Have copying practices in Portuguese language classes been overcome? What the evidence shows

ARTICLE

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Abstract
The object of study of the Portuguese Language (PL) class has been discussed for at least forty years. The PCNs (1998) institutionalized the text as the guiding element of the PL class, a position reinforced by the BNCC (2018). In this scenario, the objective of the present research was to identify the current object of the PL class. The theoretical framework brings to the debate conceptions of language and language teaching, drawing on Applied Linguistics—focused on the didactic elaboration of classroom teaching—and Educational Sociolinguistics. The methodology consists of analyzing data taken from ten Supervised Internship reports (Elementary School) of the Languages (Portuguese Language) course at UNESC carried out in the second semester of 2022. Among the results, it is pointed out that the object of the PL class remains centered on classificatory and metalinguistic teaching, grounded in traditional grammar and largely perpetuated through copy-based practices.
Keywords: Education. Portuguese Language Class. Language Teaching. Copying Practice.

A prática copista nas aulas de língua portuguesa foi superada? O que mostram as evidências

Resumo
O objeto de estudo da aula de Língua Portuguesa (LP) é discutido há, no mínimo, 40 anos. Os PCNs (1998) institucionalizam que o texto deve guiar a aula de LP, registro esse reforçado pela BNCC (2018). Nesse cenário, o objetivo da presente pesquisa foi identificar qual o atual objeto da aula de LP. O aporte teórico traz para o debate as concepções de língua e de ensino de língua, levando em consideração a Linguística Aplicada — focada na elaboração didática do ensino em sala de aula, e a Sociolinguística Educacional. A metodologia consiste em analisar dados retirados de 10 (dez) relatórios de Estágio Supervisionado (Ensino Fundamental) do curso de Letras/Língua Portuguesa da UNESC em 2022/2. Dentre os resultados, aponta-se que objeto da aula de LP mantém-se no ensino classificatório e metalinguístico em torno da gramática tradicional perpetrada majoritariamente pela prática copista.

Palavras-chave: Educação. Aula de Língua Portuguesa. Ensino de Língua. Prática Copista.

1 Introduction

After a few decades, we may point out, in agreement with Britto (1997), what he terms a *generalized outcry* regarding the teaching of Portuguese Language (PL), namely that the object of study in PL classes has been, remains, and will likely continue to be debated in the near future with respect to its basic unit of instruction[1]. Soares (2002) states that, until the mid-nineteenth century, language teaching was structured around three axes: rhetoric, poetics, and grammar. In order to condition students, the methodology was sustained by three pillars: transmission, repetition, and memorization.

From the Republican period onward, reflection on approaches to PL teaching began. Texts gained space in the classroom, not as objects in themselves, but as bridges to grammatical study, while also fostering students' reflective capacity to interpret what they had learned by connecting it to their own realities. The structural basis of teaching gradually came to be associated with reflection, analysis, interaction, expression, communication, and process (Soares, 2002).

The PCNs[2] (1998), documents that are products of their time, reflect the discussion surrounding the teaching of Portuguese Language at that moment and propose that the text should be the center of PL classes. This position is reinforced by the BNCC (Base Nacional Comum Curricular), published in 2018:

> This proposal assumes the centrality of the text as the unit of work and adopts enunciative-discursive perspectives in its approach, in order to consistently relate texts to their contexts of production and to link the development of skills to the meaningful use of language in reading, listening, and text production activities across multiple media and semioses (Brasil, 2018, p.69).

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[1] According to Britto (1997), from the 1970s onward there was "a generalized outcry, including from conservative sectors, due to the increasing difficulty of students graduating from secondary education [currently upper secondary education] in reading and writing in a correct, clear, and well-articulated manner" (op. cit., p. 100).

[2] National Curriculum Parameters (PCNs).

According to these documents, PL classes should promote language practices alongside the education of students so that they may appropriate their idiosyncrasies and, through this process, develop competencies in written and oral communication. Such competencies enable them to understand and produce diverse texts, both oral and written, situated within literate practices, as well as to develop skills in linguistic analysis and literary appreciation. These practices are essential for students' reflective participation in society and in the academic and professional worlds.

With this in mind, the present study aims to investigate, through a corpus constructed from the analysis of internship reports that describe the practices developed in Portuguese Language (PL) classes, what has constituted the current object of teaching in these classes.

The theoretical framework establishes connections between conceptions of language and of its teaching, taking into account two main theoretical perspectives: Applied Linguistics—focused on the didactic development of classroom teaching—and Educational Sociolinguistics. Among the authors who reflect these perspectives, this study draws on essential readings by William Labov (1972, 1975, 2003), Angela Cristina Di Palma Back *et al.* (2017), Irandé Antunes (2003), Marcos Bagno (2000), Stella Maris Bortoni-Ricardo (2004), Carlos Arcângelo Schlickmann (2011, 2020), among others.

