courses of Medicine, Veterinary Medicine, and Law; DS4 and DS5, however, refer to the journalistic agenda of the newspaper Extra, which focuses on the repercussion of the “school party” on social networks³.

DS1: *“People who come from public schools suffer a lot of prejudice. Some people think it is not possible to be admitted into competitive courses, but it is. The school by itself is not responsible for our approval. The student needs to work hard, dedicate*

³ All the discursive sequences analyzed in this article are transcribed *ipsis litteris*, i.e. as they were in their original texts.

oneself, and believe. I have always worked hard so that today my dream has come true,” she said. (*italics added*)

DS2: “Our family is poor, with few conditions, and that is why I dedicated myself a lot. I studied 12 hours a day so that I could be here today, and I hope to graduate and one day be able to give this gift to my mother”, she confides. (*italics added*)

DS3: “It is not because we *are or come from* a public school that we are less than others, everyone can get a good grade in ENEM. It is possible, but you have to dedicate yourself”, she said. (*italics added*)

DS4: “If nothing works out”: under this name, students from the third year of high school at a school in Rio Grande do Sul held a party on May 17th and dressed up in costumes that, according to themselves, represented ‘*alternative*’ professions, as a last resort in a life where... *nothing worked out*. (*italics added*).

DS5: In a public statement, IENH says that ‘at no time there was the intention to discriminate against *certain professions, especially* since many of them are part of the administrative staff and are essential to the smooth running of the institution’. In another section of the text, the school states that the activity was part of the D-Day, aimed at integration and ‘*relaxation*’ among the students, addressing a scenario of ‘*not passing the entrance exam*’. (*italics added*).

Returning to the fact that imaginary formations are constructed discursively and ideology is not concealment but mediation between language and the world, according to Orland (2005), and knowing that discourses are uttered through socially established subject positions, the discursive sequences will be analyzed in order to understand the effects of meaning present in the discourses, and whether they meet these existing imaginary formations about public/private school students.

In DS1, we are able to observe a discourse that shows the stigma attached to Brazilian public education. At the beginning of the statement, the young woman describes the prejudice that students coming from these institutions suffer when they choose courses that are commonly prestigious, exposing the imaginary formation of public schools as molding the workforce, as seen in the work of Althusser (1985).

The three discursive sequences call attention for their mobilization of “negation” in the articulation of statements. It is possible to analyze this repetition based on one of the concepts proposed by Ernst-Pereira (2009), the excess: according to the researcher, the excess is what is repeated, they are textual forms that appear excessively in the statements and gain prominence precisely because of their frequency. We notice that this adverb “no” is repeated several times in the intradiscourse, retrieving knowledge identified with a position on public schools and the students who graduate from them, in their negative aspects. By anticipating this knowledge, she denies them, even before reporting on her experience with the school and entering higher education. We also observe the construction with the relative pronoun “who”, “there are people who think it is not possible”, “the people who come from public schools”, it is not everyone, there is a syntactic fit that restricts the knowledge about public schools and the people who study there.

In DS1, we can analyze in the intradiscourse the presence of the syntactic fit introduced by the relative pronoun “who”, in addition to the adversative “but”, and such a combination in the statement mobilizes the knowledge that the subject believes is linked to the public school and tries to demonstrate that there is an exception, since they managed it, despite everything that was taken up, to enter a law course. We notice that in the three DSs in focus, the subject mentions “being admitted into” and “succeeding”, relating these achievements to an “effort”, with hours of study and dedication. Such discursive sequences refer to an exception, since they are personal elements that come from the students, and do not depend solely on the school, since the subject says that “the school by itself is not responsible for our success”. In this excerpt, we can see that this exception, anchored in knowledge referring to effort, dedication, and diligence, will result in the approval in the entrance exam, in other words, success is achieved through meritocracy.

We have also noticed that the discourse is arranged in such a way as to create a distance between success at the entrance exam and public education. When talking about the stereotype⁴ of public school students, the third person is used, in the same way as when saying that ‘the student needs to work hard, dedicate oneself and believe’, while when talking about her success in fulfilling a dream, the personal pronoun ‘I’ is used. Third-person pronouns are used to narrate events or

⁴ Stereotype is an image generally attributed to a group, established by common sense, without necessarily having any scientific criteria. According to Amossy and Herschberg-Pierrot, the stereotype designates a type of syntactic construction that triggers the pre-affirmed (Amossy; Herschberg-Pierrot, 2001, p. 113), in other words, within DA, stereotype refers to a discourse that already exists within the Interdiscourse and is triggered automatically and unconsciously, when constructing new meanings within certain topics, such as, for example, public and private education.

points of view of which the narrator is not a part; by producing statements in this way, they produce a distancing, a non-identification with that place.

