



REVISTA

# DIÁLOGO EDUCACIONAL

periodicos.pucpr.br/dialogoeducacional




PUCPRESS


## Language and power: identity performances and resistance in contemporary discursive devices

*Linguagem e poder: performances identitárias e resistência em dispositivos discursivos*

*Lenguaje y poder: performances identitarias y resistencia en los dispositivos discursivos contemporáneos*

---

Angela Maria dos Santos Rufino <sup>[a]</sup>   
Cruzeiro do Sul, AC, Brasil  
Universidade Federal do Acre (UFAC)

Luiz Antonio Gomes Senna <sup>[b]</sup>   
Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brasil  
Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro (UERJ)

**How to cite:** RUFINO, A. M. dos S.; SENNA, AL. A. G. Language and power: identity performances and resistance in contemporary discursive devices. *Revista Diálogo Educacional*, Curitiba, PUCPRESS, v. 25, n. 86, p. 1468-1483, 2025. <https://doi.org/10.7213/1981-416X.25.086.AO04EN>

### Abstract

This study aims to analyze the intrinsic relationship between language and identity, exploring how discourse acts both as a tool for identity construction and as a mechanism of social exclusion. Drawing on critical bibliographic research, grounded in the work of theorists such as Foucault, Butler, Rajagopalan, and Anzaldúa, the investigation

<sup>[a]</sup> Assistant Professor in the Graduate Program in Education at the Federal University of Acre (UFAC) and leader of the Research Group on Equity and Diversity Studies, e-mail: [angela.rufino@ufac.br](mailto:angela.rufino@ufac.br)

<sup>[b]</sup> Full Professor in the Graduate Program in Education at the State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ), research productivity fellow of the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq) and the Carlos Chagas Filho Foundation for Research Support of the State of Rio de Janeiro (FAPERJ). Leader of the Research Group on Language, Human Cognition, and Educational Processes, e-mail: [luizagsenna@gmail.com](mailto:luizagsenna@gmail.com)

focuses on how language, in its multiple forms (gestural, digital, oral), shapes belonging, hierarchizes knowledge, and perpetuates inequalities while also creating spaces for resistance. The main findings reveal that language is a symbolic battleground: while hegemonic norms silence marginalized dialects and accents, peripheral movements reframe words, coin neologisms (such as LGBTQIA+ *pajubá*), and use technologies to revitalize endangered languages. Furthermore, the disciplinary power analyzed by Foucault is present in institutions such as schools and the media, which naturalize exclusion but also serve as stages for insurgencies. The study concludes that identity is performative, shaped by linguistic choices that shift between submission and subversion, and that discourse critique is a political act essential to dismantling oppressive structures.

**Keywords:** Language. Identity. Discursive power. Cultural resistance. Symbolic exclusion.

## Resumo

*Este estudo tem como objetivo analisar a relação intrínseca entre linguagem e identidade, explorando como o discurso pode atuar como ferramenta de construção identitária e, simultaneamente, de exclusão social. Por meio de uma pesquisa bibliográfica crítica, fundamentada em teóricos como Foucault, Freire, Butler, Rajagopalan e Anzaldúa, investiga-se como a linguagem, em suas múltiplas formas (gestual, digital, oral), modela pertencimentos, hierarquiza saberes e perpetua desigualdades, mas também abre brechas para resistências. Os principais achados revelam que a linguagem é um campo de batalha simbólico: enquanto normas hegemônicas silenciam dialetos e sotaques marginalizados, movimentos periféricos ressignificam palavras, criam neologismos (como o pajubá LGBTQIA+) e utilizam tecnologias para revitalizar línguas ameaçadas. Além disso, o poder disciplinar, analisado por Foucault, mostra-se presente em instituições como escolas e mídias, que naturalizam exclusões, mas também são palcos de insurgências. Conclui-se que a identidade é performativa, moldada por escolhas linguísticas que oscilam entre a submissão e a subversão, e que a crítica ao discurso é um ato político essencial para desmontar estruturas opressoras.*

**Palavras-chave:** Linguagem. Identidade. Poder discursivo. Resistência cultural. Exclusão simbólica.

## Resumen

*Este estudio analiza la relación intrínseca entre lenguaje e identidad, explorando cómo el discurso actúa tanto como herramienta para la construcción identitaria como mecanismo de exclusión social. A través de una investigación bibliográfica crítica, fundamentada en teóricos como Foucault, Butler, Rajagopalan y Anzaldúa, se examina cómo el lenguaje, en sus múltiples formas (gestual, digital, oral), configura pertenencias, jerarquiza saberes y perpetúa desigualdades, al mismo tiempo que abre espacios para la resistencia. Los principales hallazgos revelan que el lenguaje es un campo de batalla simbólico: mientras las normas hegemónicas silencian dialectos y acentos marginados, los movimientos periféricos resignifican palabras, crean neologismos (como el pajubá LGBTQIA+) y utilizan tecnologías para revitalizar lenguas en peligro de extinción. Además, el poder disciplinario analizado por Foucault se manifiesta en instituciones como la escuela y los medios de comunicación, que naturalizan exclusiones pero también pueden convertirse en escenarios de insurgencia. Se concluye que la identidad es performativa, modelada por elecciones lingüísticas que oscilan entre la sumisión y la subversión, y que la crítica del discurso es un acto político indispensable para desmantelar las estructuras opresivas.*

**Palabras clave:** Lenguaje. Identidad. Poder discursivo. Resistencia cultural. Exclusión simbólica.

## Introduction

Among the threads of time, like weaves that shape the human, unfolds this study, one in which the word, more than a vehicle of meaning, transcends its communicative function and becomes the primordial mortar in the construction of intimate universes and the forging of social masks. If identity emerges like embroidery in constant weaving, woven into the dialogic webs of years and discourses, then it is built in shifting arenas where silent battles are fought for the right to exist. This is not mere rhetorical play, but echoes of power that sculpt symbolic geographies by marking who may inhabit the illuminated center and who remains in the shadows of the unspeakable.

Far from ontological crystallizations, this study proposes a nomadic gaze upon language and identity, chameleon-like concepts that change color according to context and the urgencies of the present. Essentialism, with its cages of absolute certainties, is challenged by an epistemology of flow, in which the “self” is revealed as a polyphonic performance, intertwining inherited voices, imposed silences, and invented insurgencies.

Each discursive act carries the ambiguity of a tool: it can stitch belonging or tear apart the social fabric; it can validate narratives or erase stories beneath the veil of normativity. As the horizon expands, a critical gaze becomes urgent, one that recognizes language as both a marker of inclusion and exclusion. Think of Indigenous languages silenced by colonialism, of accents stigmatized by the phonocentric elite, of academic jargon raised like walls separating bodies of knowledge.

Speech, entangled with markers of gender, race, and class, reveals its political materiality. Access to the word is a privilege marked by hierarchies, on a map where some voices are amplified while others are reduced to whispers or erased like spelling errors. In this mosaic of voices and silences, no definitive theory is proposed, but rather a stance of radical listening. If identity is a work written by many hands on the social parchment, then language, as creative and destructive power, must be both window and mirror, labyrinth and map. In the folds of each syllable dwells an unnamed universe, where to be is to exist in resistance.

