

## Language policies in Brazil and the epistemology underlying the selection of foreign language textbooks<sup>1</sup>

### Políticas linguísticas no Brasil e a epistemologia que subjaz a seleção de livros didáticos de língua estrangeira

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#### Abstract

The aim of this paper is to discuss language policies in Brazil, especially in relation to the way they are implemented in the guidelines for the selection of textbooks for the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language (EFL). To subsidize the reflection herein proposed, the study analyzed the main principles and set of criteria used by the National Textbook Program (PNLD) to assess the textbooks designed for Brazilian secondary education. The results of the qualitative analysis carried out revealed a straightforward connection among modern foreign language learning policies in Brazil and the epistemology underlying the evaluation and choice of textbooks. The study concludes that a wider perspective on EFL teaching in Brazil is necessary, taking into account the need for the development of students' speaking skills required in the exercise of a global citizenship.

**Keywords:** language policies; EFL textbooks; secondary education; PNLD.

#### Resumo

O objetivo deste artigo é discutir políticas linguísticas no Brasil, especialmente em relação a como estas são implementadas nas orientações para seleção de livros didáticos para o ensino e aprendizagem de Inglês como língua estrangeira (ILE) no país. A fim de subsidiar a reflexão aqui proposta, o estudo analisou o conjunto de critérios e princípios gerais empregados pelo Programa Nacional do Livro Didático (PNLD) para a avaliação dos livros didáticos de LE designados ao Ensino Médio. Os resultados da análise qualitativa revelaram uma relação direta entre as políticas linguísticas para o ensino-aprendizagem de LE no Brasil e os conceitos epistemológicos que subjazem a análise e seleção dos livros didáticos. O estudo conclui que é preciso colocar em prática uma visão mais ampla para o ensino ILE no Brasil, tendo em vista a necessidade de os estudantes desenvolverem a habilidade da fala para o exercício da cidadania global.

**Palavras-chave:** Políticas linguísticas, Inglês como língua estrangeira, Livros didáticos, Ensino Médio, PNLD

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## 1. Introduction

We live in a flat (Friedman, 2005) and globalized world where the knowledge of additional languages (L2) has become key for the exercise of a global citizenship. Currently, physical borders do not prevent communication between speakers of different mother tongues (L1). In this paper we use the term additional language to refer to any language but the first or native language (L1). In this scenario, the teaching of L2s in general and of English in particular, plays an important role in the 1) maintenance of national cohesion (Finardi & Csillagh, 2016), 2) access to online information (Finardi, Prebianca & Momm, 2013) and education (Finardi & Tyler, 2015), and 3) social inclusion of diversity and in the fight against the commodification of education as seen, for example, in the abundant offer of private English courses in Brazil (Finardi, 2014; Ortiz & Finardi, 2015).

In this context, States set guidelines and regulations (in the form of language policies) to use specific languages in particular contexts. This policy intervention by the State can legislate the use of languages through the inseparable component of language planning and language education. Briefly speaking, there are three types of State policies: 1) policies that States want to make public as symbols of competence and work to guarantee votes, 2) policies that States do not want to make public such as some aspects of external affairs or defense and, 3) often invisible language policies defined by Calvet (2007) as those policies overtly or covertly proposed by the State to regulate relations between languages and society.

Language policies are usually invisible as they are interwoven in cultural, educational and political policies. The State is the main proponent of language policies which can be analyzed in government funded programs such as the Brazilian Language without Borders Program (*Idiomas sem Fronteiras* – IsF, in the Portuguese abbreviation) (for example, Gimenez & Passoni, 2016) or the National Textbook Program (*Programa Nacional do Livro Didático* or PNLD in the abbreviation in Portuguese) (for example, Sarmento & Goulart da Silva, 2016).

In this study we will focus on the PNLD which, according to Sarmento and Goulart da Silva (2016) can be considered a policy that aims at evaluating textbooks to be purchased and distributed by the Brazilian government to Brazilian public schools. Therefore, to better understand the framework on which textbook selection is based, a closer look on the epistemology underlying the assessment of foreign language textbooks seems of great importance, once the parameters established for the evaluation of such books might reflect not only language but also educational and social policies supported by the Brazilian State.

