


Literary reading in a Brazilian Portuguese textbook: a dialogical approach /

A leitura literária no livro didático de português: uma análise dialógica


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ABSTRACT

One of the main objectives of Basic Education is to contribute to the development of literary readers. However, trails that bring us closer to this purpose are still challenging. In this article, we intend to discuss and reframe the notion of literary reading in order to problematize its practice in a textbook. We are theoretically based on The Bakhtin Circle and literature teaching researchers, such as Zilberman (2016) and Rezende (2013). The analysis will be based on the Dialogical Discourse Analysis methodological framework, and the analytical focus falls on the first chapter of the High School textbook *Se liga na língua*. The results suggest the existence of frictions between dialogical literary reading practices and traditional views on teaching literature. Above all, the lack of an approach to the aesthetic dimension is evident in the textbook, as the activities seem to ignore the processes of interpenetration, i.e., the act of experiencing other realities, objectifying the experience and perceiving the transfiguration of reality through reading.

KEYWORDS: Literary reading; Textbook; Literature teaching.

RESUMO

Formar leitores literários é um dos objetivos consensuais da Educação Básica. Contudo, caminhos que nos aproximem desse propósito ainda se mostram desafiadores. Neste artigo, procuramos discutir e ressignificar a noção de leitura literária, com vistas a problematizar sua prática a partir do livro didático. Embasamo-nos, responsivamente, nos apontamentos do Círculo de Bakhtin e em pesquisas sobre o ensino de literaturas, tais como as de Zilberman (2016) e Rezende (2013). O percurso metodológico fundamenta-se na Análise Dialógica do Discurso e o recorte analítico recai sobre o primeiro capítulo do livro de Ensino Médio *Se liga na língua*. Os resultados sugerem fricção entre práticas de leitura literária dialógica e visões tradicionais do ensino de literaturas. Evidencia-se, sobretudo, a falta de uma abordagem da dimensão estética, pois as atividades parecem ignorar os processos de compenetração, vivência de realidades outras, objetivação da experiência e percepção de transfiguração da realidade por meio da leitura.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Leitura literária; Livro didático; Ensino de literatura.

1 Introduction

[...] looked over his shoulder and realized that the wall that then blocked his way was cracking [...] passed through the gap, and then found the clearing that so long he had yearned for... (FUNKE; DEL TORO, 2019, p. 288-289).

The challenges of literary education comprise an immense and complex labyrinth, through which diverse elements circulate. In the course of the countless paths of this labyrinth, these elements take multiple directions and experience different ways of dealing with the difficulties of literary education. Research on the reading rates in Brazil, for instance, indicates the low number of readers in the country¹. Conversely, this survey also points out the most common literary reading practices among young people. For instance, the reading of *best-sellers*, the encounter between

¹ *Retratos da leitura no Brasil*, despite its commercial point of view and the support received from sectors that view books as artifacts of the cultural industry, provides an overview of the reading scenario in Brazil. In its latest edition, for example, we find out that the approximate number of readers in Brazil was 56 million in 2015 and dropped to 52 million in 2019. It is worth highlighting that the research considers as a reader “the one that has read, in the whole or partially, at least one book in the last three months” (Slides 19 and 20 from the presentation of the research data, available at <https://www.prolivro.org.br/pesquisas-retratos-da-leitura/as-pesquisas-2/>, access on 20 Nov. 2020).

literature and other forms of art, such as cinema and games, as well as several literary reading practices that involve the use of the Internet.

Among the many walkers on the paths passing through literary reading, even though they may be in different directions, there seems to be a consensus: if we want our students to increasingly enter the world of books, we need to help them find a welcoming terrain in which they feel not only instigated and challenged, but also prepared to make progress. At this rate, teachers –who were once seen as the guardians of the literary reading access (LAJOLO, 2000) – are doing their best to guide contemporary students, who were born in the age of rapid technological advances and overwhelming information and market appeals, through this labyrinthine path. To accomplish this task, however, teachers need some support.

Textbooks play an important assisting role in the teacher's work. By refracting² the position of several sectors (official documents, academic research, commercial interests, need of captivating teachers and students etc.), these resources may indicate to what extent literary reading is introduced and experienced in the context of Basic Education. Considering that these indicators are explicit in chapters that focus on introducing the concept of literature, usually in the very beginning of Secondary Education, this article intends to examine how textbooks depict literary reading at this level of Basic Education. More specifically, we seek to understand the construction of the discourse on the notion of literary reading in a textbook chapter dedicated to the notion of the literary field. This comprehension will result both from the analysis of the texts selected to introduce the concept and from the investigation of the activities based on the textual selection of the material. Therefore, we aim to explore cracks that may help us to find not clearings, but possible paths for literary reading in school.

Our analysis will focus on the introduction and the first chapter from the first volume of the series *Se liga na língua*, published by Moderna. Authored by Wilton Ormundo and Cristiane Siniscalchi, this work has been approved by the *Programa Nacional do Livro Didático* [Brazilian Textbook Program] (PNLD) in 2018, and it was the second textbook most distributed by the program. The series proposes a contemporary approach to literary reading using a strategy that

² Throughout this article, in dialogue with the epistemological basis of the Bakhtin Circle that underlies our theoretical and methodological discussion, we use the term “refract” and its variations. *Refraction*, in the work of the Circle, is related to the capacity of the linguistic sign to not only repeat/reproduce a conception of reality through linguistic material, but also to include in this repetition several social evaluations and ideological conceptions. In the words of Vološinov (1973, p. 10), “A sign does not simply exist as a part of a reality - it reflects and refracts another reality. Therefore, it may distort that reality or be true to it, or may perceive it from a special point of view, and so forth”.

promises to be “innovative in its proposals and textual selection, [being] in direct dialogue with the contemporaneity and the young readers’ culture” (ORMUNDO; SINISCALCHI, 2016, p. 356). This promise, along with the favorable reception this series got, evidenced by the wide adoption of this material by the teachers, incites us to further explore the path taken by the work within the immense labyrinth of literary education.

