TEACHING LITERATURE IN ‘LIQUID TIMES’¹

Luciane Oliveira Muller*

RESUMO: Este artigo consiste de uma leitura e uma discussão sobre o ensino de literatura no contexto atual. Inicialmente, é proposta uma procura pela definição de literatura, e, então, é também feita uma tentativa de analisar e entender o que são os ‘tempos líquidos’. Além disso, o artigo propõe algumas questões tais como as razões e a maneira de ensinar literatura. E, finalmente, se procura uma maneira de adaptar a literatura e o ensino de literatura a esses ‘tempos líquidos’. Com a intenção de desenvolver uma discussão, o artigo apresenta uma comparação entre a prática do ensino da literatura no contexto atual e no passado.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: literatura – ensino – tempos líquidos

ABSTRACT: This article consists of a reading and a discussion about teaching literature in the present. Initially, it proposes a search for a definition to literature, and, then, it attempts to analyze and understand what ‘liquid times’ mean. Hence, the article opens some questions such as how and why to teach literature. And, finally, it seeks a way to adapt literature and teaching literature to these ‘liquid times’. In order to develop the discussion, the article presents a comparison between the practice of teaching literature in the present moment and in the past.

KEYWORDS: literature – teaching - liquid times

INTRODUCTION

To teach is to be battered
Scrutinized, and drained,
Day after day. We know this.
Still, it is never said.
(Jane Tompkins – A life in School)

Elaine Showalter presents this poem written by Jane Tompkins in order to exemplify how a teacher may feel when he or she teaches literature. For her, most of the literature teachers are “not confident of [their] authority” (SHOWALTER, 2003, p.3). Different from other subjects taught at schools and universities, such as physics or mathematics (which have exact answers), literature presents a subjective characteristic, which, most of the times, is extremely difficult to apprehend and to handle or even to explain. Indeed, Showalter (ibid) believes that when the critic Jane Tompkins wrote this poem about teaching she wanted to express the fear of failure feeling that some teachers

¹ In this paper the term ‘liquid times’ refers to Zygmunt Bauman’s metaphor of our contemporary society.
* Luciane Oliveira Müller graduated in languages at FAPA and obtained a Master’s Degree in Literatures in English at UFRGS. In the present, she takes part of the Doctoral’s Program in Literatures in English at UFRGS. E-mail address: lu.muller@hotmail.com
might face along their careers. In fact, Showalter dedicates a chapter in her book *Teaching Literature* in order to discuss the anxiety of teaching. And, according to her, this anxiety, fear, or lack of confidence has to do with the fact that

There have been many debates about the literary canon, and about teaching of literary theory, but almost none about the day-to-day life of the literature classroom. Although we talk a lot about *what* we teach, we are embarrassed or afraid to ask *why* and *how* we teach (SHOWALTER, 2003, p.vii).

Accordingly, teachers may not be well prepared for teaching literature. They are not taught to teach this subject, and, in general, students model their teachers when they start working as teachers. Due to this, teaching literature is an activity that still deserves more attention and research. For this reason, the main intention of this work is to research and discuss more about this practice of teaching literature.

In present-day, our society is passing through many transformations, but the teaching act seems to be stuck in the past. In the past, teaching seemed to be easier than now, for we had different students, society and values. Things seemed to be better established. A teacher was supposed to know a lot about the subject to be taught and a student was more inclined to believe, accept or even agree with the teachers’ arguments and statements. However, in these days, our society is different: teachers are not as confident as they used to be, and students are not as passive as in the past. According to the Polish Sociologist Zygmunt Bauman, we are living in the age of uncertainty; we are living in what he names “Liquid Times”. Actually, Bauman introduces this notion of liquidity in his book *Liquid Modernity*. In this book he proposes that our notion of stability and solidity has changed: everything that seemed to be solid, fixed, stable, and durable has become mutable, flexible, and volatile. And this shift has been happening in such a great haste and constancy that it is almost impossible to apprehend, follow, or even notice the changes; so much so that these changes are affecting most of our social practices (BAUMAN, 2000, p.2). And I can say that teaching is also one of them.