## 2. Review of the literature

According to Sarmento and Goulart da Silva (2016), policies related to textbooks have been around since 1929 when the National Book Institute was created to regulate the production of national textbooks. In the mid 1980's, the PNLD suffered major changes whereby teachers could choose the textbooks (which became reusable for 3 years) to be used in their schools and the PNLD was extended to include primary education. In the mid 1990's, the PNLD suffered another change, this time regarding the evaluation process. Textbooks registered in the PNLD had to be part of a centralized evaluation based on predetermined criteria set by the Ministry of Education.

Nowadays, the PNLD analyzes books for three levels of education, namely: a) primary education, b) secondary education and c) education of adults and young adults (*Educação para Jovens e Adultos* in the abbreviation in Portuguese - EJA) and in 2011 foreign languages (FL) were included in the program which used to include only literacy, geography, history, Portuguese, math, science and social studies before that.

Before textbooks reach schools they are evaluated by the PNLD in a series of stages which start with the registration of textbooks by publishing houses in the public call which also sets the guidelines for the production of textbooks by private publishing houses. These guidelines also establish the criteria by which the textbooks will be evaluated and relate to editorial guidelines and pedagogical guidelines. The editorial guidelines are common to all the areas included in the PNLD and regulate formal aspects. The pedagogical guidelines, on the other hand, are further sub-divided into general rules common to all areas of knowledge (which refer to legal aspects such as whether the textbooks are in line with Brazilian laws) and specific criteria related to teaching methodologies and topics to be addressed in the textbook.

During the first part of the evaluation, the textbooks are analyzed in terms of formal aspects of the guidelines and the textbooks which pass this stage are then forwarded to specialists in the area who will then analyze the textbook in relation to the pedagogical guidelines. This study will focus on the analysis of the PNLD pedagogical guidelines designed for secondary schools for the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language (EFL) as evidence of the language policies and epistemology underlying the selection of textbooks.

Sarmento (2016) states that most textbooks submitted for evaluation in the PNLD are not approved. Sarmento and Goulart da Silva (2016), considering the information provided until 2015, further claim that only 18,9% of the collections were approved, which is a significantly low approval ratio when compared to textbooks aimed at teaching Portuguese, half of which are usually approved. Da Silva and Sarmento (2013 as cited in Sarmento and Goulart da Silva, 2016) speculate that one reason for the low approval ratio in the case of textbooks for foreign languages is related to their inadequacy pursuant the pedagogical and methodological criteria established by the PNLD guidelines.

Sarmento and Goulart da Silva (2016) also claim that the Brazilian State makes huge investments to evaluate the textbooks but after the textbooks reach the schools, there is no monitoring of what happens to them. Aspects such as how teachers use the textbooks or how students perceive them are not addressed by the PNLD guidelines and can be considered a limitation of the program. For this reason, since 2011, Sarmento and Goulart da Silva (2016) have been following the development of the PNLD in schools in the South of Brazil through surveys, interviews, school visits and class observations, and part of these data is reported in their book chapter.

The PNLD can also be considered an Educational Language Policy (ELP) since it relates to language practices and decisions concerning languages in educational contexts. In this sense, da Silva and Sarmento (2015) investigated the criteria used by foreign language teachers in public schools to choose the textbook (in Portuguese *Livro Didático* or in the abbreviation - LD) from the National Textbook Program (PNLD). Previous studies (Sarmento & da Silva 2012, 2013, as cited in da Silva & Sarmento, 2015) investigated aspects related to the use of PNLD in schools; however, those studies did not investigate textbook choice.

Tormena (2007) analyzed the PNLD to identify language policies. In her study, she dealt with laws, documents and official programs that preceded and oriented the PNLD along with some language theories that supposedly exerted influence upon the evaluation of the textbooks. Results of her study suggest that the PNLD can be categorized as a form of implicit language policy.

Araújo, Santos and Difabio (2015) remind us that although language policies are not always explicit, many institutions, organizations and specific segments of society can define and defend a language policy, though only the State has the power to propose and implement language policies in a top-down fashion through language planning.