Considering the abovementioned matter, the first section of this article discusses literature teaching in school and the place of the textbook. The second section argues about the concept of literary reading. The third and fourth sections introduce the methodology and the analysis of the textbook, respectively.

2 Teaching literature in school and the textbook issue

Literature teaching is a problem that has been increasingly addressed by contemporary researchers. Even though literature has lost its autonomy as a discipline after it was included within the field of Portuguese Language discipline, regulatory documents such as the *Base Nacional Comum Curricular* [Brazilian National Common Core] – BNCC (BRASIL, 2018) highlight the relevance of the literary text and of literary reading in the field of languages. Nevertheless, working with literary reading is not always easy; several factors such as the lack of appropriate teacher training for teaching literature, scarce literary works in school libraries, and the lack of access to Internet (AMORIM, 2013) thwart an effective work with literary texts in Brazilian classrooms. In addition, official documents such as the BNCC are rather inaccurate. Although there may be a dialogue with concepts like literature, literary reading, literary literacy, fruition etc., these documents do not provide full definition and clear guidelines for the actual work with literary texts (AMORIM; SILVA, 2019).

Rezende (2013, p. 99) broadens the discussion by asking “What do you teach when you teach literature?” The researcher claims that literature teaching is occasionally reduced to a simulacrum of what the literary approach should be; the predominant tasks involve summaries of works, discussion of the history of literature, period styles, list of works, and never exactly approach the literary text. As for Zilberman (2016), she states that literature teaching has usually been mistaken as teaching Literary Theory, given that textbooks, college entrance exams, and the *Exame Nacional do Ensino Médio* [High School National Exam] (ENEM) dialogue more clearly – since the publication of the *Parâmetros Curriculares Nacionais para o Ensino Médio* [National

Curriculum Parameters for Secondary Education] PCNEM (BRASIL, 2000) – with concepts and terms from this field. In this context, schools have combined

[...] heterogeneous notions, that origin from diverse theories, not always compatible, articulated and coherent, sometimes even concurrent or adversary. [...] The literary text, in turn, plays the role of the joker, able to occupy any position without assuming a specific identity. In addition, theoretical notions are object of reductionism (ZILBERMAN, 2016, p. 410).

Nevertheless, Rezende (2013) points out that new theoretical trends have urged noticeable changes in official documents from the state and federal level, such as the BNCC, by means of, for example, the concept of literacies, though these changes apparently have not been resignified in literature classrooms yet.

In broad terms, Rezende states that, in the midst of the 21st century, despite of the theoretical advancements in the field, literature teaching still seems to be centered on the discussion of aesthetic movements and period styles, generally associated with a certain timeline. This timeline, in turn, would guide the teacher in the act of informing students about the great works of literature and their main characteristics, which is nothing more than a superficial relationship between the literary text and its context. Moreover, the very school model contributes to this line of action in literature classes, in view of the fact that expositive classes primarily based on mechanical question-and-answer games is still predominant in schools. Rezende (2013) even disputes the possibility of applying a different type of literature class without implanting another school model first. This other type of literature school would have to shift from *teaching literature* to the pole of *literary reading*. According to the author,

[...] the expression “literary reading” is gradually imposing itself in the documents to address literature at school, although there is no conceptual focus, in general, to its meaning and the potential of this expression for teaching (REZENDE, 2013, p. 106).

This shift from literature teaching to literary reading that the researcher suggests is significant, mostly because the student becomes the center of the literature class instead of the teacher, leading the literary text to the center of the class as well rather than focusing on secondary knowledge. Several authors and official documents have suggested a major focus on literary reading. The *Orientações Curriculares Nacionais para o Ensino Médio* [National Curriculum Guidelines for the Secondary Education] - OCEM (BRASIL, 2006), for example, have already indicated the formation of the literary reader as the goal of literature teaching. BNCC, albeit less emphatic than OCEM, also suggests literary education – which is the term used by the document

– from the point of view of literary reading. Zilberman (2013, p. 415) asserts that “The reading of literature is the very reason why literature is taught in school”. Silva (2019), in his turn, argues for the questioning of the traditional content of literature teaching and evokes the need of non-romanticized, critical pedagogical practices of the literary text focused on the multiple layers of these texts that, according to the author, are always open to new readings. In this sense, the teacher’s role, as suggested by Silva (2013), consists of mediating the learner’s literary experience.

The textbook, as the greatest pedagogical instrument of most Brazilian teachers, can also become an obstacle in such a context: Rezende (2013) states that the positivist character of this resource, which constitutes a set of truths expressed didactically through a list of pre-selected texts and excerpts with questions and answers mostly supposed to be copied, can thwart an effective literary reading experience when making indiscriminate use of the textbook as the sole class material. Pinheiro (2006) also questions the actual need for literature textbooks, since the reading of the works themselves in the literature classroom is supposedly more fruitful. The author acknowledges, however, that it would require not only a bibliographic structure on the part of the schools, but also a theoretical-methodological preparation on the part of the teachers, which currently does not seem to be accomplished by undergraduate courses.

Pinheiro (2006) also claims that, until 2006, Portuguese/Literature textbooks had similar characteristics in spite of their great variety, perhaps because their material had to follow the PNLD guidelines. In a survey done with eight books, this author found that the selection of texts in these materials is repeatedly based on historical criteria or literary characteristics rather than on a pedagogical practice planning that would allow an actual experience of literary reading. In a more recent text, Nascimento (2019) points to the greater diversity of literary texts found in the analysis of a recent textbook series for Secondary Education. This increased textual diversity, however, does not assure a more effective approach to literary reading. As the very same author states, there seems to be “little room for expressing constructed readings, in addition to not drawing the students’ attention towards the differentiated construction of meanings process: a literary relationship that may take place when in contact with the text” (NASCIMENTO, 2019, p. 142).

Considering this centrality of literary reading in literature classes, the next section addresses an apparent (in)definition of this concept in the specialized bibliography, thus providing our own understanding of literary reading.