It is unquestionable that literature is a valuable subject. It can develop cultural awareness, improve linguistic skills, enhance students’ imagination, and also encourage critical thinking about the stories students read. Some authors believe literature makes people become more critical and helps students to be more engaged in the world around them and understand their role in the world. Christopher Brumfit (1986), for instance, claims that literature is a teachable ability which can provide a personal growth. For the author, “a good reader of literature has the ability of generalizing from a given text either to other aspects of the literary tradition or to personal or social significances outside literature” (BRUMFIT, 1986 p.188). In this sense, to read a literary text goes beyond decodification of words, and linguistic improvement. It implies much more than this; it means that when the reader makes connections between stories written in books with their experience and knowledge, this reader is developing his or her capacity of, as Paulo Freire calls it, “reading the world”

2 My translation of ‘ler o mundo’ (FREIRE, year???????). This term “reading the world” is used here according to Paulo Freire’s book *A importância do ato de ler*. For him, reading the world is to...
Despite its importance, it is possible to perceive that literary studies are losing their space in our society or it is possible to say that they are changing their characteristic. In the past, literature used to be one of the most important sources of knowledge and entertainment. People used to read more and spend more time discussing stories they had read in books. In those times, literature was supposed to provide entertainment, enlightenment, and also instruction. Families used to gather to read and discuss literature for amusement, for example. Books were considered very important and sometimes even dangerous. There was even a time in which some books were forbidden and destroyed because of their content.

Nowadays this reality has changed. With the advent of the new media – cinema, television and the internet – books seem to be losing their space in our lives. Hence, the term ‘Liquid Modernity’ coined by Zygmunt Bauman reveals a society which is dynamically changing and this characteristic also affects our reading time and our reading activity. This happens, in Bauman’s point of view, because “solids cancel time; for liquids, on the contrary, it is mostly time that matters. When describing solids, one may ignore time altogether; in describing fluids, to leave time out of account would be a grievous mistake” (BAUMAN, 2000, p.2). In this sense, a person needs to divide his/her time into many sections in order to cover all the daily activities, and sometimes there is not sufficient time available for reading. We are living in a society in which things happen and change very fast and time is so short that some activities are laid aside, and, unfortunately, reading is one of them.

With the intention of enlarging the discussion of this important issue – the teaching literature – the next pages of this work aim at contributing to a better understanding of the changes that our society is facing. This article also intends to make comparisons between the practice of teaching literature in the past and in the present; and it attempts to try to find a reasonable answer to the difficult question: what is literature? Therefore, the intention is to analyze the role of literature in these ‘liquid times’.

WHAT IS LITERATURE?

Initially, it seems to be an easy and naïve question to answer but, in fact, it is very difficult to reach a consensus of what literature really means. Many critics tried to answer this intriguing question, but none of them provided a reasonable answer to it. The American literary critic Elaine Showalter, for instance, points out that the search for a reasonable definition of literature leads us, teachers and students, to “entering a long dark tunnel from which few teachers, let alone clear ideas about literature, emerge” (SHOWALTER, 2003, p. 21). In the past, the main definition of literature was based on aesthetic criteria. And some authors such as the French critic Charles Du Bos (1961) present literature as something beautiful, full in expression, and artistically created by a genius. Others, like the English author Anthony Burgess, for instance, understand that comprehend its context in a dynamic relation of language and reality.
“literature may be defined as words working hard; literature is the exploitation of words” (BURGESS, 1990, p. 7). In this sense, for Burgess, literature is language, or the use of language in its splendour. In his turn, Kenneth Rexroth asserts that “literature is the organization of words to give pleasure; through them it elevates and transforms experience; through them it functions in society as a continuing symbolic criticism of values”. (REXROTH, 1974). Since literature, as most of arts, has changed and transformed its constitution throughout the years, the definitions above do not offer sufficient arguments to cover all sources of literary works nowadays. As well as we cannot even define the term beauty precisely, it is impossible to reduce literature to the definitions above. These characteristics mentioned are, for sure, part of literature, but as our society is evolving and changing, works of art, such as literary ones, seem to be mutable and some old definitions do not cover all the changes society is facing. It seems necessary to find new ones. And if literature is part of this ‘liquid’ moment in which, as Bauman observes, “fluids do not keep to any shape for long and are constantly ready (and prone) to change”, (BAUMAN, 2000, p.2) in this sense, a search for a definition would be eternal. This might be the reason why the British literary theorist Terry Eagleton proposes that “literature cannot in fact be ‘objectively’ defined” (EAGLETON, 2008, p.7). Actually, Eagleton’s ideas in relation to literature offer a striking perspective as it is possible to see in this excerpt below:

Anything can be literature, and anything which is regarded as unalterably and unquestionably literature – Shakespeare, for example – can cease to be literature. Any belief that the study of literature is the study of a stable, well-defined entity, as entomology is the study of insects, can be abandoned as a chimera. Some kinds of fiction are literature and some are not; some literature is fictional and some is not; some literature is verbally self-regarding, while some highly-wrought rhetoric is not literature. Literature, in the sense of a set of works of assured and unalterable value, distinguished by certain shared, inherent properties, does not exist (EAGLETON, 2008, p. 9).