Passoni and Luz (2016) carried out a survey about Policies and Language planning (PLP) through the analysis of a set of orienting documents for the teaching and learning of foreign languages, both at the national and State levels between 2012 and 2013. Among the documents chosen for analysis they mentioned the Law of Educational Guidelines and Basis (*Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação* in the abbreviation in Portuguese - LDB), the National Curricular Parameters for the Primary and Secondary Education (*Parâmetros Curriculares Nacionais* in the abbreviation in Portuguese for primary and secondary education, respectively PCN-EF and PCN-EM), the Curricular Guidelines for Secondary School and teaching guidelines of some Brazilian states such as Rio Grande do Sul, Mato Grosso, Sergipe, Rondonia and Rio de Janeiro. The Policies Cycle Approach (Sachs, 2011 cited in Gimenez & Passoni, 2016) was used to analyze the data which revealed that the speech of different social groups influence the definition and proposition of policies (context of influence). Yet, the analysis of the context of production of the documents selected showed that State and national curricular guidelines for the teaching and learning of a FL (English, in particular) are aligned in terms of the concepts underlying FL teaching, such as education for the exercise of citizenship, interdisciplinarity, access to the culture of other peoples, critical pedagogy and multiliteracy.

In addition, Passoni and Gomes (2016) carried out a search at the CAPES portal for theses and dissertations using the keywords "Language Policies". The documental search showed that there has been a growing interest in the theme in the research agenda of language policies. Another finding of Passoni and Gomes (2016) relates to an interconnection among the several studies on Language Policies which, according to the authors, may result in extrapolations of the studies themselves. Examples of these extrapolations would be (i) the fostering of the discussion, in Letras undergraduate and graduate courses, of the complexity involving modern foreign languages (MFL) teaching and learning in Brazilian educational contexts, and (ii) the involvement of language professionals into the elaboration and implementation of language policies in Brazil.

Bearing in mind that the main aim of this paper is to discuss language policies in Brazil in relation to the way they are implemented in the PNL D guidelines for the selection of textbooks for the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language (EFL), a study was carried out whose aim was to analyze the main principles and set of criteria used by the PNL D to assess the textbooks designed for Brazilian secondary schools regarding the teaching and learning of English. In what follows the method used in the study will be described.

### 3. Method

In order to scrutinize the epistemology underlying the selection of foreign language textbooks for the PNL D, the analysis of data in the present study focused on three distinct but complementary parts of the 01/2013 call regarding the assessment of textbooks launched by the Ministry of Education in 2015, namely: (i) the Introduction part of Appendix III of the aforementioned call, which referred to the principles and criteria for evaluating textbooks for secondary school; (ii) the general principles and objectives for MFL at secondary school and (iii) the specific qualifying criteria for the MFL curricular component (English, in the case of the present study), carried out by means of a lexico-semantic analysis which aimed at identifying the extent to which the

guidelines established by the Ministry of Education to assess textbooks designed for Brazilian secondary schools regarding the teaching and learning of English reflect not only language but also education and social policies derived from a specific context of production. Moreover, the software Wordle (a word cloud generator) was also used to generate a word cloud with the frequency of words contained in the guidelines for textbook evaluation.

Considering the peculiarities of a lexico-semantic analysis and to avoid misinterpretation and maintain the original meanings of the source text, the analysis was carried out in the original language of the guidelines, that is, in Brazilian Portuguese. The following section presents the results and discussion of the findings.

#### 4. Results and discussion

In order to contextualize the analysis proposed in this paper, it is important to acknowledge the way Brazilian official documents conceptualize secondary school and students in this stage of basic education. As could be observed in the Introduction part of the pedagogical guidelines of the call herein analyzed, some of the objectives of secondary school in Brazil, in line with the Law of Educational Guidelines and Basis (LDB), are related to: (i) consolidating and deepening the knowledge acquired in previous school life stages; (ii) preparing students to continue learning to be able to be integrated in the laboring market world; (iii) improving the human condition of students in what regards their ethics, critical thinking and intellectual autonomy; and (iv) developing students' understanding of the techno-scientific concepts and the relation between theory and practice within and between curricular components.

As portrayed in the aforementioned objectives, secondary school is held responsible for preparing students for life, by guaranteeing the development of their sense of autonomy and emancipation towards the construction of an integral, solid education. Thus, students are considered, in this stage of basic education, as subjects under formation who play an important role in the social, cultural, political and economic life of the society they belong to. With that in mind, the LDB further states that young students of secondary schools should be seen as learning subjects with peculiarities that must be taken into account by this stage of formal education.

... The education of the young should be organized as an intercultural process of personal education and (re) construction of socially relevant knowledge, both for citizen participation in public life and for entering the world of work and for continuing studies (Lei nº 9.394 de 1996, p. 38, our translation<sup>3</sup>).