The central aim of this investigation is to understand the deep connections between language and identity, examining how discourses operate both in the constitution of subjects and in the symbolic marginalization of social groups. To illuminate this complex web, bibliographic research is used as a compass, a navigation through oceans of ink and pixels, where each text is a lighthouse capable of revealing the caves and flares of thought. This method goes beyond the passive collection of citations; it demands from the researcher the art of the goldsmith: knowing how to sift for preciousness amid excess, to find harmony within academic dissonance, and to confront times and epistemologies that converse, or clash, on the pages consulted.

The battle is immense: in a world where knowledge explodes in digital supernovas, researching becomes an act of critical curation. Each click can unearth millennia of thought, from Socrates to Freire, from ancestral theories to contemporary voices like bell hooks, but also triggers traps: superficialities and ideas disguised as ready-made truths for consumption. Vigilant reading is necessary, with eyes trained to read between the lines for the traces of social struggles that have shaped such knowledge, while the feet remain grounded in the still-dusty floor of public schools, where verbs are conjugated with the body and meanings negotiated in the world.

Thus, this work is not merely a literature review, but the cartography of a living territory, where each source consulted is like a fragmented mirror reflecting parts of the same question: How does the word, in its many forms, powers, and wounds, construct (and deconstruct) who we are and how we may be together? The answer, if it exists, perhaps lies in listening: in the gaps between theories, in the murmur of real voices, those who, between confusing lessons and playground conflicts, write in pencil, in crumpled notebooks, the rough draft of who they dare to be.

In weaving this analysis, a critical dialogic perspective is adopted, one that understands language as a field of living forces, where different social voices intersect, dispute meanings, and are mutually transformed. It starts from the understanding that every utterance carries echoes of other discourses,

dominant or marginalized, revealing that no text is monolithic in essence: even seemingly authoritarian discourse is crossed by invisible echoes and traces of silenced voices.

Within this context, the notion of linguistic heterogeneity becomes central, and highlights the constitutive plurality of language, composed of accents, slang, jargon, and registers in constant tension. Applying this analytical lens allows us to understand how identities are forged in the clash between hegemonic voices (like standard language) and subterranean ones (like *pajubá* or *funk*)<sup>1</sup>, recognizing that words carry within them the struggles of class, race, and gender. The methodological choice for a dialogic analysis is thus justified, as it is capable of mapping not only the explicit content of discourses but also their implicit layers, where fissures and resistances are revealed. Every critical analysis, in this sense, is an act of attentive listening to the cracks through which discourse challenges established hierarchies.

This work is structured as follows: it dives into a critique of identity predefinition, which, though often celebrated as guidance, can become a gilded cage. Forms of being are not rigid molds but performative choreographies negotiated in specific cultural contexts. Thus, an epistemology of the in-between is proposed, where hybridity and contradictions are not flaws to be corrected, but legitimate expressions of the human condition.

Language is also approached not as a mere instrument, but as a performative space where the subject is simultaneously actor, playwright, and spectator of themselves. Its communicative, expressive, and political functions are analyzed through decolonial perspectives: how the verb colonizes accents, how metaphors uphold hierarchies, and how neologisms can inaugurate territories of insubordination. The alchemical bond between lexicon and identity is explored, the way we choose (or are chosen by) words to name pains, desires, and delusions. Whether in the punk scream of an urban slang, the ancestral whisper of an Indigenous proverb, or the encrypted codes on social media, each expression carries a stance in the world.

In the second movement of this study, we enter the Foucauldian territory where discourse and power intertwine like threads of the same web. It describes how educational, media, and legal systems act as true factories of subjectivities by shaping behaviors and identities according to pre-established norms. Exclusion is identified not as an accident but as a technology of control, a mechanism that silences rural accents, erases dissident pronouns, and turns difference into deficit.

## The language that clothes us: the skin of language, the soul of the Self

Between the embroidery of silent hands whispering in Brazilian Sign Language (LIBRAS, acronym in Portuguese) and the whirlwind of pixels dancing on screens, an axiom is revealed: language and identity are threads of the same web, a living dyad that breathes, bleeds, and reinvents itself in the raw flesh of everyday life. There is no “I” without a verb, nor a verb without a body to breathe its intent toward the other. In every corner of the perceptible world, we are artisans of masks: we combine words, emojis, gestures, memes, and signs like someone blending paints on an infinite palette, painting faces that at times protect us, at times reveal us (Bruner, 1997; Koch, 2002; Rajagopalan, 2003).

In the marketplace of human relations, language pours out in multiple tongues, some sanctified by ancestral canons, others born in the urgent alleyways of daily survival. Brazilian Sign Language, with its syntax and embodied poetics, dismantles the myth that voice exists only where there is sound. Meanwhile, in digital networks, narratives emerge in GIFs, hashtags, and stories: ephemeral idioms that die and are reborn in cycles of algorithm. These quantum-text genres, hybrids of poetics and provocation, defy the nostalgia of paper and ink: a tweet can spark revolutions, a TikTok can reframe trauma, a meme can become a hymn of resistance (Castells, 2018; Koch, 2002; Rajagopalan, 2003). It is precisely from this kaleidoscope

<sup>1</sup> Translation note: *Pajubá* is a vibrant and affectionate sociolect used by LGBTQIA+ communities in Brazil, particularly by travestis and transgender people. It is composed of slang, expressions, and vocabulary of African origin—especially from Yoruba—and is often referred to as the “queer dialect” or “dialect of the queer community.” *Funk carioca* is a music genre that emerged in the *favelas* (urban peripheries) of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Characterized by strong beats and socially charged lyrics, it has become a powerful form of expression for marginalized communities.

of languages and flows that Castells (2018) intervenes, proposing a provocative reading of the relationship between cultural identity and forms of symbolic expression in the contemporary world.

The more that societies try to recover their identity beyond the global logic of uncontrolled power of flows, the more they need an architecture that exposes their own reality, without faking beauty from a transhistorical spatial repertoire. But at the same time, oversignificant architecture, trying to give a very definite message or to express directly the codes of a given culture, is too primitive a form to be able to penetrate our saturated visual imaginary (Castells, 2010, p. 449).

By bringing aesthetics and politics into tension, we are warned against the risk of solidifying meaning in a time that demands porosity. In this social laboratory, language is both trench and embrace. Through it, we negotiate belonging (“among us, Northeasterners”), dispute meanings (“that’s fake news”), and even lie to survive (“all is fine”). Koch reminds us that every lexical choice is political: saying “neurodivergent” instead of “sick,” or “transvestite” instead of “man dressed as a woman,” is not mere euphemism, it is a semiotic revolution. In classrooms, dating apps, and life’s corridors, we repeat and subvert scripts: we experience “love” in 140 characters, recite Drummond<sup>2</sup> in reels, say “I love you” through heart emojis (Butler, 2003; Koch, 2002; Spivak, 2010).

Language is also a portable museum of memories and affections. We memorize our grandmother’s proverbs, professional jargon, catchphrases from TV shows, and in this coming and going, we build an identity shaped by traces. In times of artificial intelligence, these memories are challenged: chatbots simulate empathy, deepfakes forge accents, algorithms predict our words before we think them. How can we be authentic when our speech can be simulated by a model trained on data bought in the cloud? (Bauman, 2001; Castells, 2018; Rajagopalan, 2003).