In Pecheuxian Discourse Analysis, subject-positions are related to the discursive formations with which discursive subjects identify themselves or not. Thus, when we speak, we do so from somewhere, under ideological interpellation and driven by mechanisms that we cannot always perceive, we occupy social positions that influence the meanings that are being said. This is why meanings change, words are re-signified, and two subjects can talk about education and be referring to completely different meanings, since they are in different subject-positions. When we speak, then, we assume these imaginary positions about what public or private school students should be, for example. In DS1, we notice that terms such as ‘the student’, ‘the people who come from public schools’ are used, while we also find first-person pronouns such as ‘I’, but we notice that they are used in different conditions – when talking about public schools and their students, there is a distancing when talking about them in the third person. This DS1 signals a process of identification with knowledge that comes from a Discursive Formation about education that emphasizes negative aspects/stigmas regarding public education, and consequently, this is extended to students who come from this education. In this way, discourses such as the one in DS1 show that this subject, in the position of student, does not fully identify with that position.

In DS3, when the subject performs the movement of comparison ‘it is not because we *are* or *come from* a public school that we are less than others, everyone can get a good grade in the ENEM’, she also uses a negation to create a distance from this knowledge, it is not a condition ‘to be from a public school and be less than someone else’, this statement is linked to a Discursive Formation about public education. The use of the adversative ‘but’ also enables a paraphrastic movement that opposes what is being said in the sentence, when the subject says that ‘everyone can get a good grade in the ENEM, but you have to dedicate yourself’, it allows us to paraphrase the following: ‘Those who dedicate themselves will get a good grade in the ENEM’, this mobilization produces a meaning effect that reiterates effort, dedication, but even though the subject reinforces in his discourse that ‘it is possible’, she cannot get rid of the public school stigma. The use of ‘it is possible’ takes up an imaginary about public schools as failures, reinforcing in the discourse the imaginary that students who are admitted into higher education courses are part of a small group of exceptions.

In DS2 and DS5, it is possible to see a contrast between the behavior of students from public and private institutions. In DS2, the difficulties experienced by her family are exposed and there is a narrative of the 12-hour routine of daily study, intensified before the entrance exam, as opposed to the party held by the students of the private institution, to 'relax', and 'a scenario of not passing the exam being addressed'. The fact that a public-school student passes the entrance exam is reported in a romanticized and meritocratic way, highlighting hours of dedication and effort, while for the private school students the 'failure' is treated in a satirical way.

DS4 shows the testimony of the students from the private institution about the episode, who point to these professions as '*alternatives*', as *the last way out in the life of someone where... nothing worked out*; the non-identification with these places is notable, so that the young people use them as a 'costume', an outfit commonly worn at parties such as carnival or Halloween, usually for comic purposes. The clipping 'the last way out in the life of someone where nothing worked out' corroborates the idea of distancing themselves; they do not see themselves identified with the knowledge about these professions, so they refute them all, except if something goes wrong. From this we can understand the allusion to the dichotomy of right and wrong, or rather, doing well in life, being successful, through a prestigious profession.

When commenting on the students' party (cf. DS5), the school argues that 'at no time did it intend to discriminate against *certain professions*, especially because many of them are part of the administrative staff and are essential to the smooth running of the institution'. According to DA, all possible sayings are 'available' to subjects at the level of the interdiscourse, which is the axis, according to the theory, of the *constitution* of discourses, of discursive 'memory' (Orlandi, 2005, p. 33). Nevertheless, when we produce a discourse, we do so through the axis of 'formulation' (Orlandi, 2005, p. 33), called intradiscourse. In no way, including because we have access to all the sayings at the moment of discursive construction and choose certain combinations, do we control the effects of meaning and reverberate through our sayings.

Both axes are interconnected with two pieces of oblivion to which, as subjects subjected by ideology, we are invariably subjected: number one, in which we believe we are the origin of what we say; and number two, in which we think that what we say can only be said in the way we do (Orlandi, 2005). Both the concept of interdiscourse and that of intradiscourse and the oblivion are related to another concept in the theory, that of Discursive Formations – which determine everything that can and should be said and also what cannot and should not be said.