Therefore, the organization of secondary schools should enable a continuous and effective dialogue with youngsters, avoiding the silencing of their identity characteristics and providing opportunities for meaningful learning in a movement against knowledge fragmentation and towards the favoring of all human dimensions.

... Current policies aimed at improving secondary education have been based on the concept of 'Integral Education' which translates into the development of all dimensions of the human being: ethical, aesthetic, historical, cultural, personal, among others, considering subjects in their entirety (Lei nº 9.394 de 1996, p.38, our translation<sup>4</sup>).

<sup>3</sup> In the original: "...a escolarização do jovem deve organizar-se como um processo intercultural de formação pessoal e de (re) construção de conhecimentos socialmente relevantes, tanto para a participação cidadã na vida pública, quanto para a inserção no mundo do trabalho e no prosseguimento dos estudos".



As put forward by Antunes and Padilha (2010, p. 24, our translation<sup>5</sup>),

the goal of integral education is to prepare technically competent men and women who are able to fully perform their profession, to live independently, in constant search of personal and professional fulfillment, but above all it aims at educating human beings that promote well-being, social justice and sustainable living for all.

In order to make this possible, secondary education should prioritize interdisciplinary teaching and learning perspectives which articulate students' knowledge and life experience emphasizing science, labor, technology and culture as integrated aspects of education. Besides, as also proposed by the National Curricular Guidelines for Secondary Education (*Resolução CNE/CEB n. 2, 2012*), these interdisciplinary practices should consider labor as an educational principle, science as a pedagogic principle, human rights as a guiding principle and social- environmental sustainability as a universal aim.

Based on the conceptualization of education, in general, and of secondary education and students in this formal stage of education in particular, the selection of textbooks for high school is taken as a tool to help ensure a pedagogical practice engaged with the integration of different knowledge fields and the articulation of all human (students) dimensions.

Having explored the context in which the textbook selection is inserted, let us now turn to the analysis of the general principles and objectives underlying the selection of MFL textbooks for secondary schools. Figure 1 shows the word cloud generated from the excerpt of the textbook national call which explains the main educational objective of MFL in general, and of the FL textbooks in particular.

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<sup>4</sup> In the original: “...as políticas atuais voltadas para a melhoria do ensino médio têm se pautado na concepção de 'Educação Integral', que se traduz pelo desenvolvimento de todas as dimensões do ser humano: éticas, estéticas, históricas, culturais, corporais, entre outras, compreendendo os sujeitos na sua totalidade”.

<sup>5</sup> In the original: “a educação integral objetiva a preparação de homens e mulheres tecnicamente competentes, capazes de desempenhar plenamente sua profissão, de viver com autonomia, em busca permanente de sua realização pessoal e profissional, mas, sobretudo, almeja a formação de seres humanos que promovem o bem-viver, a justiça social e a vida sustentável para todos”.







As can be seen in Figure 2, the most prominent words regarding the role of MFL textbooks seem to be in line with the proposals for National Curricular Parameters for secondary school when they suggest that the role of MFL textbooks is to foster knowledge building through diverse pedagogical practices which provide access to different cultures and forms of expression through language use. In this sense, it seems that MFL textbooks are expected to rely on an interdisciplinary view of education.

The concept of interdisciplinarity, however, is rather polysemic as it is defined according to the cultural and political characteristics of the educational system in which interdisciplinary approaches are considered. As put forward by Lenoir (2006), this concept might be understood from at least three different perspectives: 1) the epistemological one, originated in France, 2) the instrumental one, proposed in the USA, and 3) the introspective one practiced in Brazil. The author explains that the first perspective treats interdisciplinarity as a metatheory that seeks to articulate the different knowledge areas and subareas. The instrumental perspective, on the other hand, deals with interdisciplinarity in a more practical way. That is, the interaction among the various knowledge fields aims at mobilizing students' knowledge, acquired throughout their academic lives, in order to find solutions to social, economic and technological problems, for example. The third view of interdisciplinarity, the one usually adopted in the Brazilian educational context, seems more related to an introspective practice as it focuses on the person of the teacher and his/her pedagogical practices inside the classroom (Lenoir, 2006).

The National Curricular Guidelines for Secondary Education state that "interdisciplinarity and contextualization should ensure the transversality of knowledge from different curriculum components fostering dialogue between knowledge and different fields of knowledge" (*Resolução CNE/CEB n. 2, 2012, p. 06, our translation*). Therefore, the implementation of interdisciplinary practices in the educational context implies recognizing the inseparability of the particularities of each curricular component and the comprehension of the existence of more complex systems. That is, it is essential that all subjects involved in the teaching and learning process perceive the dialogic relation between the whole and its parts (Rocha, 2013).