Where our identities were once like hardcover books, fixed biographies, with Latin prefaces and definitive spines, today we are editable wikis, open to real-time updates, written by us and by others. Choosing a language, or inventing one (like the “*pajubá*” of drag queens), is a political act. Every like, every silence, every word chosen or abandoned, every adopted slang is a revision of this open manuscript we call identity (Anzaldúa, 1987; Butler, 2003; Koch, 2002).

Thus, we continue navigating, translators of ourselves, between the ancestral song of oral narratives and the electric buzz of encoded words. At the crossroads between ink and pixel, being is not a fixed noun but a wild verb: a verb that does not conjugate but explodes in infinite gerunds, being reinventing, being connecting, being (con)voking (Bruner, 1997; Rajagopalan, 2003; Santos, 2006).

Since childhood, we are literate in invisible codes. We learn, for example, that crying in public is a sign of weakness, that the Northeastern accent is a joke, that a rumor must ask permission to become a headline. These scripts, ingrained like rites of passage, make us polyglots of survival, masters of disguised adaptation. A CEO speaks “*boardroomese*” during the day and sings funk at karaoke; a single mother masters legal language in court and the dialect of despair in waiting lines. Identity thus becomes a gala outfit stitched with threads of urgency, changed for each audience, each social expectation (Bhabha, 1998; Butler, 2003; Foucault, 1996).

Rajagopalan (2003) helps us unravel this veil: the distinction between language and dialect is, in many cases, a dispute over linguistic thrones. While Lisbon Portuguese is enthroned as high culture, Cape Verdean Creole is treated as the ugly duckling of dictionaries, even though its syllables carry the sung resistance of slave ship holds and the poetry of market vendors. Hegemonic grammar is a coin minted in colonial gold: bourgeois accents are worth more than *quilombola*<sup>3</sup> proverbs; standardized norms silence the living musicality of the streets (Mignolo, 2003; Quijano, 2005; Rajagopalan, 2003).

<sup>2</sup> Translation note: Carlos Drummond de Andrade (1902–1987) was a major Brazilian poet whose work explored themes of identity, modernity, and introspection.

<sup>3</sup> Translation note: *Quilombos* are rural Brazilian communities formed by descendants of enslaved Africans who resisted colonization and slavery. They are important symbols of cultural resilience and Afro-Brazilian identity.

But there are insurgents. Youth from the peripheries transform slang into shields and trenches: they reinvent words like “*imicar*”, used in Northern and Northeastern communities with the meaning of getting into trouble or becoming involved undesirably, even if absent from formal dictionaries, they reframe denials. Indigenous communities recover their languages through mobile apps, turning technology into a resistance tool. The counteroffensive against linguistic prejudice is a semiotic guerrilla. Every affirmed pronoun, every celebrated regional expression is an open trench in the battle for the right to name the world, and with that, to exist (Anzaldúa, 1987; Santos, 2006).

Koch (2002) reminds us that language is not a neutral tool but a vital atmosphere, as essential as air. In rural zones, it is the breath that turns mourning into poetry. In megaphones, it is the gust that turns indignation into a manifesto. And even in silence, language screams: in the gaze that reveals unrequited love, in the body that says “no” without uttering phonemes. On social media, this breath finds new lungs: memes become complex cultural treatises; emojis, digital hieroglyphs; influencers, modern shamans who translate unrest into 30-second videos. Language is a mutant organism that survives the extinction of scrolls and adapts to digital savannahs (Castells, 2018; Koch, 2002; Rajagopalan, 2003).

In this context, the dilemma of the contemporary polyglot emerges: How many “selves” fit in a single body? How to balance corporate dialect with the mother tongue of the heart? How to be “professional” in front of Zoom cameras and “authentic” in Instagram captions? Perhaps the answer lies in being our own translator—someone who navigates the thread that stitches us from within. Like the teacher who teaches standard language with rigor but celebrates the sway and beauty of the living orality in her students’ writing. Like the rapper who weaves Enlightenment references with street slang, crafting verses that flow between academia and the block (Bhabha, 1998; Rajagopalan, 2003; Santos, 2006).

And so we go on, voluntary castaways in a sea of signs, rowing between islands of hegemonic grammars and archipelagos of forbidden languages, knowing, deep down, that every word spoken is a mirror: reflecting who we were, who we are, and who we are still becoming (Anzaldúa, 1987; Bruner, 1997; Rajagopalan, 2003). Between the ancestral murmur of words and the glow of algorithms now translating us, language reveals itself as a living entity, sometimes armor, sometimes bridge, that not only weaves sounds but builds universes in the palms of human hands. Koch (2002), in her sensitive wisdom, invites us to a threefold dance: to understand language as a reflection of thought, as a stage for communication, and as a cultural tattoo. Three faces of the same diamond refracted into infinite possibilities (Bruner, 1997; Koch, 2002; Rajagopalan, 2003).

The first function of language is that of a mirror of the inner world, an intimate alchemy that transforms the invisible realm of thought into shareable signs. Since the earliest myths, when *homo sapiens* sketched deer on cave walls, to the poets who sow emotions in verses, language acts as the translation of the unspeakable. Koch (2002) reminds us that it reflects both love and war, joy or grief, always according to the curvature of the gaze that activates it. The Inuit, for example, with their dozens of words for snow, are not merely describing a weather phenomenon, but encoding survival nuances. A scientific text translates the gravity of the physical world into equations, mathematical metaphors that reveal more than they measure. Language, in this sense, is a prism: it decomposes the raw light of experience into decipherable colors (Bruner, 1997; Koch, 2002; Rajagopalan, 2003).

The second function is that of a bridge across abysses, the dance of communication. If thought is monologue, communication is shared choreography, a game of revelation and concealment, where words alternate between mask and mirror. Koch (2002) defines it as code, but it is also a ritual of belonging. A kiss, a contract, a viral meme, all are gestures of self-translation. In the *favelas* [slums], *funk* is a telegram of resistance; in parliaments, euphemisms disguise oppression. In everyday life, we replace declarations with averted glances or emojis that say “I love you” through pulsing hearts. And when speech fails, we invent new languages: Brazilian Sign Language turns hands into voices, and programmers create Python to converse with machines (Castells, 2018; Hall, 2006; Koch, 2002).

The third function is that of a tattoo of the collective soul, marks that shape identities. We do not merely use language; we are shaped by it. *Embiá*, an Afro-Brazilian ritual language, is not merely a communication tool, it is a living sanctuary, each word a dance step in honor of the *orixás* [Afro-Brazilian deities]. The *caipira* dialect, a rural Brazilian vernacular marked by a dragged “r” sound, carries the epic of the *bandeirantes* (colonial explorers), the resistance of farmers, and the affections of rural life. For Koch, in this realm, language is action, a hammer that forges worlds. LGBTQIA+ youth who reclaim “*bicha*” [a formerly derogatory term for queer men] as a badge of pride, or Black collectives who replace “*negritude*” with “*pretitude*” [terms that center Blackness from a Brazilian perspective], sculpt identity in living letters. Language, in this sense, is a weapon of mass construction (Anzaldúa, 1987; Butler, 2003; Koch, 2002).

