Sociolinguistics and education: the challenges posed by the treatment of linguistic diversity in Brazilian Portuguese textbooks

Anna Christina Bentes¹, Claudia Goulart²

¹UNICAMP/, Brasil
²ESEBA/UFU – UNICAMP, Brasil

In recent decades, brazilian researchers have been investigating why brazilian language textbooks still work a diglossic perspective about brazilian sociolinguistic reality. This communication is to report how Brazilian Portuguese language textbooks are still dealing with the complex relationships between speech and writing and between orality and literacy in final years of primary school. Although these materials presuppose a sociolinguistic discourse made explicit in the theoretical assumptions present in Teacher’s Guides, most of the proposed activities have not considered language as a social and extremely variable object, mischaracterising existing intersections between oral and written practices. When we observed activities directed related to sociolinguistics concepts, we can say that the concepts are untwisted and some of them (as standard & nonstandard varieties) serve only to "camouflage" linguistic diversity and heterogeneity, explained as "deviations" from "cultural norms" or "cultivated variety". Textbooks convey the view that oral texts are informal and formatted by non-standard norms and written texts are rather formal and formatted by standard norms. By doing so, the materials reinforce a diglossic perspective about brazilian sociolinguistic reality and promote a deep cut between speech and writing and between orality and literacy. Our analysis shows that these pedagogical practices lead to exclusion, preventing students to become competent in multivariate uses of language (including standard ones) and also preventing the development of strategies and processes that could operate transformations on the relation between learner and language varieties. Finally, we intend to present some guiding sociolinguistic principles for language activities to be proposed in textbooks so that students can achieve a more consistent view about language as social practice.

Keywords: Linguistic Diversity, Language Textbooks, Sociolinguistics.