As argued by Rocha (2013), overcoming the disciplinary view of school curricula requires expressive changes in the epistemological conceptions that underlie all school activity. That is why, according to Rocha, it is extremely necessary to reflect upon pedagogical strategies that can, gradually, cross the barriers of individual curricular components, offering students a diversified form of learning that leads to the comprehension of reality in its entirety.

The concern with an integrated view of the curriculum is embedded in the National Curricular Guidelines for Secondary Education which reinforces the need to intertwine the different curricular components through interdisciplinary practices on behalf of knowledge articulation and transversality (*Resolução CNE/CEB n. 2, 2012*). This view is also represented in the pedagogical guidelines for MFL textbook selection of the call analyzed in this paper, as observed in Figure 2 and in Figure 3.

Figure 3 presents the specific qualifying assessment criteria required from MFL textbooks. The first lexico-semantic piece of evidence found in the data refers to the interdisciplinary perspective that the teaching and learning of a FL should provide secondary school students. They are highlighted in bold. The second lexico-semantic piece of evidence that called our attention is related to the emphasis placed by the guidelines on the reading and writing skills as the only ones capable of enabling students to develop autonomy, critical sense, and the communication ability

to express themselves in a FL as well as to understand other cultures' forms of expression. These pieces of evidence are underlined in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Specific qualifying criteria for MFL - interdisciplinarity and the receptive skills

Criteria
<u>reúne um conjunto de textos</u> representativos das comunidades falantes da língua estrangeira, com temas adequados ao ensino médio, que não veicule estereótipos nem preconceitos em relação às culturas estrangeiras envolvidas, nem às nossas próprias em relação a elas
<u>seleciona textos</u> que favoreçam o acesso à diversidade cultural, social, étnica, etária e de gênero manifestada na língua estrangeira, de modo a garantir a compreensão de que essa diversidade é inerente à constituição de uma língua e a das comunidades que nela se expressam
contempla variedade de gêneros do discurso, concretizados por meio de linguagem verbal, não verbal ou verbo-visual, caracterizadora de diferentes formas de expressão na língua estrangeira e na língua nacional; <u>inclui textos</u> que circulam no mundo social, oriundos de diferentes esferas e suportes representativos das comunidades que se manifestam na língua estrangeira
<u>expõe elementos de contextualização social e histórica dos textos selecionados</u> , de modo que se possa compreender suas condições de produção e circulação
<u>propõe atividades de leitura</u> comprometidas com o desenvolvimento da capacidade de reflexão crítica
ressalta nas <u>atividades de compreensão leitora</u> o processo que envolve propostas de pré-leitura, leitura e pós-leitura que contemplem uma efetiva interação texto-leitor
<u>explora estratégias de leitura</u> , tais como localização de informações explícitas e implícitas no texto, levantamento de hipóteses, produção de inferência, compreensão detalhada e global do texto, dentre outras
<u>prioriza atividades que atribuam à leitura e à produção escrita papel central</u> no processo de aprendizagem da língua estrangeira no ensino médio
<u>desenvolve atividades de leitura, escrita e oralidade, que sejam capazes de integrar propósitos e finalidades da aprendizagem da língua estrangeira</u>
<u>articula o material oferecido na versão eletrônica que acompanha a coleção com temas, textos e atividades previstas no livro do estudante;</u>
favorece a interdisciplinaridade, tanto a interna à área, como na relação entre áreas, por meio de articulações integradoras que se proponham a ultrapassar os limites estritos da disciplina
promove atividades que levem a novas formas de integração entre língua estrangeira e língua portuguesa e entre ambas e as demais áreas de conhecimento

Source: the authors'

As regards the undeniable emphasis posed by the guidelines on FL receptive skills (especially reading), it is worth mentioning that research on educational practices and outcomes in Brazil has shown a gap in English proficiency of students in the end of the secondary school stage. This is clear when language policies such as the English without Borders program (IsF- Inglês in the Portuguese abbreviation) is implemented by the national government.