But the 21st century presents a new challenge: these three functions not only coexist, they merge. A single tweet can simultaneously be a mirror of the subject, a bridge for dialogue, and a coat of arms for identity. When artificial intelligence generates texts, we are forced to ask: can an algorithm have style? And when emojis become the shared language of millennials, what is lost, or gained, in translation? Koch (2002), with keen sensitivity, reminds us that language is no longer just a human code; it is becoming a hybrid ecosystem where machines, natures, and subjectivities collide in zones not yet named (Castells, 2018; Rajagopalan, 2003).

Thus, language reveals itself as a river with three branches: the first springs from the source of thought; the second irrigates the fields of communication; the third bathes the banks of collective identity. And we, word navigators, row between these arms, knowing that each expression, each silence, each lexical choice is a verse in the infinite poem of being human (Bruner, 1997; Koch, 2002; Rajagopalan, 2003).

Between the diaphanous veils of words that dress the soul and the subterranean echoes of unspoken syllables, an unsettling truth unfolds: language is the chisel that sculpts the self in social clay. Every verb, every pause, every accent is a strike of creation on the imperfect statue of what we are. Rajagopalan (2003), with his acuity, reminds us that we do not merely speak, we are spoken. We are carried by language like rivers that, in their course, bear the memory of the springs that fed them (Bruner, 1997; Rajagopalan, 2003).

Language, as public tattoo, transcends its communicative function: it is an identity emblem engraved on the social skin. Even without explicit intent, every interaction carries marks: an accent that carries migratory histories, a technical jargon that becomes a second language, a slang from the periphery that challenges hegemonic grammar. All are traces of belonging, resistance, and world.

Consider, for example, the lawyer who masters “*juridiquês*”<sup>4</sup> in court but moves fluently through street dialects on a job site or on public transit, like holding a dual-identity passport. Or the drag queen who transforms standard Portuguese into *pajubá*, weaving sparkling insults and secret codes into a language that is trench, performance, and protection (Anzaldúa, 1987; Butler, 2003; Koch, 2002).

Language, in this sense, is both prison and liberation. It can trap subjects in stigma (“unbearable,” “lazy,” “problematic”), but it can also free them in cries of autonomy and affirmation (“my curly hair is my crown”). Rajagopalan (2003) warns us: when a dialect is reduced to an “error” or an accent is ridiculed, it is not phonemes being corrected, it is entire worlds being erased.

Still, in the interstices of norms, creative revolt blooms: communities reviving near-extinct languages through apps; LGBTQIA+ collectives reinventing pronouns and challenging grammatical binarism with forms like “*elu/delu*,”<sup>5</sup> establishing new spaces of recognition (Butler, 2003; Rajagopalan, 2003).

Language is also an invisible web that weaves through society. It is not a state, it is a flow, a river of discourses that flows through everything from institutional backstages to WhatsApp groups. In this cultural

<sup>4</sup> Translation note: *Juridiquês* is a colloquial (and often critical) Brazilian term referring to the overly technical, formal, and convoluted language used by legal professionals, especially in legal documents, court rulings, petitions, and oral arguments.

<sup>5</sup> Translation note: *Elu* and *delu* are gender-neutral pronouns created in Portuguese to challenge the traditional grammatical binary (masculine/feminine). *Ele* = he, *ela* = she, while *elu* serves as a neutral or non-binary alternative. Likewise, *dela* (“hers”) becomes *delu* as a neutral possessive. These pronouns are used primarily within LGBTQIA+ communities—especially by non-binary and gender-nonconforming individuals—as part of a broader movement toward inclusive language that resists gendered linguistic structures.

broth, identities are collective works. In *funk* lyrics, the “forbidden” is not just rhythm, it is a sonic cartography of pain and delirium at the system’s edges.

In viral memes, ironies encapsulate generational experiences that often laugh only to keep from crying. And even in silence, what is not said, a family taboo, a state secret, also sculpts identities. The unspoken shapes, represses, or protects (Foucault, 1996; Hall, 2006; Koch, 2002).

Building identity through language is thus a political act of semiotic guerrilla. Every lexical choice is a symbolic battle. Choosing “person experiencing homelessness” instead of “beggar” is not euphemism, it’s a restitution of dignity. Using “sex worker” instead of “prostitute” shifts the focus from stigma to the person.

Rajagopalan invites us to poetic vigilance: to distrust words that naturalize oppression, metaphors that mask violence, like “tax war,” “labor market,” or “pacification.” Poorly handled, language can be censorship; well crafted, it is alchemy. A minefield that, at times, blooms in symbolic gold. In this same rhythm of critical unrest, the author deepens the call for ongoing attention to the linguistic mechanisms that uphold inequality:

However, one of the most effective ways to combat social prejudice is, on the one hand, to monitor the language through which such prejudices are produced and sustained, and on the other, to compel the speaker—in the name of politically correct language—to exercise control over their own speech, constantly becoming aware of the existence of such prejudices. Intervening in language is intervening in the world (Rajagopalan, 2003. p. 102, our translation).

It is from this reflective horizon that the following is affirmed: identity is not a pearl hidden in the depths of the self’s sea; it is an open shell, shaped by the currents of language. Every word we echo, every silence we cultivate, is a breath in this invisible fabric that defines us, limits us, and paradoxically, frees us. At our core, we are verbal sculptures, carved both by what we pronounce and by what we keep silent. An open work, signed with the lips, without a frame, without a museum, made to exist in the living flesh of the human (Bruner, 1997; Butler, 2003; Rajagopalan, 2003).

## Discourses as chains, words as keys

Between the golden threads of power that cross the classroom and the dark webs of silenced curricula, emancipatory teacher education emerges as an act of insurgency. Michel Foucault (1996) reminds us that power pulses through the veins of the social, while Paulo Freire (1987), in his radically humanist legacy, teaches that it is possible to transform chains into bridges. When the teacher, in their transdisciplinary practice, unveils the hidden codes of textbooks that erase indigenous knowledge or reduce Black history to footnotes, they not only question epistemic hierarchies but also irrigate the arid soil of education with the seeds of decolonial sustainability. Lesson after lesson, this educator-artisan does not repeat discourses, but dismantles and reconstructs them, showing that the “order” of knowledge is rhizomatic, capable of being traversed by *quilombola*, LGBTQIA+, ecological voices, voices that transform the classroom into a sacred space of human rights (Quijano, 2005).

If discourse is the invisible mortar that builds walls, transdisciplinarity is the hammer that tears them down, creating cracks through which utopia breathes. In teaching practices that connect mathematics to marginal poetry, or biology to ancestral myths, there is a political gesture of rupture: breaking with discipline as a Foucauldian “iron grid” and weaving knowledge as a living fishing net, open to the unpredictable.

When physics teachers discuss thermodynamics based on the sustainable agriculture of traditional communities, they are not merely teaching formulas, they are shifting the axis of scientific knowledge, revealing that sustainability is not an abstract concept but a body that pulses in the hands of those who resist. This pedagogy, essentially Freirean, transforms the classroom into a space where knowledge maps are redrawn by many hands, including those carrying soil under their nails (Santos, 2006).