3 Literary reading

In the labyrinth of research on literary reading, we inevitably pass through the corridor that discusses reading in its broadest sense. We must get through this path in order to reach the discussion on literary reading.

3.1 The concept of reading

In its broad sense, reading means interpreting signals, whether they are climatic, body, facial, gestures, graphics, and so forth. This is the reading of the world that, as Freire (2001) highlights, must precede the reading of the word. In the case of reading texts – or reading words, as Freire prefers - the reading process has been extensively investigated in several fields of knowledge such as the Cognitive Sciences, Discursive Studies, and Literacies. In this regard, Kleiman (2013) points out that cognitive studies have already approached reading from several points of view and perspectives such as: 1) the focus on linguistic material, in which reading is primarily seen as a process of decoding and extracting information in a reading model called *bottom-up*; 2) the focus on the reader, which highlights the importance of the reader's previous knowledge and contribution to the text: *top-down reading model*; 3) the *interactional* perspective, which combines both models and defines reading as an act of interaction that emphasizes the importance of both actors involved in the process: text and reader.

It is worth reminding that, in the third conception, neither the text or the reader are isolated, since both are situated and constituted in historical, social, political, and cultural processes. This issue gains prominence in the discursive studies – more focused on aspects related to use of language within enunciative contexts. Let's look at some contributions of these studies.

3.2 Notions of dialogism and answerability

Dialogism, a central concept of the Bakhtin Circle's language discursive studies, refers to the fact that every utterance is one part of a larger dialogue that shapes the history of beings. Therefore, "any speaker is himself a respondent to a greater or lesser degree. He is not, after all, the first speaker, the one who disturbs the eternal silence of the universe" (BAKHTIN, 1986, p. 69). Consequently, when uttering, every speaker:

presupposes not only the existence of the language system he is using, but also the existence of preceding utterances - his own and others' - with which his given utterance enters into one kind of relation or another (builds on them,

polemicalizes with them, or simply presumes that they are already known to the listener). (BAKHTIN, 1986, p. 69).

Each utterance is thus in dialogue with previous utterances, relying on them, confirming them, denying them, complementing them, broadening them etc., in a past projection as well as in a future projection. Every utterance has a presumed audience, i.e., the speaker bears in mind who will hear or read it. *Will this sentence have the intended impact? Better choose other words to make myself clear! I better not say anything!* All these considerations are done in dialogue with (and are guided by) possible answers. This is the principle of the notion of *answerability*. According to the Circle's philosophy:

in point of fact, word is a *two-sided act*. It is determined equally by *whose word* it is and for *whom* it is meant. As word, it is precisely *the product of the reciprocal relationship between speaker and listener, addresser and addressee*. Each and every word expresses the "one" in relation to the "other". (VOLOŠINOV, 1973, p. 86).

As the product of the relationship between the one and the other, the meanings of words are not contained in them, but constructed in the macro and micro contextual relations in which they and the other participants of the discursive events are inserted. Comprehension is always mediated by the context and is always *active*. In Vološinov's words,

to understand another person's utterance means to orient oneself with respect to it, to find the proper place for it in the corresponding context. For each word of the utterance that we are in process of understanding, we, as it were, lay down a set of our own answering words (VOLOŠINOV, 1973, p. 102).

Therefore, the listener or the reader is always active; they participate in the process of construction of meanings and adds the responsive layers. Comprehension takes place by means of ever-contextualized, responsive, and dialogic processes. Thereby notions of dialogism and answerability are relevant to approach the concept of reading in full connection to interpretation and comprehension.

3.3 Links in the discursive chain about reading

Recent studies such as Vargas (2018) and Nascimento (2019), based on researches on the conceptual integration (FAUCONNIER; TURNER, 2002), regard the use of the term *integration* as more appropriate when referring to what takes place between text and reader during the reading

process. More than interaction, they integrate with each other, as if the reader integrated to the text to produce his own reading and then went through a transformation in a dialogue to a new layer of experiences that will be the basis for his future readings. The text, in turn, when integrated to the reader and completed by the act of reading, is no longer the same as before because it has received a whole layer of previous knowledge and values that make the reader see the text differently. Previously, the text could have been seen as an organized set of words and sentences that arouse one's curiosity, weariness, and contempt, among other feelings. After the reading, these feelings may turn into reflection, enchantment, confirmation of hypotheses, revelation, disgust, confirmation of weariness etc. The fact is that both the reader and the text do more than interacting. They integrate and (re)form each other in the reading process.

Accordingly, reading is hereby understood as an interpretative, dialogic, and responsive act that takes place through a process of *integration between the reader* – social, historical, political, and culturally situated being – and the text (that which the reader interprets), which is situated as well. Such integrative process can promote different dimensions of the person who reads, such as moral, ethical, emotional, affective, and aesthetic. These dimensions are interrelated and related to the cognitive dimension.

3.4 Dimensions involved in the reading process

In the reading process, we mobilize a wide range of dimensions that are interrelated and constitute our being and produce meanings, relations, and perceptions. In reading a narrative, for example, the moral and aesthetic dimensions involve the construction of judgment towards the characters and their attitudes and actions. The emotional and affective dimensions can also enter this game and make the reader recognize themselves, root for or against the characters, get emotional with an attitude etc. in a move of *empathy*. All of this is connected to the cognitive dimension, which is always included in the other dimensions, feeding and being fed by them in an unending flow of change. It enables meanings produced along the way to interfere in moral judgment and in the establishment of affective relationships with the text, for example. Likewise, moral values and the affective dimension can interfere in the production of meanings.

Such an exchange, as one may imagine, takes place through the whole reading process. Reading news articles can lead to interpretations, mobilize all the aforementioned dimensions, and lead us to position ourselves to match our ethical and moral values. We can get emotional and

develop empathy about people and situations encountered through reading. In such a way, what is the distinguished feature that allows us to add the adjective *literary* to reading? Regarding this point, another human dimension requires further investigation: the *aesthetic* dimension.

