



## Reading Workshop<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** Knowing the failure of the work with reading in elementary, we propose a reflection on the training of teachers that work with children. This article is the result of the project “Oficina de Leitura” that proposes workshops aimed at undergraduate students from *Campus Catalão* of UF G and public school teachers who, in turn, will conduct workshops aimed at developing reading skills of elementary school students from schools in Catalão, becoming thus multiplying the actions developed in the project. In all workshops are included texts whose themes are related to environmental issues, ethnicity, those with special needs and digital inclusion as texts that, as a basic tool of teaching and learning to read, have as main function the establishment of senses, serving ideologies, and a broadest sense, the training of citizens.

**Keywords:** Reading, education, citizenship, workshops.

Reading is fundamental. Everyone agrees. At the beginning of school life, Massini-Cagliari (2001: 34) says that “para que progrida em suas produções escritas e realmente chegue à compreensão dos diferentes usos e naturezas da fala e da escrita, é necessário que a produção de textos não aconteça desvinculada da leitura”.

Thus, reading and writing are inextricably linked. In the early years at school, reading is obviously different from the ideal reading. According to Massini-Cagliari (1999: 115), the decipherment of covering obligatory recognition of word meanings, however,

é claro que não chega a ser uma leitura completa, madura e ideal, mas já é uma primeira leitura e um pré-requisito para que a leitura propriamente dita aconteça. (...) se não soubermos dizer quais palavras estão escritas, não seremos capazes de efetuar uma leitura que vá além dos significados literais.

For this author, reading involves a long learning process and can only be considered satisfactory

quando um leitor atinge um tal grau de maturidade e independência, sendo capaz de chegar ao texto “do outro” e apropriar-se dele como construção do outro mas reconstrução sua (...) E é somente a partir daí que o leitor pode usufruir plenamente da leitura em todas as funções que ela possa assumir na nossa sociedade (Massini-Cagliari, 1999: 114).

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Although all students have left the school term that “teaches reading”, is common to hear that Brazilians do not read. It is said by the laity, researchers and teachers who reflect about the practices of reading or on the “lack” of such practices. Negatively evaluate this discourse involves claiming that certain theories on the subject need to be problematized.

So, we ask the question: Do people read or do not read in Brazil? They Read and do not read in Brazil. They read some books and do not read others. They read a lot of *Sabrina* and maybe read a few *Machado de Assis*. Worldwide, many people read Harry Potter, as Cortina (2004) says,

no levantamento publicado pelo Quid em 2001, que corresponde aos best-sellers de 2000, os quatro primeiros lugares dos records de vendagem são ocupados pela série de Harry Potter, das edições Gallimard Jeunesse. Harry Potter à l'école des sorciers aparece em primeiro lugar, com uma quantia de 739.000 livros vendidos; Harry Potter et la coupe de feu vem em segundo com 580.000 volumes vendidos; em terceiro está Harry Potter et le prisonnier d'Azkaban, com 449.000 volumes vendidos.

In Brazil, *O Mistério do Cinco Estrelas*, Marcos Rey, has sold over a million copies; *Xangô de Baker Street*, Jô Soares, sold about four million; the series *Os Karas*, Pedro Bandeira, was almost as much read as Harry Potter; Paulo Coelho has sold over seven million books to Brazilians; people read many *self-help* and best-sellers. A few people read newspapers, poetry, literary classics, etc. (Britto & Abreu, 2003: 116-117). So, generally, when people say that few read in Brazil, come into play value judgments that exclude the list of those readers who read only what is not evaluated positively by criticism. In the words of Brito & Abreu (2003: 118), this is the result of a traditional view according to which all other writings, even though physically identical to the right books, they are non-books. Likewise, those who read them, although they read, they are non-readers because they read, according to these critics, the books they “should not” read.

What a person does when reading? What is reading? How do you read? These issues are present in several areas of work which, due to the importance that reading has taken the life of man, give him a prominent place. The answers to these questions have varied diachronically and synchronically, given the diversity of disciplines concerned with the issue. This growing theoretical concern may not yet have had a fair



correspondence regarding the application of theory to practice on the reading of it, especially the practice of reading in the classroom.