Within the folds of everyday school life, where algorithms of digital platforms seek to standardize teaching, emancipatory teacher education constitutes an act of rebellion choreographed with political precision and poetic sensitivity. Foucault (1996) warns that power shapes even technological systems; but teachers who use these technologies to amplify peripheral voices, recording podcasts with students about *favela* memories or mapping local ecological crises, transform tools of control into lanterns of autonomy. This practice, both dialogic and transdisciplinary, does not settle for merely “including” human rights in the curriculum: it embodies them. It confronts the logic that reduces sustainability to recycling projects but ignores the suffocated cry of rivers poisoned by agribusiness. From this perspective, education ceases to be an island of neutrality and becomes a river that drags, with force, both the mud and the gold of social struggles (Mbembe, 2018).

The emancipatory teachers are tightrope walkers dancing over the abyss between norm and possibility, intertwining in their lesson plans the invisible threads of micropolitics. By questioning why “classic” literature is mostly white and European, or why African history is treated as a secondary chapter, they practice epistemic disobedience, as Paulo Freire (1987) teaches. The classroom becomes a laboratory of concrete utopias: when addressing the climate crisis through indigenous narratives, they not only treat sustainability but decolonize the future. In this crossing, transdisciplinarity reveals itself less as a method and more as a way of being. Teacher education thus ceases to be technical training and becomes a rite of passage, where one learns to read the world through the eyes of the excluded and write it with the hands of those who still dare to dream (Anzaldúa, 1987).

Power, far from being a monopoly of kings or presidents, is a rhizome: a geography without a center, an ecosystem of micropolitics. It infiltrates the classroom when an accent is ridiculed; the hospital, when a diagnosis becomes a sentence; dating apps, where algorithms decide who is desirable. Foucault (1996) insists: there is no “there” or “here,” only flow. We are all crossed by this network, sometimes replicators of control, sometimes resistance questioning the grammars of the world (Bauman, 2001; Foucault, 1996; Mbembe, 2018).

Stuart Hall (2006) teaches us that identities are not born but performed on discursive stages. Every pronoun, every silence, every adjective is strategic. When one says “bandit,” one does not merely name: one sentences, criminalizes a life. When “community leadership” is spoken of, resistance is often disguised under the veneer of managing misery. Discourse is a factory of symbols: it can crown heroes or erase histories, canonize colonizers by banning indigenous languages and forcing peoples to forget who they are (Foucault, 1996; Hall, 2006; Spivak, 2010).

Exclusion, in this context, is not an accident but method. It is the subtle art of erasing existences. It manifests itself through language, when dialects are classified as “errors” and accents as “backwardness”; through invisibilization, when textbooks erase women from science and statistics reduce trans people to statistical margins; through naturalization, when it is accepted that *favelas* “do not have” rights or that certain bodies “are not” compatible with academic spaces. But Foucault (1979) warns us: where there is power, there is resistance. Every exclusion generates its antibodies: Black movements that resignify “black” as pride; LGBTQIA+ communities that transform insults into flags now raised as marks of power (Butler, 2003; Foucault, 1979; hooks, 2013).

Identity, in the context of contemporary social dynamics, is configured not as a fixed essence but as a performative process marked by tensions between normalization and subversion. In urban peripheries, for example, young people negotiate daily marginalized cultural expressions such as *funk*, associated with stereotypes of violence, poverty, and strategies of integration into hegemonic systems, such as accessing formal education or securing institutionalized jobs. This identity hybridity reveals itself not only symbolically but bodily: the peripheral body becomes a territory where conflicts between cultural autonomy and assimilationist pressures materialize (Bauman, 2001; Mbembe, 2018).

On social media, a similar phenomenon is observed. Digital influencers celebrating body diversity, such as the body positive movement, frequently resort to filters or editing apps to fit dominant aesthetic standards, even if only partially. This contradiction, far from mere individual incoherence, reflects

micropolitical operations of power acting on bodies and subjectivities, simultaneously encouraging self-acceptance and conformity (Foucault, 1979). In this scenario, resistance emerges not as total denial of structures but as a tactic of resignification. If power establishes normative choreographies, like the waltz of respectability or the sonnet of neoliberal productivity, marginalized groups improvise dissonant steps: appropriating hegemonic codes to subvert them, as in the “*passinho*”<sup>6</sup> dance from Rio, which turns street dance into social critique, or online discourses exposing the fissures of superficial empowerment (Butler, 2003; Hall, 2006).

Thus, we navigate, castaways and captains alike, through an ocean where discourses are the currents, identities the boats, and power the wind that can carry us to harbors of dignity or drag us into abysses. Perhaps all that remains is to learn to read the stars of resistance and row, even without a compass, knowing that the sea is never just sea, and the backlands never just loneliness (Castells, 2018; Foucault, 1996; Santos, 2006). Between the invisible blankets that govern bodies and the words that weave fate, the Foucauldian enigma unfolds: power is not a single sun but a diffuse galaxy, a luminosity that does not emanate from a fixed center but pulses in every conversation, every social gesture, every moving network. There are no thrones or pyramids, only rhizomes of influence that connect the sigh of a marginalized poet to a parliamentary decree, the algorithm that dictates consumer trends to the silenced voice of a teacher. Power is, thus, a living constellation (Bauman, 2001; Castells, 2018; Foucault, 1996).

For Foucault (1996), power is the breath of the collective body; it is not possessed or concentrated, it only flows. It is like the breeze that both stirs a state’s flag and a protester’s scarf. It is the current descending from antennas into prison systems, flowing through school corridors, overflowing into social media. Its genius lies in understanding ubiquity. In schools, power can shape curricula that glorify certain histories and silence others, teaching children to venerate white heroes and forget Black revolutions. In hospitals, it decides who deserves choice and who will be pathologized: trans bodies treated as “cases,” Black people subject to neglect and symbolic anesthesia.

In dating apps, the algorithm privileges Eurocentric bodies, disguising racism as “personal preference” (Foucault, 1996; Mbembe, 2018). Under this same horizon of structural exclusions, the realization that educational opportunity inequality cannot be dissolved by individual efforts or isolated adjustments emerges. As Bauman (2001, p. 15, our translation) states: “The inequality of educational opportunities is an issue that can only be confronted on a broad scale by State policies. So far, however, as we have seen, state policies seem to be moving away, not toward, a serious confrontation of the issue”.

From this bitter realization, however, an ethical and discursive call springs. If power is air, discourse is the storm that carves mountains. Foucault reveals that words do not describe the world: they found it. Every utterance is an act of creation. When we read “*Ordem e Progresso*” [Order and Progress] on the Brazilian flag, we see not just a motto but the historical project of erasing *quilombos* and exalting land concentration. “War on drugs” is not a policy; it is a euphemism that transforms Black youth into enemies of the state. Yet discourse also changes course. Social movements resignify words: “queer” becomes a badge of pride, “favela” a symbol of resistance. Peripheral artists break literary canons, writing in poetry slams, on walls, and on cellphone screens (Anzaldúa, 1987; Foucault, 1996; Hall, 2006).

Intellectuals, in this scenario, are weavers often entangled in the very fabric they critique. Teachers, judges, journalists, all participate in the machinery of discourse, sometimes feeding the machine, sometimes trying to sabotage it. The progressive sociologist publishing in elitist journals may, unknowingly, reinforce restricted access to reflection. The feminist influencer selling “empowerment” t-shirts made in sweatshops outsources her own discourse. Foucault (1996) teaches us there is no purity. The critical intellectual is not a neutral being but someone who may stitch escapes in the system’s gaps. Like that teacher who, during prep classes for the National High School Exam (ENEM, *Exame Nacional do Ensino Médio*)<sup>7</sup>, inserts Paulo Freire

<sup>6</sup> Translation note: *Passinho* (“little step”) is a Brazilian street dance style that emerged in the early 2000s in the *favelas* of Rio de Janeiro. Despite its name, the dance is fast-paced, dynamic, and highly expressive, blending elements of funk, breakdance, and local creativity.