3.5 The aesthetic dimension: finally, literary reading!

Originated from Greek *aisthesis*, the word aesthetics refers to the experience of *perception*, *sensibility* or *sensation* when in contact with something else. Artistic aesthetic is thus about the process of perception and sensibility about the experience provided by the contact with the artistic object (painting, sculpture, literature). But what is this process like?

Let's start with one of the poles of the process: the artistic object and, among many other possibilities, as our view will be restricted to texts that can be considered artistic works, the so-called literary text. As for this kind of text, one must first think about its objectives and characteristics. Unlike newspaper articles, for example, the text containing literary intentionality, in general, is not seen as one designed for a simple practical use in everyday routines of the social world. It surpasses the daily practical life in order to meet the human need of imagining and fabling. This is the reason why literature in its broad sense is one of the *incomprehensible* rights, i.e., “the ones that shall not be denied to anyone” (CANDIDO, 2011, p. 175). Another characteristic of texts regarded as literary is the use of language that enables the plurality of interpretive possibilities, in which a great deal of contribution is expected of the reader, it is intended and pre-designed. This is a notorious, distinguished feature. As Langlade (2013) points out:

If one assumes that every literary work is characterized by its incompleteness, it is concluded then that it can only really exist when the reader lends the work elements of their personal universe: elements of the scenario, landscapes, characters' physical traces and features etc. Therefore, the reader produces “complementing activities” when imagining... (LANGLADE, 2013, p. 35).

This thought leads to the other pole of the process: the reader, the one that attends to the potentiality of the text and is thus responsible for advancing the process that may establish an aesthetic and literary relationship in the act of reading. For research purposes, we will divide the steps of this process that is, in practice, rather imbricate. We will again rely on the studies of the Bakhtin Circle in order to look into them.

According to the Circle, the aesthetic contemplation is a process originated from previous steps. In *Towards a philosophy of the act*, Bakhtin states the following: “An essential moment

(though not the only one) in aesthetic contemplation is empathizing into an individual object of seeing – seeing it from inside in its own essence” (BAKHTIN, 1993, p. 14). Empathy is thus a step of the aesthetic experience made possible by an act that is labeled as *compenetration* later in another text: “*The first step in aesthetic activity is my projecting myself into him and experiencing his life from within him. I must experience — come to see and to know — what he experiences; I must put myself in his place and coincide with him, as it were*” (BAKHTIN, 1990, p. 25, italics added).

Compenetration means to move oneself from the original place of existence to dive into the text and experience the situations it narrates, possibly creating empathy. Empathy itself, however, does not ensure the aesthetic activity. This depends on the movement of returning to the self and on the evaluation of the lived experience so that one can observe it from the outside.

This moment of empathizing is always followed by the moment of objectification, that is, a placing outside oneself of the individuality understood through empathizing, a separating of it from oneself, a return into oneself. And only this returned-in to-itself consciousness gives form, from its own place, to the individuality grasped from inside, that is, shapes it aesthetically as a unitary, whole, and qualitatively distinctive individuality (BAKHTIN, 1993, p. 14).

Therefore, aesthetic activity depends on the movement of returning to one’s own place of existence to evaluate the experiences of compenetration and empathy from the outside. This movement of displacing and returning to one’s own place in the world is called *exotopy* by the Circle. In a less philosophical language, it is the same as displacing oneself towards the world of reading – and taking along the values and forms of understanding and feeling situations in a movement in which one can create empathy and experience different feelings –to later return to oneself and evaluate, from the outside, the movement of displacement as well as the experiences thereby provided. Accomplishing these two steps, which, as previously mentioned, are not sequential but simultaneous, leads to the development of aesthetic activity and the consolidation of literary reading.

Literary reading is thus a process of integration between text and reader (both in social, political, historical, and cultural contexts), in which the aesthetic dimension acts as an input of other dimensions. During this process, readers are repositioned in a reality both external and internal to themselves, which broadens their range of experiences.

In light of the notions discussed above, the next section introduces the theoretical-methodological guidelines that will conduct the analysis of the textbook chapter at stake.

4 Analytical paths: research methodology

The analysis in the following section focuses on a chapter of the textbook *Se Liga na Língua: Literatura, Produção de Texto e Linguagem*, certified by the PNLD 2018 still in force for Brazilian Secondary Education. Our purpose is to understand the construction of the discourse on literary reading in the chapter from this textbook responsible for conceptualizing the literary field. Thus, this research of socio-historical character (ROJO, 2006) is in dialogue with the Dialogic Analysis of Discourse – DAD (BRAIT, 2004; SOBRAL; GIACOMELI, 2016) in an attempt of effectively interpret the given corpus, entailing “[...] not only the necessary concepts from several fields, but also the types of revision and rearticulation required by the problem situation” (ROJO, 2006, p. 264).

Data analysis, founded on the theoretical discussion of the previous sections, will follow some principles of the DAD. According to Brait (2004), DAD essentially looks into understanding the processes of construction of meanings and its effects on the social world. To do so, it assumes that meanings are provided in the social interaction and that meaning is constructed by the dialogue between subjects understood as discursive, historical, and cultural. As a matter of fact, to understand the texts/discourses under investigation, DAD seeks to evidence the construction of meanings derived from the analysis of verbal and extra-verbal materiality paired with a wider context indicted by the features of particular situations, i.e., the dialogic relation of text/discourse and its social, discursive, and historical formations. Sobral and Giacomelli (2016) point out that the Dialogic Analysis of Discourse initially analyzes texts that have been effectively produced in order to verify how subjects realize interactions from discourse genres and examine the linguistic forms in its usual signification.

The textbook that runs the corpus of this article has been chosen from the series of Portuguese textbooks certified by the PNLD in 2018. This series, *Se Liga na Língua: Literatura, Produção de Texto e Linguagem*, is authored by Wilton Osmundo and Cristiane Siniscalchi, and the first edition was published in 2016 by Moderna. As mentioned earlier, this choice of textbook is justified by the wide adoption of this material by the teachers and its second place in the national ranking of distribution, which is clear evidence that professionals extensively rely on this book. Moreover, this material contains an innovative proposal in search of dialogue with contemporary times and the language of younger people, in view of the fact that this series is meant to be used in High School.