Finardi, Prebianca, Schmitt and Andrade (2014), for example, in a study that sought to investigate the affordances and limitations of the online course My English Online (MEO) offered by the IsF- Inglês program analyzed the perceptions of 25 Brazilian undergraduate students of a federal university. The analysis of the MEO course showed that it fails to provide adequate instructional feedback concerning written and listening activities, indicating ergonomic deficiency of the software. Another drawback concerning MEO indicated in the study was its lack of affordance for the development of oral skills, especially speaking, which might indicate, according to the authors of the study, a misconception in educational policies in Brazil regarding what a proficient learner should be able to do in a foreign language. Finardi et al. (2014) suggested that this misconception also exists in different levels of education as shown in language policies of primary and secondary education which strongly recommend the development of the reading skill (at the expense of others). The authors suggest that one result of this policy is that when students reach university level they do not have a good level of oral fluency in English and can at most, read in that language. So as to correct this perceived deficiency in the development of oral skills in English in Brazil, the national government launched the IsF as part of the internationalization agenda of Brazilian tertiary education. However, the analysis in Finardi et al. (2014) suggests that the MEO falls short of this expectation and should be offered in tandem with face to face classes to improve oral production skills of Brazilian students and their overall proficiency level in English. To conclude, the authors suggested a major restructuring of language policies in Brazil to include the development of productive skills in the target language in primary and secondary schools.

This is not to say that mastering the four abilities (reading, writing, speaking and listening) corresponds to knowing a language in its totality. On the contrary, it represents a step in the process of finding out other viewpoints and different forms of conceptualizing the world embedded in a language. In this sense, we agree with Tilio (2014), who reminds us that communicating in a language is, among other things, being able to understand different discourses and re-signify them based on the world knowledge one has. And this, as pointed out by Tilio, is one of the goals of teaching and learning a FL, as it can promote the exercise of citizenship and social inclusion.

Another piece of lexico-semantic evidence in the data relates to the straightforward connection among modern foreign language learning policies in Brazil and the epistemology underlying the evaluation and choice of textbooks given that both aim at the education of critical-thinking citizens and express a great concern with educating young learners to understand diversity in general, as represented in foreign languages in several social dimensions. Figure 4 displays the pieces of evidence related to that finding in bold format.

Figure 4. Specific qualifying criteria for MFL – diversity

Criteria
seleciona textos que favoreçam o acesso à diversidade cultural, social, étnica, etária e de gênero manifestada na língua estrangeira, de modo a garantir a compreensão de que essa diversidade é inerente à constituição de uma língua e a das comunidades que nela se expressam
contempla variedade de gêneros do discurso, concretizados por meio de linguagem verbal, não verbal ou verbo-visual, caracterizadora de diferentes formas de expressão na língua estrangeira e na língua nacional; inclui textos que circulam no mundo social, oriundos de diferentes esferas e suportes representativos das comunidades que se manifestam na língua estrangeira
propõe atividades de leitura comprometidas com o desenvolvimento da capacidade de reflexão crítica
oferece oportunidade de acesso a manifestações estéticas das diferentes comunidades que se identificam com a cultura estrangeira e com a nacional, com o propósito de desenvolver a fruição de produções artísticas
propõe atividades de avaliação e de autoavaliação que integrem os diferentes aspectos que compõem os estudos da linguagem nesse nível de ensino, buscando harmonizar conhecimentos linguístico-discursivos e aspectos culturais relacionados à expressão e à compreensão na língua estrangeira
utiliza ilustrações que reproduzam a diversidade étnica, social e cultural das comunidades, das regiões e dos países em que as línguas estrangeiras estudadas são faladas
proporciona articulação entre o estudo da língua estrangeira e manifestações que valorizam o comportamento ético, o reconhecimento dos direitos humanos e da cidadania, a prática do respeito e acolhimento do outro, compatível com o perfil do estudante do ensino médio

Source: the authors'

In regards to the education of critical thinking individuals, the guidelines in the document analyzed favor activities and materials with different forms of cultural, social, ethnic, gender and age representations to guarantee diversity and access to different forms of expression in the language including texts that circulate in different spheres and communities. Empowered by this kind of knowledge, students can become part of a greater world, being able to think, reflect and act in it as discursive subjects (Dos Santos, 2012). In other words, access to forms of expression of different groups and cultures contributes to a better understanding, not only of students' reality involving their own language and forms of expression, but also of a plural world constituted by several and identifiable forms of organization (Dos Santos, 2012).