Even the French Discourse Analysis, for example, whose birth occurred as a method for reading texts, for some time may have held a theoretical privileged position, leaving in second place the reflections on the practice reading. In relation to reading in the classroom, some recent studies have turned to the application of concepts of Discourse Analysis, which have given a new dimension to the teaching of reading.

Historically, about reading three positions ensued. Preceding the rise of modern linguistics, the first one maintained the view that reading is trying to figure out the intentions, the author's thought. During this period, dominated the proceedings from the author.

Foram os tempos das tentativas de situar o texto em seu contexto específico, levando-se em conta o sentido das palavras na época de seu uso e vendo em qualquer uso não transparente ou não regular da linguagem uma manobra que denunciava alguma característica pessoal do autor do texto, que por ela se revelava (Possenti, 1985: 9).

The second one, based on the precepts of structural linguistics, denied the author and gave the text the status of determining the reading, as if it was a product entirely inscribed in the materiality of texts. According to Possenti (1985: 9), under the aegis of this conception of reading, “viveu-se um período relativamente longo de tentativa de abandono do autor e das circunstâncias, para apreender as invariantes dos textos. O texto fala por sua estrutura, não pela boca de seu autor”.

It was found, however, that the text is powerless “para ser o árbitro da pendenga pelo sentido” (Possenti, 1999: 171). According to Possenti (1999), they decided to “promover duas alterações táticas importantes: a primeira foi deslocar o centro da questão para o leitor; a segunda foi abandonar a exigência do sentido correto”.

Then comes the position that the reader controls the reading process. In this way, the text, “(...) seria de ordem tal que a idéia da apreensão de seu sentido seria uma ilusão, um equívoco” (Possenti, 1985: 9). The various meanings that a text may have in terms of singular readings made by different readers, or even different readings made by the same reader at different times led to the idea that “o texto só existe no momento da leitura” (Possenti, 1985: 10).



The first position, defending an original meaning inscribed by the author in the text, and the second, which sees the text as a system to be decoded by the reader, founded as proposed closing of reading. The latter one, on the contrary, by arguing that the text is open, it proposes the reverse, ie, presents the text as the object of several readings, giving the reader the most relevant role in the triad author-text-reader. It's a dangerous game: on one hand, to monopolize the reading, to interdict the movement of interpretation, value only the started readers and institutionally authorized, on the other hand, any reading is accepted as correct, as if the words of the author had no relevance.

The positions described above, designed in relation to work with reading in school, raise concern. In a text that analyzes the weakening of society and materialized by reading text, Barzotto asserts

(...) o que se verifica com relação à perda de limites na sociedade em geral é a passagem de um conhecimento dogmático e autoritário, que promove a submissão e a adaptação, a um desmonte do conhecimento produzido, desconsiderando o trabalho dos sujeitos que os produziram, bem como sua própria existência, uma vez que qualquer outro seria considerado do mesmo modo (Barzotto, 2001: 247).

At school, In school, reading was mediated by the teacher, taken as authority able to say what is the meaning intended by the author or inscribed in the text. To this practice it was opposed freedom without limits, as if the text was open to any interpretation. This position resulted in a framework such that no reading could be considered wrong. This was reflected in practice in schools, universities and conferences because if someone criticized the reading of another, saying he was wrong, soon heard comments like: "It is my reading", there are so many readings as readers" etc.

Opposed to this picture, Possenti (1999) and (2001) advocates the position that there is a misreading because "o leitor lê o que é possível para ele ler", not because the reader is incompetent or because he is better or worse reader, but because each person "tem uma certa ideologia" (Possenti, 2001: 13). Thus, the same reader is not capable to find many meanings in a text. The interpretations "têm a ver com as posições dos leitores" (Possenti, 2001: 13) "(...) pode haver leitores com enciclopédias, que lhes permitem ler corretamente certos textos e leitores que não conseguem ler certos textos senão de forma equivocada" (Possenti, 1999: 174).