The following sections will present the methodology and the analysis, divided into: conception of language, conception of teaching, reading, writing, and orality. Finally, the results will be summarized, followed by the final considerations and references.

2 Clues from the methodological path and subsequent analysis

Along this path, data were mobilized for analysis from ten (10) Supervised Internship reports (Elementary School) from the Portuguese Language track of the undergraduate *Letras* (Languages) program at UNESC, produced in the second semester of 2022. These reports were written by undergraduate students in the sixth phase of the program who were completing their mandatory, unpaid internship, with a focus on the

section reporting the activities carried out during the observation phase. The internships were conducted in public schools in the state, located in the mesoregion of the Association of Municipalities of the Carboniferous Region (AMREC), municipalities that gravitate around UNESC and therefore encompass both urban and non-urban areas across the fourteen municipalities involved.

The selection of these specific reports is justified, on the one hand, by the regional and temporal proximity of the present researchers and, on the other hand, by the understanding that these documents contain multiple perspectives of pre-service teachers in training, who seek to understand how Portuguese language teaching has been conducted, as portrayed in their observation reports. Through the lens of these future teachers' expectations, it is possible to apprehend the accumulation of experiences and perceptions that emerge from their accounts.

The methodological choice is based on the documentary analysis of these reports, which are part of the public collection of the Languages Studies Research Laboratory *(Laboratório de Pesquisa de Letras* - LAPEL). Although these documents were not originally produced for research purposes, they provide authentic records of the pedagogical and formative practices experienced by the undergraduate teacher candidates, making them significant sources for understanding teaching and learning processes. Because they were produced with different objectives, the reports offer a spontaneous perspective on school experiences, allowing for a more contextualized analysis of observational practices. Thus, the methodology is grounded in the possibility that these records provide relevant information that contributes to an understanding of formative dynamics within the context of initial Portuguese Language teacher education.

Regarding ethical considerations, it is important to clarify, as stated earlier, that the reports used in this study are in the public domain and are part of the collection of the Languages program at UNESC, made available through LAPEL. As these are archival documents that are publicly accessible and were produced for institutional academic purposes, the personal identification of participants is preserved. Data collection, given its sensitive nature, focuses on discursive aspects, safeguarding the subjects involved and,

moreover, returning to the archive publications such as this one, which add to the formative resources available to undergraduate teacher candidates. This characterizes the research as posing no risk to the individuals involved. Therefore, the use of these reports did not require submission to a Research Ethics Committee, nor the obtaining of individual consent or authorization, and the analysis is in accordance with ethical standards applicable to documentary research.

In this analysis, identification and interpretation are grounded in the theoretical framework previously presented—Applied Linguistics and Educational Sociolinguistics. For data selection, the reflections of Jesus (2019, pp. 64–69) were followed, in which the author presents the dialogical relationship between the report, the reporter, the individual who carries out the practice being reported, and the reader of these reports. In any case, this research involved reading the writing of one observer about the practice of a teacher.

The data composing this analysis were selected by mapping the most recurrent situations related to the functioning of Portuguese Language (PL) classes and the object guiding them. Evidence was thus selected based on the incidence of specific aspects that recurred across different classes observed by different observers, as well as across different teachers observed.

Given the conditions under which the evidence was selected, the data were organized into the following analytical categories: (i) conception of language; (ii) conception of teaching; (iii) reading; (iv) writing and orality. This categorization is by no means abrupt or discrete, as the categories intersect. Bortoni-Ricardo (2004) proposes a scalar gradient ranging from oral speech situations to literacy situations; similarly, the categories adopted here should be understood in the same way, in which the category "conception of language" certainly permeates pedagogical practices and is therefore associated with the "conception of teaching," as well as with "reading," "orality," and "writing."

Finally, when cited, the reports are referenced in numerical order (R1, R2 […] R10).

2.1 Conception of language

Variationist Sociolinguistics conceives of language as used, living, and heterogeneous. It is concerned with analyzing the relationship between variation and change in language in use, correlating linguistic and social aspects. For Labov (1975), language varies and changes within the speech community[3] and constitutes "a general and universal principle, capable of being described and analyzed scientifically" (Labov, 2008 [1972], p. 10). Language reflects society and is an institution that undergoes structural and functional transformations[4].