Regarding the structure of the first volume of this series, there is a traditional subdivision in three categories, namely: Literature, Textual Production, and Language. The first category is connected to our theme of interest in this article and contains four units and nine chapters. In analytical terms, the focus lies on the examination of the introductory pages of this volume as well as the first chapter, taking into consideration that these introductory spaces provide greater possibility of reflection on literary reading. The first chapter is entitled *O Texto Literário* and aims to discuss topics like literary texts and non-literary texts; denotation and connotation; literary movements; context and historiography; the intertextuality; and the cultural library. Each one of these subtopics includes some artistic image followed by texts about the purpose of art, primarily the literary one. The conclusion of the content is followed by a block of three to five questions which is supposed to guide a discussion and arouse critical analysis of the texts, as well as highlight and relate the subtopic chosen for the class.

5 Views on literary reading in a textbook

Before the first chapter in this volume, there is a page entitled *Uma só realidade não é o bastante*. There is a text right below it, in a language rather accessible to a younger audience, which discusses the fact that fiction is a human need. As support, the text refracts Candido's sayings in *O Direito à Literatura*, a widely known text from the field of literature teaching, to inform that "just as nobody fails to dream, nor can one live without creating stories or having contact with them" (ORMUNDO; SINISCALCHI, 2016, p. 12). In the following, literature is introduced as a very special form of art which does not depend on direct contact with the original writings: "for diving into the worlds created by writers, one does not need to read directly from the original writings produced by them" (ORMUNDO; SINISCALCHI, 2016, p. 12). Literature is introduced as a possibility of expanding the world in which the student is invited to go on an adventure. The image that follows the text introduces several characters lying over a book that apparently makes them float, which reinforces the invitation to adventure. This opening reveals an introduction to the concept of literature by appealing to the reader's emotional dimension, highlighting the possibility of *exotopic compenetration* (BAKHTIN, 1990), that is, the move from the very place of existence to dive into the text and experience the situations narrated there, as discussed in section 2. The promise seems to be of something magical and exciting.

In the following pages, there is a text entitled “*Afinal, pra que serve a literatura?*” whose language remains simple and welcoming to young students. It asks the readers whether they make art, drawing the attention to the existence of art in the students’ lives by means of movies, paintings, sculptures etc. The text highlights the function of literary art by refracting once again Candido’s view that literature is supposed to “organize in words our chaotic interior world” (ORMUNDO; SINISCALCHI, 2016, p. 14). It intends to emphasize, therefore, the experience of empathy provided by reading, because when we read a poem or a novel, for example, we can feel their words expressing our own feelings. This identification with the text, reconciled with the effect it produces – *compenetration and objectification* (BAKHTIN, 1993) – is the main impact of literature in our lives.

As a complement to the opening’s discussion, the image of a girl that seems to fly introduces the following page:



* Cena de *Alice no país das maravilhas*, em montagem do grupo teatral Cia. Le Plat du Jour (2009), inspirada no clássico de Lewis Carroll, escrito em 1865. As aventuras da menina Alice viraram teatro, filme, pintura, escultura, desenho animado. O que torna uma obra literária um clássico universal, a ponto de atravessar o tempo, fascinando leitores e inspirando artistas? Uma explicação possível está na definição do autor Italo Calvino: “Um clássico é um livro que nunca terminou de dizer aquilo que tinha para dizer”.

Figure 1: (ORMUNDO; SINISCALCHI, 2016, p. 15)

This image represents a scene of *Alice's Adventures in the Wonderland*, performed by the *Le Plat du Jour* theater company (2009) and based on Lewis Carroll's 1865 classic. The caption mentions the power of the classics, in light of the work's passage through time and the possibilities of adaptations in movies, theaters, and other artistic media. In this regard, Italo Calvino is quoted: "A classic is a book that is never finished saying what it has to say" (ORMUNDO; SINISCALCHI, 2016, p. 15). This statement is in accordance with the idea of incompleteness of the literary text, as stated by Langlade (2013), given that the reader brings to literature subjective interpretations and a range of private experiences that influence the impact of the work in each person's life in their respective, particular contexts. The idea of integration between text and readers described by Vargas (2018) and Nascimento (2019) is present in the conception of such passage.

Following these opening pages, the chapter 1 entitled *O texto literário* starts with the image of a painting:



Figure 2: (ORMUNDO; SINISCALCHI, 2016, p. 16)

Coexistence II by Apolo Torres (2009) is a quite realistic image of a bus inserted in the universe of painting. There are no interpretation activities for this image. Along with the caption, it highlights that “art (including literature) has the power of recreating reality so as to draw our attention to what then seemed natural to us” (ORMUNDO; SINISCALCHI, 2016, p. 16). Although this information is not discussed with students in the activities, it reveals the aesthetic dimension of art. As we have already stressed, this dimension involves the *exotopy*, which is one’s repositioning in a reality that is simultaneously external and internal to oneself, in addition to a return that leads one to recreate a particular way of perception of the object responsible for repositioning.

The first text on which the chapters’ activities are founded is the poem *Elogio da memória* by José Paulo Paes. This author’s texts are rather common in textbooks for High School. The language of the poem is simple, and dialogues with the arrangement of the verses that resembles the image of an hourglass. It is followed by these activities:

- 1 - Observing the arrangement of the lines, what is the image that first comes up in your mind?
- 2 - Explain the relationship between the image that you pictured and the content of the poem.
- 3 - In your opinion, why did the author give the poem the title “Elogio da memória”? (ORMUNDO; SINISCALCHI, 2016, p. 17)

As observed above, the questions are short and objective. They require the expression of personal readings, as confirmed in the teacher supplement: “1. *Students* are expected to realize that the image [...] is an hourglass. 2. *Personal answer. Suggestion* [...] 3. *Personal answer. Suggestion* [...]” (ORMUNDO; SINISCALCHI, 2016, p. 409). In this manner, the activities seem to focus on notions of dialogism (BAKHTIN, 1986) and answerability (VOLOŠINOV, 1973), thereby anticipating dialogues and specific responsive attitudes in the contact with the texts.