Possenti and Barzotto point a way. The first one states that “devemos ser contrários, evidentemente, àqueles que dizem que o sentido do texto é fixo. (...) Mas a liberalidade total não é possível” (Possenti, 2001: 12). The text should be considered more important than the reader. Barzotto (1999) considers that society has lost its boundaries. Rescue them amounts to limiting the free ride through the text, doing justice to what is symbolic law on the word “reading”, without acting as if the text, author and reader were worth no nothing (Barzotto, 1999: 17).

After these clarifications, it is noticed that the problem with reading has been taking the field in several studies of linguists. Lately, we see the dissemination of proposals to encourage the formation of habits of reading.

In this context, what has been the position of undergraduate courses in Portuguese and Literature, those who are officially responsible for the training of Portuguese teachers? Although we do not intend to answer this question, perhaps we can contribute to the discussion of the topic by proposing that the undergraduate courses in Portuguese and Literature are co-participants in the failure of the teaching of Portuguese in Brazil.

In the early years of school, it is almost impossible any possibility of real change because the teachers who teach for these series tend to be the least qualified of all levels [and those who receive lower wages] often highly dependent on the textbook, using old theories disguised as new concepts. Teachers in recent years of high school, usually are very concerned about the *Vestibular*. So, they prioritize metalinguistic activities over reading and writing activities. The undergraduate courses in Portuguese and Literature, with their goals and teaching practices [in our opinion somewhat disjointed from the other levels] accommodating students almost always attracted to the little competition in *Vestibular* and almost never by the desire to become teachers of Portuguese. We believe that it is happening currently the same occurred in elementary school during the seventies: some undergraduate courses in Portuguese and Literature have been unable to cope with the crisis of language that now presents to them. And those who still insist in excessive theorizing, reading with the sole purpose of evaluation and appraisal of notes, an incipient working with text and reading and leaving in the background or even exclude activities related to future practice as Portuguese teachers contribute



significantly to the failure of the teaching of reading at all levels: primary, secondary and higher education.

So, thinking that a change in teaching reading, as it has continually been proposed in lectures and publications from different theoretical approaches can be given in elementary and secondary school without at the same time activities in the undergraduate courses in Portuguese and Literature [and also in other undergraduate courses to train teachers] to reflect constantly the same purpose, is avoid the linguists, researchers and teachers of these courses of the responsibility for success / failure of reading education at all levels.

The failure of the work with reading in elementary and secondary schools has been justified in different ways. However, few are those who attribute to the undergraduate courses in Portuguese and Literature part of the responsibility for failure. Most attaches only to matters out of school [socio-economic, cultural and historical] or the teachers and students of elementary school the blame for school failure.

After this reflection, we proposed the project *Oficina de Leitura*. It is being conducted with the support of *PROEXT 2009 - MEC / SESu* in the city of *Catalão-GO*. Assuming the failure of the teaching reading in elementary and secondary schools, we propose a reflection on the training of teachers so that they are able to ensure the inclusion of their future students in reading practices through reading workshops with diverse themes that are applied to teachers of elementary public schools.

We can say that the project is justified by the need for actions aiming to promote the reading of texts that lead to discussion of various topics important to the construction of citizenship, social inclusion and to improve performance linguistic, textual and discourse of those involved in the process including researchers, students, teachers and even elementary school students from public schools. We intended to encourage reading in elementary schools, improve the teach of reading in public schools and minimize the problems of students who leave school with little reading practices or even students that are unable to read. We intend also contribute more directly in the training of undergraduate students to feel co-responsible in shaping readers aware and socially active in relation to reading.

Delimited the location of the project development, we choose topics should be broached in the reading workshops. The first one was the environmental issue, present



in everyday life of all. Another theme relates to issues of ethnicity, because these questions are intimately connected with the life of the Brazilians and linked to issues of social inequality. Blacks, as throughout the country, often belong to the poorest social strata, have more dental problems, live in neighborhoods with inadequate infrastructure, study in the worst schools, and consequently, are those with the greatest problems of reading and writing.

The third theme relates to people with special needs who are virtually ignored in schools because teachers are not prepared to handle them. Finally, one last issue relates to digital genres. It was installed and inaugurated in 2009 in *Catalão*, a digital public library where the students access their e-mails, visit the “Orkut” and “MSN” and copy ready texts from the Internet instead to prepare their own texts. It is missing to these students a way to search, study and reading on the internet.

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