Educational Sociolinguistics (ES) emerges from the need to incorporate into the school context discussions about the teaching of living language and its variations, especially by disseminating the contributions of variationist sociolinguistic studies. In Brazil, ES has developed in the theoretical field by promoting and reflecting on the linguistic and communicative competencies of children who are not exposed, within their families, to prestigious varieties of their mother tongue and who come to learn them at school. The authors Bortoni-Ricardo (2005) and Bagno (2000), respectively, state that:

> The school cannot ignore sociolinguistic differences. Teachers, and through them students, must be fully aware that there are two or more ways of saying the same thing. Moreover, these alternative forms serve distinct communicative purposes and are received differently by society (Bortoni-Ricardo, 2005, p. 15).

> […] it is interesting to encourage, in mother tongue classes, an increasingly broader and deeper knowledge of sociolinguistic varieties, so that the classroom ceases to be a place for the exclusive study of varieties of greater social prestige and becomes a living laboratory for researching the language in its multiplicity of forms and uses (Bagno, 2000, p. 134).

Sociolinguistic differences should not be confused with error. In this sense, the impoverishment of Portuguese Language (PL) teaching occurs when teachers, already

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[3] According to Labov, a speech community is not defined by linguistic homogeneity, but by the sharing of norms and normative patterns, even in the presence of stratified variation in speech (Labov, 2008 [1972], p. 188).

[4] "By choosing linguistic structure and evolution as objects of study, Labov breaks with the relationship established by Saussure between structure and synchrony on the one hand, and evolutionary history and diachrony on the other, bringing synchrony and diachrony equally closer to notions of structure and the functioning of language" (Coelho *et al.*, 2012, p. 22).

acculturated by this very system, reproduce "more of the same" for their students, thereby perpetuating inadequacies in language teaching.

This claim is validated by the evidence recorded in the analyzed reports. The descriptions show Portuguese Language (PL) classes being guided, predominantly, by a conception of language as uniform and homogeneous. Within these descriptions, what appears repeatedly and contributes to the impression that the classes are constructed and conceived from the premise of a static language is the following statement:

> **Evidence 1:** The definitions provided by the teacher regarding the categories studied were consistent with what is traditionally heard: that verbs are words that indicate "action, state, or natural phenomenon," and that conjunctions are words that serve as "links between sentences" (R1, p.11).

The evidence above reveals a uniformity in the recurrent appearance of a mechanized teaching practice focused on metalanguage and classification. A conception of language biased by the existence of a "manual of politeness" (Bagno, 2000, p. 27) views language as a fragment of grammar. Within such conceptions, there is an inversion of reality and history, in which grammar—representing the standard norm (GT)—is used as a "means of disciplining language and achieving the ideal form of oral and written expression" (Bagno, 2000, p. 27). Bagno (2000) had already argued that this idea is nothing more than a false illusion created on the basis of ideologies and discourses that reinforce discrimination and the status quo offered by "speaking well." Teaching grounded in a conception of a single language departs from the real needs of language learning, including those outlined in official documents.

Sociolinguistics considers the student to be a speaker of the native language and, therefore, a native of their linguistic variety, recognizing that the learner already knows how their language functions and needs, within the space of PL instruction, to develop their language practices.

> **Evidence 2:** The teacher […] was working with her eighth-grade classes on transitivity and verbal government, and I was quite impressed by the way she applied the assessment: she asked the students to produce a twenty-line text, of any genre and on any topic; the only requirement was that certain verbs indicated

by the teacher had to be included. If I understood the proposal correctly, the teacher intended to show her students that, regardless of their understanding of the metalanguage of transitivity, they were capable of using all the verbs appropriately, since they are native speakers of Portuguese and, logically, fluent in the language (R6, p.7).

Evidence 3: The students had considerable freedom and autonomy to comment on and discuss the text […] I perceived a very meaningful class; the object of the lesson was the text, but without disregarding students' opinions. I appreciated the way the teacher encouraged students to comment on the characters and contribute their impressions. […] It was a very moving, important, and necessary class; the students opened up and were highly participatory. The resources chosen by the teacher, including the usual classroom dynamics, were very positive (R9, p.13-14).

Unlike the previous evidence, these descriptions portray classes guided by a conception of language that recognizes Portuguese Language (PL) speakers as knowledgeable of the structure of their mother tongue. This principle is evident, in the second piece of evidence, when the teacher, even without resorting to metalanguage, understands that students know how to apply verbal transitivity; and, in the third piece of evidence, when the text is taken as the central object of discussion, articulated with an issue drawn from the students' school reality. In this way, a reflective lesson is constructed, grounded in a diagnosis of the class's everyday context, in which the text constitutes the object of teaching.

As a possible caveat, it may be suggested that the activity could have been guided *a priori* by a discursive genre, in order to avoid the production of texts without a defined compositional structure. Even so, this aspect does not invalidate the reflective proposal developed by the teacher.