<sup>7</sup> Translation note: The *ENEM* is Brazil’s main standardized test for university admission.

between Bhaskara formulas (Giroux, 2013; Foucault, 1996; Freire, 1987). Law, media, and education function as resonance chambers of power. The court does not judge only crimes; it judges bodies: a Black drug dealer is “dangerous,” while a corrupt banker is “entrepreneurial.” The 9 pm soap opera manufactures affections: romanticizing whiteness and reducing the domestic worker to an unnamed supporting character. Universities, in turn, sanctify knowledge from the Global North: European philosophies are called “classics,” while indigenous knowledge is relegated to “folklore” (Foucault, 1996; Quijano, 2005; Spivak, 2010).

Thus, we navigate an ocean where power and discourse are tide and salt, inseparable, imponderable. We are both fish drinking this water and castaways trying to describe it, unaware that the language we use is already soaked by the currents we seek to critique. All that remains is to dance on the tightrope: using the words that bind us as ropes to free ourselves, aware that even the subtlest threads can become nets or bridges (Anzaldúa, 1987; Foucault, 1996; Hall, 2006).

In the world’s webs, where words weave the invisible, discourse reveals its multifaceted essence. It is like a river carrying not only symbols and sounds in its currents but the mortar that builds human understanding. More than a mere vehicle of communication, discourse unfolds as a symbolic battlefield, woven with invisible codes, silent conventions, and language rituals that shape and solidify meanings, crossing cultures and eras with its historical breath. It is neither neutral nor fixed; it is a dancing flame, always on the edge of itself, crossed by flames that both illuminate and burn. It is the reality tensioned, debated, and felt among the fishermen of meaning (Foucault, 1996; Hall, 2006; Rajagopalan, 2003).

Foucault reminds us that discourse is like the wind, unseen but moving everything. In every society, it undergoes a ceremony of domestication: filtered by control guidelines, sifted by invisible hierarchies, adjusted to the logic of authority. These procedures act as guardians of the temple of knowledge, ensuring that words do not profane the altar of the *status quo*. “Every discursive production,” says the philosopher, “is watched, pruned, and redistributed like a bonsai garden.” Every twisted branch represents a threat; every contained silence, a dangerous echo. Yet, in the same soil where pruning occurs, fertilization also takes place: discourse fertilizes and naturalizes beliefs, legitimating structures, softening coercions, dissolving the dissent under the guise of order (Foucault, 1996; Spivak, 2010).

What we call “truth” is often only the reflection of a disciplined mirror. Discourse establishes itself with an aura of harmony, as if breathing the world with neutrality. But beneath its surface pulses exclusion. It carefully chooses who may inhabit the realm of the sayable, who will be canonized as legitimate, and who will be condemned to the exile of silence. Its power lies in the ability to euphemize coercion: it transforms arbitrary rules into natural laws, oppressions into traditions, inequalities into “inevitable” hierarchies. It is a theater where elites enact their permanence, disguising the steel of chains under the rhetorical shine of gold (Foucault, 1996; Mbembe, 2018; Quijano, 2005).

However, discourse is not a monolithic block. In its fissures, between the cracks of words, sprouts of resistance germinate. It is paradoxically both battlefield and seedbed. Power asserts itself through it but can only exist because it is challenged. Every utterance carries within it a spark of ambiguity, a promise that can be twisted, diverted, reappropriated. Foucault invites us to perceive this tense materiality: discourse as political body, technical subject, vehicle of collective fevers, stage of semantic coups. Its “heavy and fearsome materiality” does not reside in solidity but in fluidity: it is fragile and potent because it is always on the verge of a new lexicon that erupts, destabilizes, dethrones (Butler, 2003; Foucault, 1996; Hall, 2006).

Rethinking discourse is to enter an alchemical laboratory where meanings are fused and refused. Every lexical choice, every metaphor evoked, every strategically maintained silence is a political act. There is no neutrality in this process: calling a flower a “weed” reveals a worldview; calling a territory ‘empty’ imposes a hierarchy. Discourse does not describe the world, it finds it, in dialogue with the structures that sustain it and the impulses that corrode it. In this dance between organization and rebellion, we understand that all knowledge production is partial, and this partiality is not a weakness, but a condition of possibility. We are always situated at a point in the labyrinth, reading reality through the cracks we have. Critique, then, is not a search for absolute objectivity, but a mapping of the coordinates that define what can be said, done, and dreamed (Foucault, 1996; Santos, 2006; Spivak, 2010).

Discourse, in its imperfect glory, is simultaneously a cell and a key. It imprisons through what it silences, but also frees through what it hints at. Thus, in the depths of the verb, a dialectical lesson echoes: discourse is an organism in perpetual becoming, tensioned between order and chaos, between the voice of the master and the murmur of the crowds. Its power lies not only in what it affirms, but above all in what it leaves unsaid. It is an invitation to rereading, revolt, and reinvention. Fragmented like a broken mirror, each piece reflects a struggle, and all together form the mosaic of a humanity that will never be complete and, for that very reason, continues creating (Anzaldúa, 1987; Foucault, 1996; Hall, 2006). In the cracks of the symbolic stage, where masks dance to the rhythm of power, unfolds a choreography of delusions. It is a politics that infiltrates the pores of discursive freedom, dressed in the diaphanous cloak of plurality. In this theater of shadows, the main actors hide themselves, their identities dissolved in strategic mists, like threads of a carefully woven narrative meant to appear spontaneous.

It is a meticulous farce: under the cloak of diversity, the masters of the mind orchestrate silent destructions. Interests camouflage themselves in collective whispers, in rumors that echo like folklore; in jokes that carry stereotypes; in melodies that naturalize hierarchies. All these elements are instruments of a cunning mechanism of soft power, inoculated into the bloodstream of popular culture. Subaltern groups, in a somnambulistic state of vigilance, assimilate these narratives as if they were wild fruits, harvested without questioning the poisoned soil that nourished them (Foucault, 1996; Mbembe, 2018; Spivak, 2010).

In *The Order of Discourse*, Foucault (1996) identifies three great gates that censor the word, erecting walls between the permissible and the forbidden. The first is sacred interdiction, which falls upon topics wrapped in moral veils, such as sexuality or politics, treated as taboos whose transgression triggers the alarms of the sacred. The second gate is the split between reason and madness, a boundary that encloses certain voices in the asylum of the unacceptable. The third, perhaps the most insidious, is the regime of truth: an epistemological organization that splits the world into rigid dichotomies, true versus false, scientific versus superstitious, rational versus heretic. These three systems not only filter what can be said but shape what can be believed. They transform discursive freedom into a prison molded by the expectations of the acceptable (Foucault, 1996; Mignolo, 2003; Quijano, 2005).