Nevertheless, the activities do not progress in problematizing the reasons for the possibility of a literary construction of meanings and relations with the text. The aesthetic dimension is not problematized, but taken for granted instead. It provides Candido’s (1995) excerpt to determine the literariness of the text:

“Literary production draws the words out of nowhere and arranges them into an articulated whole. [...] The organization of the word talks to our soul and leads it first to organize itself and then organize the world”. *This is what happens in the poem* by José Paulo Paes. [...] (ORMUNDO; SINISCALCHI, 2016, p. 17, italics added)

When using the quotation of a literary critic to discuss the process of literary production, followed by a *statement* instead of a problematization of the processes involving the poem on which the activities are based, the material may suggest an understanding of literariness based only on the observation of characteristics pointed out by specialists in the subject. It is dangerous because of the invisibilization of the construction process of an aesthetic relation with the text, which also entails the reader's action and not only textual features. It confirms what Zilberman (2016) pointed out in regard to the fact that literature teaching is usually mistaken as teaching Literary Theory. It also seems to endorse Rezende's (2013) statement that scholarly practices of literary reading are not approached properly on the literary tissue.

On the next page, connotative and denotative languages are the main content introduced by the title *A literatura atribui novos sentidos às palavras*. Activities are based on two texts: the first one is an entry of the word <guardar> retrieved from the *Pequeno dicionário Houaiss da língua portuguesa*; the other is a poem by Antonio Cícero whose title, *Guardar*, holds the core idea of the poem. In the following, there are two exercises with three questions each:

1. The verb *guardar* is defined, in the poem, as “olhar”, “fitar”, “mirar”, “admirar”, “iluminar”.
 - a) Do these definitions match the ones in the dictionary entry?
 - b) What is the difference between the definitions provided by the dictionary and the poem?
 - c) What is the example provided by the speaker of the poem to testify its definition of *guardar*?
2. The speaker of the poem tells that “se escreve”, “se diz”, “se publica”, “se declara e declama um poema” to “guardá-lo”.
 - a) Is this statement contradictory, considering that the text would become accessible to the readers?
 - b) What is the meaning of the verb *guardar* in the context of the poem?
 - c) What about your opinion? What is the meaning of the verb *guardar*? (ORMUNDO; SINISCALCHI, 2016, p. 18-19).

As may be observed, the first exercise focuses on the comparison of both texts, signaling the existence of similarities and differences regarding the use of the word *guardar*. In the second exercise, a greater possibility of interpretation of the poem opens up, especially by making room to the reader's contribution in the question of letter c. A positive point worth mentioning is the movement from the literary text to later reach linguistic and theoretical aspects, such as denotation and connotation. It is known that the common model of literary textbooks has once been the opposite: the introduction of the content was done prior to the text to later ask the student to observe the phenomenon of the text.

Despite this, it is quite clear that the core purpose of this section is not the literary experience. The text is in the background of a greater purpose: to distinguish connotative from denotative language. The activities do not aim to propose a reflection on literary reading, but rather they focus primarily on one characteristic of literary texts: the predominance of connotative language. In this regard, we bring up once again Zilberman's (2016) statement about the use of literature to understand elements of literary theory, reducing literature to strictly established norms.

Page nineteen also introduces new content that extends up to page twenty. The text of the section *Movimentos literários* describes the study methodology that will run the whole book. It provides the following information: "Literary movement, literary school, or period style is defined as groups of authors and works pertaining to the same historical period that contain similarities, though each of them present particular stylistic features" (ORMUNDO; SINISCALCHI, 2016, p. 19).

In the following, a balloon highlights the relevance of literature in society, presenting the poem "Dentro da noite veloz" by Ferreira Gullar as an example due to the importance of this poem during for the Military Dictatorship in Brazil. This point, though it is not highlighted – given that the poem is quoted but not reproduced in the page – is important because it depicts literature as a powerful way of acting on social reality, which suggests transformation as one of the purposes of literature. It means that, as explicitly set forth in section 2, the utterances from the literary objects interact with the individuals' answerability (VOLOŠINOV, 1973) and are resignified as they resignify worldviews as well.

Following the discussion about literary movements, there is a section entitled *Contexto Histórico e Historiografia*. This section brings forward an excerpt of the novel *A moreninha*, by Joaquim Manuel de Macedo, published in 1844, and an excerpt of the poem *Pista de Dança*, by Waly Salomão. Before introducing these excerpts, however, it provides the information that both texts "were written in different periods and talk about music and dance" (ORMUNDO; SINISCALCHI, 2016, p. 20). Raising this topic beforehand, even though this is quite explicit in both excerpts, seems to guide the reading, thus constraining it, which may be problematic. Nevertheless, such thematic delimitation may be an attempt to help the student understand texts containing a less familiar language. The texts from this section, unlike the previous ones, contain several words that do not belong to High School students' usual vocabulary, either in virtue of the time distance or because they belong to a specific vocabulary from the music field. The tentative resource to solve this issue was highlighting the uncommon words and make use of glossaries. The questions about these texts are given as below:

- 1) Joaquim de Manuel Macedo's novel was originally published in 1844. What elements of the text characterize it as a work written in the XIX century?
- 2) What actions described in Macedo's excerpt are typical from the period?
- 3) Which social class is Macedo describing?
- 4) Women are given prominence in the *soirée* scene. How are they characterized in the first text?
- 5) Given that the second text is entitled "Pista de dança", describe the sensations that the author tries to convey. Retrieve examples from the text to justify your answer.
- 6) Establish the relationship between the title "Pista de dança" and the form of the poem.
- 7) Does the language used by the poet in "Pista de dança" reveal the period it was written? Justify your answer.
- 8) Although Macedo's text is an excerpt of the novel and Waly Salomão's is a poem, the content brings them together. How are the events described in the texts similar? (ORMUNDO; SINISCALCHI, 2016, p. 22).