Accordingly, we cannot understand literature as a stable well-defined entity, because literature, as in Eagleton’s opinion, has a variable definition. And such variation has to do with the fact that literature is constituted by what Eagleton names “highly valued writing”, as well as, “value” portrays a transitive aspect, literature, in Eagleton’s opinion, “is a notably unstable affair” (ibid., 2008, p. 9). In this sense, it is impossible not to think about the relation between the pursuing of a definition for literature and ‘liquid times’. And departing from this perspective of literature as an unstable and variable entity in consonance with Eagleton’s ideas, we return to the ‘long dark tunnel’ mentioned by Showalter, and our ideas about literature become blurred again. If we, teachers and critics of literature, do not reach a consensus and find a reasonable definition for the term literature, imagine our students. It is easy to think how they may feel when we, as teachers, ask them to define literature.

Thus, it is possible to assert that all these authors agree in one point: it is very difficult to reach a consensus and find a good definition for literature; however, for someone who appreciates and studies literature there is not misleading in identifying
such work of art. In this sense, it is possible to assert that identification is easier than definition. In short, it is possible to say that a certain written work is literature, but it is not easy to know why. Moreover, to complicate matters further, our society is living under the rule of drastic transformations and uncertainty of these ‘liquid times’, and this is one of the reasons why literature also needs to adapt to this contemporary scenario.

WHAT ARE ‘LIQUID TIMES’?

As I have mentioned before, our society is facing a period of changes. That traditional notion of a solid society – which was characterized by stability, durability and repetition – does not exist anymore. According to the Sociologist Zygmunt Bauman, that solid society has turned into a liquid modern society. What does that mean? It means that our society in the present moment is characterized, in Bauman’s terms, by flexibility, volatility and fragmentation. These changes and transformations influence most of the strata of our society – the social models and structures that in the past seemed to be so fixed and well-established at this moment are not the same anymore (BAUMAN, 2000, p.2-3). Bauman points out that those structures do not last sufficiently to endure and to govern the costumes and values. For Bauman all of our traditional beliefs and relationships are changing and those fixed and durable ties of family, class, religion, marriage, work, study are becoming frail and instable. According to this perspective, uncertainty and instability are the rulers of the moment (BAUMAN, 2007, p. 1).

Furthermore, Bauman claims that we are living a “liquid life” and it means that things in this,

Liquid life just like liquid modern society, cannot keep its shape or stay on course for long. In a liquid modern society, individual achievements cannot be solidified into lasting possessions because, in no time, assets turn into liabilities and abilities into disabilities. Conditions of action and strategies designed to respond to them age quickly and become obsolete before the actors have a chance to learn them properly (ibid, 2005, p.1).

Thus, if we follow Bauman’s perspective in which things are changing and becoming obsolete at a great rate, how can we define a subject such as literature? As soon as we reach a definition for this subject, this definition might be obsolete and we will need a new one. If we are living in the era of instability in which structures, costumes and values are changing quickly as thought, in this sense, literature also needs to readjust to this new era. It also needs to readapt to this liquidity this moment in history presents.

In other words, in his book Alone Again: Ethics After Certainty (1994), Bauman points out that fragmentation and discontinuity are taking part of our routine, and, in reality, it is necessary to be aware of the implications of these changes in order to carry on, as it is possible to see in the excerpt below:
These new elements stem from overall tendency to dismantle, deregulate and dissipate the once solid and relatively lasting frames in which the concerns and efforts of most individuals were inscribed. Jobs, once seen as ‘for life’, are more often that not now temporary and may disappear virtually without notice, together with the factories or offices or bank branches which offered them. Even the skills which the jobs required are ageing fast, turning overnight form assets into liabilities. Being prudent and provident, thinking of the future, becomes ever more difficult, as there is little sense in accumulating skills for which tomorrow may be no demand, or saving money which tomorrow may lose much of its purchasing power. At the moment young men and women enter the game of life, none can tell what the rules of the game will be like in the future. Their only certainty is that the rules will change many times over before the game is finished (id, 1994, p.15).