In the following section, the focus of the analysis turns to conceptions and practices of language teaching, which are inevitably guided by the perception the teacher constructs of language and linguistic phenomena, and which directly affect pedagogical practices. Thus, didactic decisions are made based on the theoretical principles adopted by the teacher (Antunes, 2003)

2.2 Conception of teaching

The teaching space is understood as the sum of the repertoire of knowledge that students already possess about language. From this perspective, the aim was to describe what appeared most recurrent in terms of teaching practices that favor (or do not favor) the development of students' linguistic knowledge. However, the evidence presented in the reports points to another mode of language teaching, namely:

> **Evidence 4:** The explanation system is as follows: the teacher writes the content on the board > students copy it into their notebooks > the teacher reads the content with the students > the teacher writes exercises on the board > students copy the instructions and complete the exercises in their notebooks > correction is carried out either with some students going to the board or with the teacher correcting each question with the whole class (R1, p.11)

> **Evidence 5:** Students are required to copy everything that is written on the board, which makes classes longer and hinders the effective use of class time (R3, p.8)

This excerpt clearly conveys a conception of teaching marked by indifference toward students' appropriation of knowledge, highlighting the need for reflection on teaching practice with regard to meaningful language teaching. The planning of this lesson model revolves around the fulfillment of predetermined goals, in which the student is not considered in terms of their learning potential and may be compared to a *tabula rasa*. The only objective that is effectively fulfilled is the obligation to present content that is weakly objectified and tends not to become meaningful given the objective conditions of teaching.

It is also noteworthy that this type of class does not help students monitor their attentional mechanisms.

> **Evidence 6:** Increasingly dispersed and distracted during classes […] students talk and interact a great deal among themselves […] it was frequently observed that the classes did not clearly understand concepts and content of Portuguese Language that are taught in the early years, which reveals that PL teaching failed at this stage. This gap generates the consequences that could be observed: distracted and inattentive students (R3, p.8).

In this case, the evidence itself attempts to find a justification for a problem that has already been mentioned previously: tiring, repetitive, and meaningless classes. Copying-based practices[5] give rise to an endless cycle within classroom organization:

> **Evidence 7:** […] her classes, which were essentially copying from the board and answering meaningless questionnaires […] the students were very noisy and questioning, asking reflective questions about why they had to copy so much instead of interpreting, and how one could learn a textual genre without having actually seen it (R10, p.6).

Students' questions stem from a natural need for clarity. If copying is present—understanding that it is often the most viable practice for schools facing material shortages—it must be justified, interpreted, and correlated with the instructional needs presented to students. Filling the board with text solely to use it as a pretext and support for answering a classificatory questionnaire, without even relating it to any context of students' social reality or learning experience, amounts to nothing more than a mechanical object with no attainable instructional purpose to be appropriated: "**Evidence 8:** […] then the teacher, after making some unfortunate remarks, returned to copying on the board and stating that Portuguese classes were like that, obligatorily involving a lot of copying (R10, p.8)."

This evidence narrates a reality described in the majority of the reports analyzed in this study: a restricted view of Portuguese Language (PL) teaching methods, reducing them to class after class of copying without a clear rationale or purpose. Another key factor highlighted regarding the conception of teaching relates to the object of study in PL classes. The data reveal that most of the observed and described lessons are centered on the metalinguistic teaching of traditional grammar (GT). Consider the following:

> **Evidence 9:** In this class, they began working on "compound sentences by coordination." At the start, the teacher asked about what a verb is and what a sentence is; she reviewed with the class what a phrase, a clause, and a sentence are. She then explained what a coordinated clause is; as a first step, students were supposed to identify the verbs. As a way of reinforcement, she provided them with

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[5] Jesus (2019, pp. 80–81) had already found similar results regarding decontextualized copying practices in the teaching of English.

a scheme to separate the sentences: first, find the verb; then identify the conjunction or comma near the verb; after that, separate the clauses with a line, leaving the conjunction in the second clause; and finally, number the clauses (R2, p.12)

In this evidence, the author of R2 precisely describes what occupies most of the space in PL classes: memorization, classification, and a form of teaching that is completely disconnected from students' realities. This type of class exists solely to reinforce the idea, previously discussed, that PL speakers do not actually know their own language. It is common to hear students say, "I don't know anything about Portuguese," or even: "**Evidence 10:** Students report hating the subject (R5, p.3)."

As will be seen in the following excerpt, there is evidence of the underuse of lesson planning with regard both to students' interpretive potential—developed through their school trajectory as well as through their knowledge and reading of the world—and to the text itself as an object of reflection:

> **Evidence 11:** Two reading activities were assigned in addition to the content written on the board and copied into the notebook. In one activity for the eighth grade, there were two short texts but no questions related to interpretation—the texts served only for students to answer questions related to the content of conjunctions. The other activity, for the sixth grade, consisted of a short text entitled *"Past, present, or future?"*, which functioned as a short story about verb tenses so that students could identify verbs in the past, present, and future and fill in a table with each one (R1, p.12).