In general, it is possible to state that half of the exercises concern the evaluation of the student's ability in pointing out the period in which these texts were written, which confirms the main intention of the subsection in highlighting the importance of the sociohistorical context to understand the work. It is not a recent discussion in Literary Theory studies and in other studies about literature teaching from different fields that the excessive use of historiography to understand the literary text is not enough to comprehend the aspirations of a complex and multidimensional range, whose existence is rather useful in the classroom especially when it is critically and integrally read. Rezende (2013) has already discussed the impoverishment of literature when it is only referred to as a set of works and authors pertaining to the canon generally read under strictly historiographical criticism. In this sense, one can leave aside the particularities from works and authors and then fail to perceive that a novel may contain features from other movements, such as when the modernists write about how realists and romantics use elements of the baroque style.

It is relevant to note as well that many of these questions imply copy and paste, as they intrinsically express the idea that the answers must be retrieved from the excerpts. Rezende (2013) questions the possibility of establishing a new way of teaching literature without actually transforming the educational system first. Such questioning is based on the argument of the characteristic mechanization in the question-answer game and the largely expository classes. Through this point of view, the superficiality in the treatment of the literary text is notorious, given that it does not reach more abstract layers.

Nevertheless, even though it is not quite explicit, the third and fourth questions attempt to promote a reflection on social class and female representativeness, both relevant topics to develop

critical thinking in our contemporary democratic society. Drawing attention to these topics may suggest an attempt to dialogically approach the text. However, we notice greater interest in the author's intention regarding the effect of the poem and very little in requesting students' responsive attitudes (VOLOŠINOV, 1973) in respect of the reading itself. This is a relevant issue, since it can convey the idea that the student is a blank sheet of paper to be filled, a secondary contribution to constitute the meaning of the text. Where are the dialogues between the contexts of production and reception of the works? In another words, it does not seem to pay attention to Langlade's (2013) point that the reader is in the same hierarchic level of the author in regard to interpretation of the text and the literary construction of meanings, as the reading subject does not bring in memory the same images of the author.

Following these activities, the chapter presents an overview of important concepts such as the triad author/work/reader and talks about the importance of understanding the work from its context, which actually remains as a central issue: its influence on the author's work, endorsing the notion of literary art as a finished work, which supposedly emphasizes a gap between the student/reader and the literature.

Finally, this excerpt brings up the concept of Literary canon and endorses that the historiographical methodology that permeates the structure of this textbook will be as usual and traditional as possible, in spite of choosing a language that dialogues with the young audience. It states that "This series will approach literary historiography, [...] Some writers and works considered canonical from each literary school will be highlighted [...]" (ORMUNDO; SINISCALCHI, 2016, p. 22). According to this series, the literary canon is "a set of works and authors that were relevant in a certain period" (ORMUNDO; SINISCALCHI, 2016, p. 22). However, it draws attention to a possible injustice in the selection of works and the rejection of others: "This categorization, though valid in certain contexts, can be quite unfair. Great artists were (and keep being) excluded from the literary canon" (ORMUNDO; SINISCALCHI, 2016, p. 22).

This information raises the following questions: who were or who are these great artists that have been left behind? If they are and have been this great, why aren't they in this material? What were the criteria to form this canon? If this canon is really unfair, can't the material break this cycle? Despite of the understandable obstacles, we believe it is possible. If the choice is the exclusion by erasing and ignoring these books and authors, then every recent study focused on restoring, recollecting, and renewing literary works, in which the reason of exclusion is largely founded on racial discrimination, gender and sexual orientation prejudice, political ideology etc.

have been in vain after all. It is important to understand the excluding processes that these marginalized works and authors have suffered as well as to promote the historical repair of textbooks in order to introduce another literary perspective in concurrence with the prescribed canon.

The subsection that closes the first chapter is entitled *Intertextualidade e Biblioteca Cultural*. It reveals an expository text whose goal is to present relationships between the texts and then conceptualize the phenomenon of intertextuality. In the authors' terms:

The relationship between texts, in which one makes use of the other, is called intertextuality. The study of intertextuality examines how hypotexts (source texts) are explored in the intertexts ("collages" of other texts) (ORMUNDO; SINISCALCHI, 2016, p. 23).

Regarding this aspect, the textbook is in line with the idea of dialogism (BAKHTIN, 1986), since such concept, as pointed out earlier, conveys the idea that all the utterances are in constant dialogue. An utterance said in certain context contains a variety of previous utterances that complement it. In view of this, intertextuality, a concept coined in the sixties by Julia Kristeva based on the ideas of the Bakhtin Circle, is one of the manifestations of dialogism, since every text or utterance contains in itself a number of voices that interact with each other.

The next activity seems to focus on the use of oral speech in the classroom. It exhibits eight images by the American designer Christian Jackson and asks whether the student can infer to which narrative each image refers.

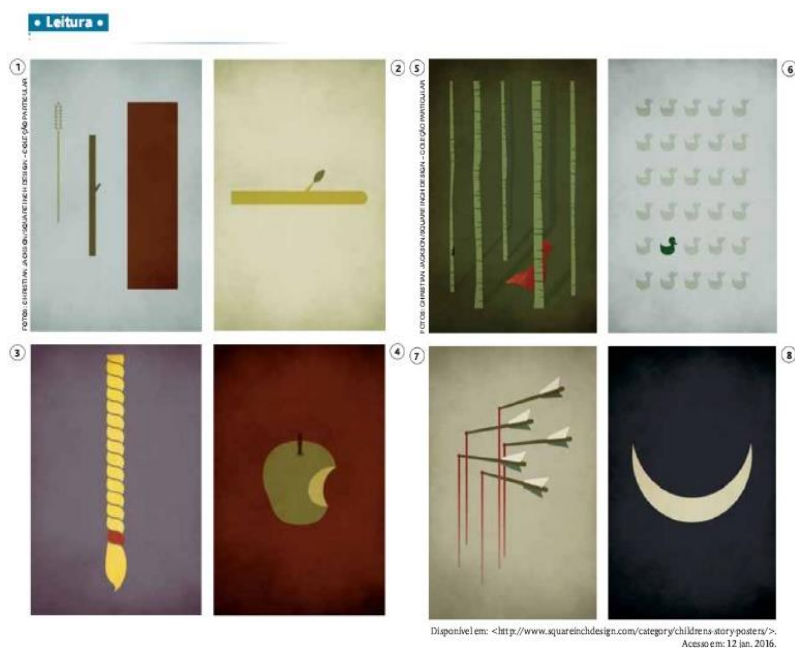


Figure 3: (ORMUNDO e SINISCALCHI, 2016, p. 23-24)