It is in this plural world then, that secondary school students can interact and build meaning through the social relations they create with the language competence they acquired in class. This

is not to say that instrumental knowledge of the foreign language should be the most relevant issue when it comes to teaching EFL at secondary education. However, we consider instrumental knowledge of the FL as a step towards students' autonomy and emancipation as subjects that are influenced by globalization demands but can, certainly, influence them through their actions.

In this sense, Dos Santos (2012, p. 46, our translation) argues that,

As a libertarian and emancipatory force, the foreign language offers conditions for people learn to choose among different possibilities. However, in order to do that, it is necessary to have wise eyes to see. That means to eliminate any type of nationalism which can hinder the full development of the citizen in his/her immediate social space and in the world, in general.

Dos Santos (2012) also argues that, despite the dispute of some research lines on the hegemonic role of EFL, it is important to recognize that the cultural process is a dynamic one, involving global inter-relationships. According to the author, then, EFL teaching and learning can play a significant role in helping to oppose the hegemonic discourses in relation to the inequality among different countries and social groups, once they are well informed and prepared students (human beings) will, inevitably, raise their voices against that. As defended by Dos Santos (2012, p. 48, our translation),

...it is necessary to avoid totalitarian theories of social and cultural reproduction, that is, views of a global, communist society, delivered by a hegemonic foreign language such as English, for example, to reach a critical paradigm which recognizes the true role of the human being in the social life.

Language policies are also represented in the guidelines for MFL selection as they require textbooks to embrace labor as an educational principle, science as a pedagogic principle and human rights as a guiding principle. Evidence for that is underlined in Figure 5.

Figure 5. Specific qualifying criteria for MFL - labor, science and human rights

Criteria
reúne um conjunto de textos representativos das comunidades falantes da língua estrangeira, com temas adequados ao ensino médio, que <u>não veicule estereótipos nem preconceitos em relação às culturas estrangeiras envolvidas, nem às nossas próprias em relação a elas</u>
vincula o trabalho intelectual às atividades práticas ou experimentais, no que concerne à <u>apropriação de conhecimentos científicos, tecnológicos, culturais e advindos da experiência, intermediados pela aprendizagem da língua estrangeira</u>
promove atividades que se fundamentam no entendimento do trabalho como <u>princípio educativo e da pesquisa como princípio pedagógico para nortear o papel da língua estrangeira no ensino médio</u>
proporciona articulação entre o estudo da língua estrangeira e manifestações que <u>valorizam o comportamento ético, o reconhecimento dos direitos humanos e da cidadania, a prática do respeito e acolhimento do outro</u> , compatível com o perfil do estudante do ensino médio

Source: the authors'



In what regards the principles of education, science and human rights embedded in the document, as well as in its interdisciplinary orientation, we see a suggestion to link intellectual work to practical activities to help the appropriation of scientific, technological and cultural knowledge mediated by the foreign language. In this sense, labor, as an educational principle, helps individuals to provide their own existence, by mobilizing resources to attend to their needs and thus, leads to the development of science and the building up of knowledge that constitutes the culture of different social groups. As a consequence, science as a pedagogic principle enables students to interpret, analyze, criticize, reflect upon and plan solutions for reality intervention (Ramos, 2008).

## 5. Final remarks

The main aim of this paper was to discuss language policies in Brazil especially in relation to the way they are implemented in the guidelines for the selection of textbooks for the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language (EFL) of the PNLD. So as to subsidize this reflection, a study was carried out which analyzed the main principles and set of criteria used by the PNLD to assess the textbooks designed for Brazilian secondary schools regarding the teaching and learning of English. The results of the qualitative analysis carried out revealed a straightforward connection between modern foreign language learning policies in Brazil and the epistemology underlying the evaluation and choice of textbooks given that both aim at the education of critical- thinking citizens prepared to address social relevant issues by posing a relatively great emphasis on the teaching and learning of the reading skill.

To change the actual panorama regarding the deficit in FL proficiency in general and in English in particular, as previously discussed, we believe it is crucial to expand the perspective on the teaching of English as a modern foreign language in Brazil. This could be done by taking into account the need for the development of students' speaking skills required for a global citizenship in the flat (Friedman, 2005) and globalized world of the twenty-first century. This could also help the conciliation of the instrumental and the sociointeractional perspectives on EFL teaching and learning as advocated by the National Curricular Parameters for Secondary School and by the National Curricular Guidelines for Secondary Education (Tilio, 2014).

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