The methodology present in this classroom fragment can also be observed and described in another report, in which the author notes: "**Evidence 12:** The exercises treated the text as a pretext, as they asked students for "classification" […] it was possible to notice that, at certain moments, students merely memorized transitivity patterns and marked them correctly (R2, p. 10)."

In yet another report, the methodology described appears to be the same as that used by the other two teachers who were being observed:

> **Evidence 13:** […] highly metalinguistic, with the text used as a pretext; the students seemed inert and accustomed to this type of class, some visibly shaken and sad. This raised questions for me about the teacher's outdated methods. The students

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barely noticed what they were working on—topics such as Loanwords, Reviews, Xenophobia, and Ableism were treated in a shallow and superficial way. Unfortunately, the teacher appeared distracted and uninterested in the knowledge acquired by the students (R10, p. 8).

All of these descriptions are consistent with a classificatory conception of teaching. Such a conception tends to disregard students' capacities and fails to explore the potential for knowledge construction. The classificatory logic is based on the premise that there is a teaching cycle without contingencies: copying texts and answering classificatory questions about the content taught, in most cases supported by the use of metalanguage. This conception generally does not take into account reading, reflection, or discussion of what is intended to be learned; there is no construction of knowledge, only a directed teaching stance characterized by obligation.

In contrast to this conception of teaching, the content presented through metalanguage is, for the most part, classificatory in nature. Observe that, in the excerpt below, the author of R10 describes a classic situation of metalinguistic teaching: studying a genre without having read, discussed, or interpreted it. "**Evidence 14:** A monotonous lesson on infographics in which the students had not even seen an example; they only copied a text (without reading it) from the board about the topic and answered questions (R10, p. 7)."

This practice directly affects students' perceptions and the construction of learning. Knowledge, when detached from students' realities and focused on exercises that prioritize memorization through classification, serves only to reinforce the stigmas commonly associated with Portuguese Language (PL) teaching. It is therefore worthwhile to consider the search for methodologies that bring students closer to the school context and reduce the gap between students' social, cultural, and ideological realities and the classroom.

In some reports, it is still possible to identify conceptions of teaching that consider the learner as a subject in the process of identity, cultural, and social formation. In the following evidence, a practice can be identified that brings the teaching process closer to students in a reflective manner.

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Evidence 15: The teacher adopts a teaching method called *"Open Word"*, in which she asks students to open their hearts and share their impressions of the literary work they have read. The students were highly participative (and sincere) during this moment: they talked about what they liked and disliked and commented on which characters they liked or disliked. [...] The book they were working with addressed the theme of bullying. I later learned that this topic had been incorporated into the class planning due to a demand arising from cases identified in the 8th grade. A need was observed, and the teacher incorporated the theme into her planning. I found this particularly important, as it demonstrates a sensitive awareness of students' realities and classroom demands, as well as the ability to design lessons based on these needs. [...] After this moment of discussion, the teacher divided the students into groups, and each group was responsible for presenting comments about one character to the whole class. [...] The students were able to share their memories and opinions about the book [...] and later shared their impressions and information about the characters with the whole group, exploring the main characteristics of each one (R9, p.13,14 e 15).

This description constitutes strong evidence of the centrality of the text in Portuguese Language (PL) lessons. The teacher identified a need for discussion, introduced the reading to the students, who completed it and then participated in a reflective PL lesson grounded in their own reality. Knowledge was constructed through reflections on social behavior, reading development, characterization of literary figures, peer discussion involving multiple perspectives on the same context, and the development of a campaign. Based on the teacher's instructional approach, students were able to externalize their learning in an engaging way, with a certain degree of autonomy and creative use of language.

Evidence 16: In class 902, the study and production of the psychological short story genre were observed. The lesson began with the reading of the renowned Clarice Lispector short story *"The First Kiss"*, during which the Portuguese language lesson took on the form of an anatomy class. Together, the teacher and students "dissected" the text, reading it paragraph by paragraph and discussing what was happening. [...] In this way, teacher and students jointly constructed knowledge not only about the text itself, but also about the textual genre and even about the author. The teacher's main role was to act as a mediator between the text and the students. After the reading and discussion, interpretive activities were proposed, which students had already addressed orally during the discussion but were now asked to record in writing in order to consolidate their understanding. Following these activities, students were asked to produce a psychological short story with horror elements. During the writing process, the teacher moved around the classroom, assisting students and addressing specific grammatical questions (R5, p.14).