These images allude to folk stories that are mostly targeted to children. It assumes that all students can identify narratives through images. However, before looking at the answers suggested by the book, each of the authors of this article identified a different folk narrative from the reading of one of the images, even though the three authors have the knowledge of the texts referenced by the images in their cultural background. We conclude, therefore, that the answer to these exercises is not as obvious as the authors of the book presume to be.

The discussions about the concepts of *Intertextualidade e Biblioteca Cultural* were concluded with the following thought:

Reading is like a mirror game in which we access new data and find again those we already knew. By doing this, every new reading becomes a new version to be filed in our cultural library. The larger and better this library becomes, the richer our readings will be (ORMUNDO; SINISCALCHI, 2016, p. 24).

This notion of reading is in line with the idea of integration mentioned by Vargas (2018) and Nascimento (2019), since it refers to the process of transformation of the subject and object through contacting each other. As we access new readings, we intertwine internalized information and experience so that the literary object is only completed by the reader. Such symbiotic relationship is only visible through filling the gaps on which the literary work is built. By means of the involvement of the affective, ethical, aesthetic, and cognitive dimension, the individual acts through judgments, conjectures, reflections, acceptances and denials, giving meaning to the text.

The last activity is based on the short story *A incapacidade de ser* by the poet Carlos Drummond de Andrade. This short story frequently appears in High School textbooks. In an objective way, it is followed by two questions:

- 1) Paulo seems to live in two plans: the fantasy and the reality.
 - a) Which elements of the text suggest that the boy's life was filled with fantasy?
 - b) How can we infer from the text that Paulo also lived in the real plan?
- 2) According to your text comprehension, what is this "caso de poesia" that Dr. Epaminondas mentions? (ORMUNDO; SINISCALCHI, 2016, p. 25).

The first exercise asks the student to retrieve textual clues that support the inference that Paulo seems to live in two plans, the fantasy and the reality – which was already given by the question's lead. The second question, in turn, enables personal answers and leads to the box *Fala aí*, which provides questions about the topic of the text that expect personal and oral answers.

In fact, the closure of this chapter resembles its beginning, since it relates literature to the imagination and fiction world. It highlights the contrast between fantasy and reality, thus conveying the conclusion that the literary text transcends the concrete aspects of the real world. Nevertheless, the questions imply an antagonism between fantasy and reality. Though these are perspective from different domains, it must be noted that fictional literature in general bends towards the concrete reality of the world.

The second question refers specifically to the interpretation of the saying “Caso de poesia”. At first sight, students usually do not feel comfortable with poetry, as they believe it is way beyond their reality. Poets are supposedly in a place of abstraction to be worshipped by the literary canon because of the adorned language they use to approach themes that seemingly never dialogue with the current practical life. As a result, the textbook is not only supposed to introduce poetry, but also build up solid bridges between fiction and reality; between poetry and life; between literary discourse and educational practice.

In general, these reading activities tend to express an idea of literature as a place for imagination, fiction, reflection, and recreation of the world. Nevertheless, as previously demonstrated in the analysis, theory fails to meet practice in the exercises or the activities proposed, given that the questions expect standard answers; either because they were planned for idealized students or they draw on traditional and archaic literature teaching approaches such as literary historiography, or they are focused on grammatical aspects of the texts. Moreover, we notice the uncritical use of concepts of literary theory and little elaboration in the movement of exotopic compenetration; of the acknowledgement of the self and the other in order to reflect over alterity. In view of this, literature is not the actual focus of the chapter that is supposed to introduce literary studies to High School students.

Final remarks

This article intended to evidence our responsive attitudes as researchers that follow certain paths in the complex labyrinth of literary education. It focused on the issue of literary reading and its approach on the didactic material selected as the investigation corpus. In the dialogic movement of research construction, we intended to look into the place of literary reading in the Brazilian classroom, resignify the very idea of literary reading – in dialogue with discourses on reading that circulates in the academy – and approach, from a sociohistorical research methodology, literary

reading as portrayed in the first unit of a High School textbook adopted by PNLD in 2018. In this approach, we concluded that the development of this textbook is still founded on the friction between dialogic literary reading practices and traditional views of literature teaching, primarily featured by a scarcely contextualized approach of literary theory concepts and a historiographical perspective of the literary object.

Although the construction of expository texts still holds a constant dialogue with the discourse of this article from a theoretical perspective, the articulation between theory and practice goes astray in certain moments, considering that the choice of exercises is grounded in a more traditional conceptualization, which sometimes thwarts an engaged and effective practice of literary reading. We also noticed that it lacked an approach of the aesthetic relation with the texts, which is, as previously stressed, crucial for the literary reading process: the material does not show any concern in drawing students' attention to the processes of compenetration, the experience of other realities, the objectivizing of experience, and perception of transfiguration of the reality through reading. Furthermore, despite of the graphical proposal and of the contemporary language, this chapter is built on a quite traditional ground, based on an idea of literature as canon and exercises that refract usual pedagogical practices.

Finally, we would like to emphasize that this analysis is a possible reading of the first unit of the Portuguese Language textbook *Se liga na língua*. Other roads can be taken. On that account, after the principles of the Bakhtin Circle which guided the present reading, our voice, being preceded by others on which we are based in a responsive and responsible manner, also hopes to raise answers/questions and future investigations in the academic sphere.

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