Beyond these evident barriers, Foucault (1996) reveals subtler mechanisms that act like viruses within the very structure of discourse. Commentary, for example, is not mere repetition: it is a ritual of interpretive control. Between the lines of sacred texts, be they juridical, scientific, or philosophical—new layers of meaning are woven, but always under the watch of the canon. The new does not sprout from the unprecedented, it warns Foucault, but from the echo of an old voice, revisited under new gazes. Thus, discourse is a river that runs over its own bed, continuously recycling itself without ever overflowing (Foucault, 1996; Hall, 2006).

The figure of the author, in turn, acquires an almost mythological status. The author's signature operates as a delimitation: it transforms texts into territories; intellectual fences whose function is to legitimize hierarchies. We cite names as if they were magic keys, often forgetting that these names are also strategic constructions. Academic discipline, finally, acts as an iron grid. Within each field of knowledge, only what aligns with established methods and axioms is considered valid. Any idea that dares to escape these boundaries is labeled "amateur" or "immature," pushed to the margins of debate (Foucault, 1996; Santos, 2006; Spivak, 2010).

Yet, even amid these restrictions, there are cracks through which the unpredictable escapes. Commentary, apparently submissive, can become a Trojan horse: by retelling a narrative, it inserts a grain of sand into the mechanism, a nuance that diverts the original meaning. No discipline, no matter how strict, can suffocate all heresies. The history of knowledge is full of saints who were once considered mad. And the authors, even when monumentalized, are always betrayed by readers who read between the lines what they perhaps never dared to say (Bhabha, 1998; Foucault, 1996; hooks, 2013).

The discursive order, therefore, is a living paradox: it restricts and stimulates, silences and whispers. Foucault warns that it is not a monolith, but a field of forces in dispute. Every rule carries within itself the seed of its own subversion; every norm incites the desire to transgress it. In the folds of discourse, between

farce and authenticity, between control and creation, language dances, prisoner and liberator, obedient and revolutionary (Anzaldúa, 1987; Butler, 2003; Foucault, 1996).

In the mists of the intellectual pantheon, where names shine like constellations guiding paths of prestige, the author, from Foucault's (1996) perspective, is not a sacred demiurge who breathes life into words, but a strategic construction, a discursive artifact that coagulates dispersed meanings around a mythified figure. Far from the romantic idea of the solitary genius, the author acts as a gravitational field that organizes thought, bestowing upon words an aura of legitimacy.

The author's function is not only to create but to heal: to stitch fragments, select elements, and keep them united by an apparent coherence, transforming discursive chaos into symbolic cosmos. The author, Foucault (1996) reveals, is less a person than a discursive operation, a proper name ritually used to demarcate territories of knowledge, a "point of origin, a field of coherence, a focus of attribution," just like cities that draw constellations in the sky only to mark a place on Earth (Freire, 1987; Giroux, 2013; Zabala, 1998).

This authorial function sustains a game of mirrors. The notion of authorship conceals the collective and historical nature of knowledge production. By anchoring ideas in names: Homer, Marx, Freud, a mythology of authority is constructed that functions as guardian of the canon. These authors become border landmarks: defining what is worthy of citation, criticism, or veneration. Their biographies are compressed, their flaws erased, all in the name of an idealizing narrative. The author-function, thus, acts as an epistemic filter: only what passes through the sieve of institutional relevance is legitimized; marginal voices remain in the limbo of the "unauthorized" (Anzaldúa, 1987; Butler, 2003; Foucault, 1996).

If the author is the face carved on the altar of knowledge, discipline is the invisible architecture that supports this temple. Foucault describes it as a technology of intellectual domestication, a system of rules that merge with the very act of thinking. Discipline does not impose visible shackles but institutes micropractices that shape the intellect: it defines methods of elaboration, validation protocols, hierarchies of credibility. For a discipline to sustain itself, it demands more than obedience: it requires creative participation. But this participation is always contained within the preestablished framework. Discipline seduces with the promise of innovation, while rigidly delimiting what is possible (Bhabha, 1998; Foucault, 1996; hooks, 2013).

We can imagine discipline as a tailor who, when cutting fabric, invents new seams, but always according to prevailing fashion standards. It stimulates discursive proliferation but from within its canons. The scientist may formulate bold hypotheses, provided they follow accepted methodologies; the philosopher may question everything, as long as they cite established authorities; the artist may break limits, provided their work fits within gallery frames. Discipline is a choreography that teaches improvisation, but only in rooms with invisible walls. For a discipline to exist, Foucault warns, it must formulate, and be able to indefinitely formulate, new propositions. Rebellion is permitted, provided it is dressed in the clothes of tradition (Bhabha, 1998; Foucault, 1996; hooks, 2013).

In this play of light and shadow, author and discipline intertwine as partners in an ancient dance. While the former offers a face to be adored, the latter delimits the space of adoration. Together, they build the illusion of order: a map that transforms the chaos of thought into safe routes. However, in the cracks of this symbolic building, weeds sprout. Heresies that challenge the canon, heretics who corrupt the structures of discipline. Foucault reminds us that every system carries within itself the virus of its dissolution, for discourses, even when conducted like domesticated rivers, still hold in their womb the monsters that can devour the margins that contain them.

Thus, in the great orchestra of knowledge, author and discipline are conductors and score. One directs the solos; the other defines which notes are allowed. But in the pauses between chords, in the silences of the scores, echo the murmurs of the untamable. Foucault (1996), cartographer of shadows, teaches us to listen not to the music itself but to the noises it tries to silence. For it is in this interval, between what is said and what remains unnamable, that pulses the power to rewrite the symphony (Anzaldúa, 1987; Butler, 2003; Foucault, 1996).

The geometries of the present are no longer shaped by visible shackles or punishment spectacles. In contemporary times, discipline no longer imposes itself through iron structures or shouts echoing in dungeons. It infiltrates like a silent choreography, embedding itself in the interstices of everyday life: organizing spaces as if drawing labyrinths, fragmenting time into relentless timers, transforming gestures into standardized routines.

If in the past power was displayed in public spectacles of torment, today it hides beneath the smooth skin of routines. It is a liquid panopticon, no longer needing towers or visible guards, as it dissolves into the very air we breathe. Foucault reminds us that Bentham's Panopticon is not merely a prison architecture but a metaphor for a society in which everyone is simultaneously observer and observed. On this stage of mirrors, we dance, adjusting our steps to the shadow of an internalized surveillance (Bhabha, 1998; Foucault, 1996; hooks, 2013).

The disciplinary society is a body of surgical precision. Foucault (1996) describes modernity as a machinery of normalization, where power is no longer exercised through terror but through detail and measurement. Schools, factories, hospitals, and barracks function as organs of the same social body, weaving subtle and therefore more effective control networks. In this logic, power does not wound, it calculates.

It measures performances, classifies bodies, hierarchizes knowledges. While in sovereign societies the monarch decided on life and death, in the disciplinary society power is bio-administered: it manages bodies, regulates habits, controls time, monitors even hygiene. The clock has replaced the whip; the school report card has taken the place of the branding iron (Bhabha, 1998; Foucault, 1996; hooks, 2013). Faced with this nearly invisible web, Foucault (1996) proposes an archaeology of words, not to decipher meanings, but to excavate absences. It is a listening to the voids, the semantic black holes, the suffocated whispers. A critical discourse analysis does not merely aim to decode messages, but to trace the ghosts of language: myths disguised as evidence, innocent metaphors that perpetuate inequalities, silences that cover the structures of prejudice. In this context, Foucault (1982, p. 787) exemplifies:

The activity which ensures apprenticeship and the acquisition of aptitudes or types of behavior is developed there by means of a whole ensemble of regulated communications (lessons, questions and answers, orders, exhortations, coded signs of obedience, differentiation marks of the "value" of each person and of the levels of knowledge) and by the means of a whole series of power processes (enclosure, surveillance, reward and punishment, the pyramidal hierarchy).