In this other piece of evidence, a teaching practice is identified in which the text is positioned as the central object of the Portuguese Language (PL) lesson. The first moment is guided by reading motivation, followed by the reading itself and by discussion and reflection on the text. Transforming the PL lesson into an "anatomy class," in which all parts of the text are dissected and all that it offers is explored, derives from a pedagogical practice that values, and above all contextualizes, what a PL lesson is and what constitutes it. Finally, during the production stage, the teacher carries out a practice of linguistic analysis. By moving among students during the writing process and addressing grammatical questions as they arise, the teacher demonstrates an attentive pedagogical stance that allows her to identify the main difficulties students face in their writing.

The two previous pieces of evidence represent teachers who reflect on the most effective ways to construct knowledge. The positive outcome of this effort is evident in the reports produced by the undergraduate observers, who describe the practices and methodologies with great enthusiasm, sharing experiences that had already been discussed theoretically during their undergraduate studies but are seldom observed in everyday school contexts. The text can, and should, be the core of the PL lesson, extending into the development of linguistic skills through an inclusive and necessary pedagogical practice.

2.3 Reading

Developing reading competencies and skills requires stimulation, attention, and organized planning. The aim of this section is to understand, based on the classroom observation reports, how reading practices are integrated into PL lessons and what stance teachers adopt in relation to the possible teaching methods for fostering reading development in the classroom.

Based on the evidence presented in the previous section, which focused on analyzing the teaching conceptions applied in the PL lessons described in the reports, it is possible to observe that reading consistently appears as an appendix to the development

of classificatory activities, rather than as a linguistic practice to be developed in its own right. Reading is not treated as an object of teaching. Because students are literate, they are automatically considered sufficiently proficient to read and interpret the different texts and modes of language presented to them, without any form of guidance or modeling regarding how the practice should be carried out. According to Back *et al.* (2017),

> The reading process requires skills from the reader that go beyond merely moving one's eyes across the text. However, these skills are not inherent to the individual and, according to Leffa (1996), need to be taught. The teacher, in turn, is primarily responsible for this task and must possess a certain level of reading proficiency in order to carry it out, since no one can teach what they do not know (Back; Jesus; Schlickmann, 2017, p. 25).

Text appropriation and content comprehension that go beyond a superficial decoding of words are also aligned with what the BNCC (2018) identifies as appropriate for this stage of Basic Education:

> [...] In Lower Secondary Education, learning within the curricular components of this area [Languages] expands the language practices developed in the early years of Elementary School [...] at this stage, the diversification of contexts enables the deepening of artistic, bodily, and linguistic language practices that both constitute and are constituted by social life (Brasil, 2018, p. 63-64).

Such practices aimed at this development are scarcely considered in the lessons described. The absence of instruction on how reading should be guided and developed, along with the lack of motivation—which generates significant student disinterest in the practice—results in students experiencing considerable difficulty in reading and, especially, in interpretation. The following evidence discusses the consequences of the lack of instruction regarding the act of reading.

> **Evidence 17:** Students from both classes did not enjoy reading. [...] Whenever they were asked to produce a text, they did not want to read it aloud. Even when the teacher requested the reading of a text for interpretation, students would not volunteer. When a classmate did volunteer to read and demonstrated reading difficulties, other students corrected them, which caused the reader to stop reading. This was another aspect that drew my attention throughout the observation: how emotionally affected students are—and how their school performance is impacted— by hurtful teasing (R7, p.5).

However, many professionals in the field still hold the conception that, in order to develop reading skills and reverse the situation described above, it is sufficient to allocate a single weekly lesson to reading practice. What the analyzed reports reveal is that teachers who adhere to this conception—who reserve a specific amount of class time for reading in the Portuguese Language (PL) lesson but do not develop methodologies capable of effectively fostering students' motivation and interest—are unable to construct knowledge about reading with their students. As can be observed in the data presented below, students merely comply with the reading task in order to meet the obligation imposed by the classroom teacher.

> **Evidence 18:** The students went outside to read in the sun, amid frequent reprimands and a very traditional approach. Although it was intended to be a more enjoyable class, while the students were reading, the teacher repeatedly called them over to check whether they had actually read the story and to assign a grade, thus turning reading into a mandatory task. I tried to encourage them to read for pleasure, and many of them talked to me; it was very pleasant, they were engaging and seemed to enjoy my company. When it was time to change the books they were reading, many chose books intended for the early years of Elementary School and books composed only of images—not that these are inherently inadequate, but for reading as a practice to be developed, they are not the most recommended. [...] Reading was treated as a mandatory and even punitive practice (R10, p.7-8).