When we examine what is said by the school, we realize that, in the retraction, there is an attempt to align it with a Discursive Formation that is not linked to prejudiced sayings; however, this attempt is flawed. Both the use of ‘determined’, which can refer to an undefined thing or being, but distinct from others, and the idea of the adverb of inclusion ‘until’, which in the sentence refers to these professions that are part of the administrative staff, bring meanings which have effects that refer to a ‘permission/tolerance’ of these professionals in the staff board. In this way, even though it is trying to show itself to be aligned with a different DF, this discourse mobilizes effects of meaning that are strongly interconnected with an elitist and prejudiced DF.

Even though the private school was criticized in the news, there is no questioning of the place its students occupy and/or will occupy. The imaginary formations that are projected onto the image of these students and circulate in the popular imagination allow the idea to spread that these positions do not belong to the students. Thus, the discourse of the young woman from the public school, by taking up the stigma that students from these institutions carry, ends up, through discursive memory, updating this knowledge about the public school and about getting into university through merit.

The mobilization of the Discursive Formation within the discourses reproduces a social imaginary that is not restricted to formal education but revolves around social *status* and purchasing power. We can analyze that the social imaginary of ‘those who have it can be’ or ‘those who do not have it cannot be’ manifests itself in the discourses of the students from the two schools: from the public school when they say that ‘it is possible’, even if they do not have a lot of financial means, starting from other conditions, to be admitted into a higher education institution, in a prestigious course is possible; and from the private school, starting from a context in which they have better financial means, imagining that if they do not pass the entrance exam, they will have the consequence of working as cleaners, working in commerce, among other types of work. The capital of the students and their families is directly linked to their success at university, in courses, and in the future, in professions that have social value.

Both private and public school students show in their speeches that the imaginary formations work in such a way as to identify socially established places for the subjects and identify with knowledge from the ideology of capitalism. In this light, we realize that even though the students in question mobilize different subject positions, they are aligned with the same discursive formation, which is in charge of directing them through the representation of their social places;

these imaginary captures, in turn, do not bring absolute truths and imprison students within ‘walls’ that *can/should* be questioned and crossed.

Final considerations

News outlets are also part of the Ideological State Apparatus because in them and through them discourses manifest the ideological effect that acts to maintain/reproduce the order of the ruling class. This is how we come across supposedly neutral discourses, such as those analyzed here, propagated in the news media, as we saw in the first headline *‘It is possible!’ says public school student who was admitted into Law and Medicine*, published on 10/20/2017 by G1.

Based on the discourses analyzed and observing that 63% of the Brazilian university population is made up of students from public schools (Senkevics and Mello, 2019, p. 23), one of the possible effects of meaning in the construction of this news item is not the effort made by the young woman to get into the federal university, but rather the courses she was admitted into, as they are prestigious courses that represent a certain social *status*.

The opposite process is seen in the second headline, *‘If nothing works out’: young people dress up as cleaners, mechanics, and street vendors at school party*, published by the newspaper Extra on 06/05/2017. As has been shown, the students who took part in this ‘school party’ are students from a private school, and by dressing up as alternative professions, in case they fail the entrance exam, they signal the lack of prestige of such professions, in other words, they are undervalued professionals, they have not done so well in life, they have not achieved the *status*.

When we think about how human relationships develop today, these stories show a contrast that goes beyond the school sphere, even though it is a reflection of the former: the economic one. Students often believe that only those from private schools can be admitted into higher education institutions because they have better financial conditions. In their discourses, there is a relationship with a Discursive Formation in which such meanings are manifested, since the students relate higher education to purchasing power – which makes it, in a way, also a product that is acquired, albeit in a symbolic way, since it is more easily available to those who can afford it. For some, however, according to the discourses present in the DSs analyzed, double the

dedication/performance is required. Another meaning that emerges is that of the prestige of certain areas in contrast to others. There is an even greater stigma towards professionals who do not require a university degree to work.

These ‘types of education’ and discourses, constitutively affected by ideology, in their ways of producing meanings, act in the construction of the imaginary formations, of these subjects and in the way they see themselves in the world outside the school, their future social places, since the school is considered an important ISA.

At the end of our reading gesture, we understand that, even though these students are unconsciously led by the Ideological School Apparatus to mobilize and identify with certain DFs, they need to reflect on ways of reading and interpret the process that the meanings go through, because with each new reading gesture, there will be new effects of meaning that can give rise to forms of resistance and combat practices that naturalize/sediment inequality, segregation, and prejudice of all kinds, inside and outside the educational institutions.

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