The materiality described by Foucault (1996) reveals that the school, far from being a neutral space, operates as a microcosm of disciplinary power, where bodies and knowledge are shaped by hierarchies that naturalize exclusions. If the curriculum silences Black and Indigenous histories, and school rituals discipline gestures and voices, then language emerges as a trench of insurgency. It is necessary to dismantle the mechanism that turns rhetoric into "tradition," privilege into "merit," exception into "natural order." Discourse, Foucault (1996) warns, is not a mirror, it is a kaleidoscope. Each fragment reflects a slice of interest; each statement carries the weight of the exclusions that made it possible (Bhabha, 1998; Foucault, 1996; hooks, 2013).

That is why we must also listen to what words leave unsaid. Foucault (1996) reminds us that effective analysis should not stop at the explicit content of discourse but must dive into the silences that sustain it, into the logical flaws and non sequiturs (from Latin: "it does not follow"), conclusions disconnected from their premises, the initial ideas that serve as the basis for an argument, which reveal the fragility of truth regimes. A racist discourse, for instance, is not upheld by logic, but by carefully orchestrated irrationality. Irrationality here is not a flaw, it is a tactic. It allows power to continue operating even when its foundations have already been exposed. It is at this point that critique must be as fluid as power itself: able to infiltrate the cracks between what is said and unsaid, between grammar and the scream (Bhabha, 1998; Foucault, 1996; hooks, 2013).

Thus, Foucault invites us to map the invisible. Analyzing the disciplinary society requires more than suspicion, it demands archaeological sensitivity. Every routine is a hieroglyph, every norm a palimpsest,

every habit a footprint. Discourse is both the light that reveals and the shadow that conceals. It is up to us, as navigators of language, to dredge the murky depths of signs, to learn to read both the flashes and the shadows, for it is at the border between the visible and the hidden that the code of culture is written, dissolved, and, perhaps, can be rewritten (Bhabha, 1998; Foucault, 1996; hooks, 2013).

## Partial considerations

Thus, among the golden threads of language and the shadows that silently weave identities, a pulsing mosaic of contradictions and resistances is revealed. Identity is not a statue; it is a rushing river, shaped by the turbulent waters of discourse. In its fluidity, it carries both the shackles of normalization and the wings of reinvention. We are made of fragments in constant collision, reassembling into new verses with each shoreline crossed. In this flow, language does not reflect, it forges. It is both hammer and anvil, where the subject reinvents itself with each utterance.

In the folds of silence and the flashes of the sayable, power operates as an invisible choreographer. It structures routines, shapes gestures, and turns lives into statistics. It inhabits the clock, the assessment, the curriculum. And yet, within the cracks of this system, voices arise that transform “errors” into shields: rescued languages, reinvented names, insults turned into hymns of dignity. Exclusion, though an open wound, can also be an invitation to stitch new narratives.

At the crossroads of the ancestral and the algorithmic, education emerges as both trench and seedbed. It is not enough to teach; one must decolonize teaching. A living school does not celebrate cultural showcases; it shatters colonial window panes. It listens to forbidden accents, embraces banned knowledge, values *quilombos, terreiros*<sup>8</sup>, and margins. Rather than separating the “erudite” from the “popular,” it fuses them in a radical dance, where calculation walks alongside song, and algebra bows to orality.

In this ocean of signs, the most courageous act is to be a translator of oneself. To inhabit the in-between, to build oneself in the interval. In this crossing, once-domesticated words become trenches: a meme dismantles structures; a neutral pronoun challenges institutionalized gender; a marginal verse rewrites dormant canons. Language, when set free, founds new geographies of meaning.

As tomorrow is drawn between pixels and pages, hope rests in the art of reading the world with suspicious eyes and open ears. May identity not harden into armor, but arch like a bridge. Because, in the end, to be is not a noun, it is a verb: becoming, to keep on being, to overflow.

## References

- ANZALDÚA, Gloria. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. 1. ed. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987.
- BAUMAN, Zygmunt. *Modernidade líquida*. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 2001.
- BHABHA, Homi K. *O local da cultura*. Belo Horizonte: Editora UFMG, 1998.
- BRUNER, Jerome. *Atos de significação*. Porto Alegre: Artes Médicas, 1997.
- BUTLER, Judith. *Problemas de gênero: feminismo e subversão da identidade*. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2003.
- CASTELLS, Manuel. *The Rise of the Network Society*. Honoken: John Wiley & Sons, 2010.

<sup>8</sup> Translation note: *Terreiros* are sacred spaces for Afro-Brazilian religious practices such as *Candomblé, Umbanda*, and other spiritual traditions rooted in African diasporic culture. They serve as places of worship, cultural preservation, and community gathering.

- CASTELLS, Manuel. *O poder da identidade*. São Paulo: Paz e Terra, 2018.
- FOUCAULT, Michel. *Microphysique du pouvoir*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1979.
- FOUCAULT, Michel. The Subject and Power. *Critical Inquiry*, v. 8, n. 4, p. 777-795, 1982.
- FOUCAULT, Michel. *A ordem do discurso*. São Paulo: Loyola, 1996.
- FREIRE, Paulo. *Pedagogia do oprimido*. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1987.
- GIROUX, Henry A. *Educação e pós-modernidade: cruzando Fronteiras*. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2013.
- HALL, Stuart. *Uma identidade cultural na pós-modernidade*. Rio de Janeiro: DP&A, 2006.
- hooks, bell. *Ensinando a transgredir: a educação como prática da liberdade*. Tradução: Marcelo Brandão Cipolla. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2013.
- KOCH, Ingedore V. *Desvendando os segredos do texto*. São Paulo: Cortez, 2002.
- MBEMBE, Achille. *Crítica da razão negra*. São Paulo: n-1, 2018.
- MIGNOLO, Walter. *Histórias locais/projetos globais: colonialidade, saberes subalternos e pensamento liminar*. Belo Horizonte: Editora UFMG, 2003.
- QUIJANO, Aníbal. *Colonialidade do poder, eurocentrismo e América Latina*. Buenos Aires: CLACSO, 2005.
- RAJAGOPALAN, Kanavillil. *Por uma linguística crítica: linguagem, identidade e a questão ética*. São Paulo: Editorial do Parábola, 2003.
- SANTOS, Boaventura de Sousa. *A gramática do tempo: para uma nova cultura política*. São Paulo: Cortez, 2006.
- SPIVAK, Gayatri C. *Pode o subalterno falar?*. Belo Horizonte: Editora UFMG, 2010.
- ZABALA, Antoni. *Uma prática educativa: como ensinar*. Porto Alegre: Artmed, 1998.

---

RECEBIDO: 22/04/2025

RECEIVED: 04/22/2025

APROVADO: 21/07/2025

APPROVED: 07/21/2025

**Editor responsável:** Alboni Marisa Dudeque Pianovski Vieira