In this case, at least the teacher's awareness that students need to read can be highlighted as a positive aspect, since they are given a specific time for this activity. On the other hand, the description clearly exposes the students' lack of motivation and willingness to read; when they do engage in the activity, it is because it carries an obligatory and evaluative character. It is also evident that there are no instructions or dialogue between the teacher and the students during the book-selection process. The situation seems to be guided solely by the students' unrestricted choice, and, given their lack of interest in reading, they end up selecting books classified for a different age group.

The time allocated to reading should constitute a process of knowledge construction, interest, and motivation, since students will not always be predisposed to reading and learning. The teacher must guide this moment in order to awaken students'

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curiosity toward the object of reading. This type of practice is described by the author of R5, who states:

> **Evidence 19:** It is clear that the students enjoy reading; therefore, the teacher encourages them to borrow books from the school library. [...] The teacher took advantage of the students' interest in reading and introduced the creation of a reading log, which the students did not seem dissatisfied with completing, since, after writing the reading log, they were expected to present the book they had read in order to persuade their classmates to read it as well (R5, p.4).

This evidence exemplifies the teacher's perceptive pedagogical stance. Creating a reading log is a traditional method used with the aim of consolidating students' understanding of what they have read. The task was not carried out with resistance, because students understood that it was merely an instrument supporting the subsequent activity. When the teacher encourages students to persuade their classmates that their chosen book is worth reading, students realize that completing the reading is essential to accomplishing that goal. The completion of the reading log thus functions as a methodological tool for highlighting specific elements of the text that will later be used as arguments to convince others. This constitutes a motivating methodology that can foster students' interest in reading.

2.4 Writing and Orality

Written and spoken texts constitute an important tool for interaction and social development. Both forms of linguistic production should hold the same level of importance in the teaching process of the Portuguese Language (PL). Marcuschi (1995, *apud* De Almeida Barbosa *et al.*, 2022, p. 2) argues that "the differences between speech and writing occur within the typological continuum of social practices and not in a dichotomous relationship between two opposing poles." In light of Educational Sociolinguistics, language teaching—both spoken and written—should value students' lived experiences within their social interaction contexts and, through this process, foster awareness of other language varieties, including the standard norm. From this perspective, this study sought to

understand how spoken and written language are taught in the observed descriptions and under which pedagogical approaches.

What draws attention is the fact that orality does not appear in any of the descriptions as a component to be studied or taught. Considering Marcuschi's assertion (2010, *apud* De Almeida Barbosa *et al.*, 2022, p. 9) that it is "possible to define human beings as speaking beings rather than writing beings," the absence of evidence allows us to infer a certain devaluation of orality teaching. This finding aligns with the perspective presented by Antunes (2003), who states that, in everyday PL classes, the teaching of orality is often not planned. A possible hypothesis is that, by assuming students already express themselves orally in PL, teachers do not recognize orality as an object of teaching that requires systematic pedagogical planning and intervention. According to Bortoni-Ricardo (2005):

> It is our task at school to help students reflect on their mother tongue. This reflection makes it easier for them to develop their competence and expand the number and nature of communicative tasks they are already able to perform, first in oral language and later through written language (Bortoni-Ricardo, 2005, p. 268).

In the ten analyzed reports, communicative competences are not developed in oral language, and in written language there is still much room for development. The teaching focus in PL classes is on classification, a fact that can be confirmed by the evidence presented in the analytical section on "teaching conception." This focus does not take the teaching of writing into account. In some descriptions, writing can be identified as a production practice aimed at delivering a final product—that is, as an assessment method for the content taught. However, in most descriptions, writing instruction does not appear. Teachers present the structural features of a given genre and ask questions about that structure. Students rarely read the genre and reflect on it, and even less frequently put into practice, through writing, what they have learned. Consider the following:

> **Evidence 20:** The classroom teacher was working with the opinion article genre with the class, which initially showed little interest; however, after the explanation and reading of a sample text with the theme "violence in football," it seemed to become more engaging, and an interesting discussion took place. After the

discussion, the teacher asked students to complete textbook activities related to the text that had been read, which caused everyone to lose focus, resulting in no participation—until she mentioned that the activity would count toward their grade (R4, p.5).

It is possible to observe that this evidence reflects a monotonous classroom reality: the teacher presents the genre in a metalinguistic manner, followed by actual contact with the text, after which only a minority of students recognize the need to reflect on the genre through reading. Subsequently, students are instructed to answer questions—either interpretative or only minimally reflective and more technical, related to genre classification. This represents one of the many problems of a methodology focused on decontextualized PL teaching. Most teachers operate under the premise that teaching should be static and fail to consider the social reality and context in which they are situated. The lack of linguistic analysis practices—through which teachers identify the linguistic development needs of the class—results in teaching that is disconnected from students' realities and needs.

It can be concluded that writing, although mentioned more frequently than orality teaching, still does not occupy a meaningful place in PL classes. Writing was only sporadically developed in the reports. In some accounts, it is possible to perceive the frustration of the undergraduate observers when hearing from teachers that writing is learned solely through copying. Considering the theoretical framework that guides this study, writing should be understood as a reflective practice aimed at developing what students already know, allowing them to progressively advance as they appropriate an expanding repertoire. For this reason, linguistic analysis—the moment of observing and identifying both collective and individual difficulties—is of central importance. Through this process, teachers are able to effectively teach what students actually need to learn.

3 Results

The analyzed evidence enabled a close examination that led to an answer to the main research question: of the ten reports analyzed, nine[6] describe classes guided by

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[6] R1, R2, R3, R4, R5, R6, R7, R8, and R10.

classificatory and metalinguistic instruction centered on traditional grammar, perpetuated through copying practices.

Finally, among the ten reports, only one[7] describes what can be considered a PL class that takes the text as its object of teaching and as the basic unit of instruction. Not coincidentally, this is also the report that describes greater teacher attentiveness to the students' reality and the context in which they are situated. Throughout the description, the author of R9 portrays the teacher as simultaneously engaging in linguistic analysis, constantly observing which methodologies work or do not work, which readings were understood or require further attention, and which practices still need to be developed.

Based on the results obtained, it is possible to conclude that the object of PL classes is predominantly the teaching of traditional grammar, guided by a conception of language as homogeneous and materialized in mechanized teaching practices focused on classification, metalinguistic explanation, and memorization.

According to Schlickmann (2020, in press), a finding already confirmed by a wide range of "research conducted in the country," these practices "have shown that we are not educating citizens who benefit from reading and writing within their social groups, but rather producing functional illiterates—individuals who know the linguistic system but are unable to make use of it due to the precariousness of their educational background."

For Antunes (2014),

> [...] what is explored in school regarding language, grammar, text, reading, writing, and literature, and, on the other hand, what is left unexplored, are decisive factors in enabling individuals to respond successfully to different social and political demands, especially those that require mastery of communicative skills, both oral and written, in longer and more complex texts (Antunes, 2014, p.11).

For this reason, the centrality of classification, metalinguistic instruction, and memorization in PL classes proves ineffective in addressing the linguistic developments that are essential—namely, reading, writing, and orality.

4 Final considerations

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[7] R9.

This article presented the final product of a research study developed with the aim of understanding what has been taken as the object of teaching in Portuguese Language (PL) classes. Supported by official documents and by theoretical perspectives that conceive language as heterogeneous, the text should occupy this central position. However, previous studies, according to Schlickmann (2020, in press), have consistently shown an excessive focus on decontextualized traditional grammar teaching within PL classes.

Of the ten Supervised Teaching Internship reports (Elementary School) from the Languages/Portuguese Language program at UNESC in the second semester of 2022, which together comprised more than ninety pieces of evidence, only one described classes focused on the development of and reflection on the text as a starting point. This report also emphasized processes of linguistic analysis and the practice of linguistic analysis, which enable the development of linguistic competencies—reading, orality, and writing.

The other nine reports describe classes overwhelmingly centered on transmission, repetition, and memorization. These classes are clearly guided by a conception of language and teaching that does not recognize students as knowledgeable users of their own language or as constructors of knowledge. Classificatory and metalinguistic teaching, developed in a decontextualized manner, is frequently reported and often accompanied by students' own statements expressing their perceived lack of knowledge of their native language.

Decontextualized teaching of Traditional Grammar (TG) reinforces the idea that Portuguese Language as a school subject is incomprehensible. It is within this form of teaching that copying practices are reproduced. Similar results were found by Jesus (2019), when investigating meaning construction in English language classes. The evidence presented and analyzed here confirms the persistence of copying practices in Portuguese Language classes. This allows us to assert, following Bazerman (2021), that the student's role seems to be limited to copying, memorizing, reproducing, or, at best,

imitating the work of more proficient writers, while their creative, questioning, and reflective potential is set aside.

The theories underpinning this study—Applied Linguistics and Educational Sociolinguistics—tend, through the text as the object of PL classes and through the practice of Linguistic Analysis, to reinforce the idea that Brazil is a pluricultural, gastronomic, political, social, regional, and, above all, linguistic country. Portuguese Language classes exist to recognize this diversity through the text.

It is therefore incumbent upon us, as teachers, to reflect on which conception of language we adopt in order to construct teaching practices capable of developing all the linguistic competencies students need. In this way, "*in addition to having something to say, they will know how to say it* and, through this, will achieve *the power to speak*" (Bagno, 2000).

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