Within all these considerations presented above, the sensation is that it is necessary to live the most of the moment because there is not certainty of what is going to happen further. In this sense, teaching practice must be in a constant change in order to follow students’ expectations. Our students are used to this mobility and new era; because they are part of it. They are growing up concomitantly with these ‘liquid times’. We, as teachers, are not, for we are from the solid times, in which everything was well-established, and that is why we need to be better prepared to these fragmentation and discontinuity.

TEACHING LITERATURE

In order to start discussing teaching literature, first of all, it is necessary to ask ourselves some questions, such as: why teach literature? How can literature be taught effectively? In order to answer these questions, it is necessary to have a deep reflexion, because, as it has been discussed here, literature is a very complex issue. As very well put by Burgess in his book *English Literature*, “the purpose of education is to fit us for life in a civilized community, and it seems to follow from the subjects we study that the two most important things in civilized life are Art and Science” (BURGESS, 1990, p.1). In so doing, it is necessary to establish and to learn at home and at school what “civilized” means. Departing from this perspective, it is possible to assert that literature can be a pedagogical instrument to develop a sense of civilization in human beings, as Collie and Slater once stated, literature “says something about fundamental human issues”. (COLLIE & SLATER, 1987, p. 3). Following this thought, it is possible to inquire what these authors mean by ‘fundamental human issues’. To answer this it is possible to infer that it can be the comprehension of the world around us, of our internal feelings, to understand costumes and values of a given society, to mention but just a few suppositions. According to this point of view, we can say that literature can be an instrument to develop cultural awareness and/or critical thinking.
Furthermore, it is possible to perceive that Showalter partakes a similar opinion about this subject, she claims that “we [teachers of literature] want our students to learn a set of critical reading skills they can apply to the world of language, literature, and culture around them throughout their lifetime” (SHOWALTER, 2003, p. 26). In doing so, literature is offering students the opportunity to learn more than other school subjects, as it offers them the opportunity to know how to develop skills for understanding and criticizing what might be right or wrong in their society. In my personal opinion, I really believe that literature has this capacity of encouraging critical thinking. Through stories that we read in books, we can make relationships with stories and situations in our real life. As well as fiction can mirror real life, it is also possible to search in fiction some ways of comprehending and dealing with our own real problems.

Possibly the best way of teaching literature is departing firstly from the teacher’s own experience as a reader, a critic, and a teacher. All these experience together can become a good resource to start planning a class. However, it is necessary to remember that students and teachers are performing different roles in these days. Classes, in the present moment, should not be teacher-centered as they used to be in the past, but, rather, they should be student-centered as Izabel Brandão asserts:

The contemporary view of approaches to literature point to a student-centred approach, for it implies exploring and sharing ideas, feeling and attitudes about studied texts. The role of the teacher is that of an initiator of the process. My own view is that the teaching/learning process is a two-way to start motivating our students not only into learning language through literature, but also learning that, as individuals, they are also responsible for how they learn something – be it literature, language, or any other subject (BRANDÃO, 1999, p.17).

By following Brandão’s ideas, these new teachers can provide more efficient classes, because they might know better what students' needs and goals are, and, along with this, students might become more autonomous and motivated, and it might provide a more rewarding, profitable and balanced learning process.

Additionally, Collie and Slater offer other reasons for thinking about the importance of teaching literature. They believe that “literary work can transcend both time and culture to speak directly to a reader in another country or a different period of history” (COLLIE & SLATER, 1987, p.3). If so, literature does not have boundaries of time and culture; it can enrich readers’ life independently of when, where or how. Furthermore, Collie and Slater also point out that the contact with literature can also enrich and broaden students writing skills (ibid., 1987, p.5). In this sense, literature does not only help improve self-knowledge, critical thinking, and cultural awareness, but it also improves the ability of writing in the target language. In general, when a student starts studying a given language what he or she wants is to acquire proficiency in that language, and the activity of reading in the target language helps them a lot. However, it is also possible to hope that with this activity may form new readers and admirers of literature.
Brumfit (1986) also underlines the importance of showing and calling students’ attention to the search of meaning in literary text because, for him, “there can be no final reading of a literary text – the meaning is always subject to negotiation, for it results from the relationship between reader(s) and writer” (ibid, p.185). In this sense, students need to know that the meaning of a literary text is something open and negotiable, and, most of the times, it is necessary to develop some abilities to perceive the nuances of a text. Hence, literature teaching requires more than the ability of giving a definition for literature, it also requires skills for identifying and dealing with a literary work as Showalter asserts: “preparing to teach is an intense form of research” (SHOWALTER, 2003, p. 44). For this reason, Brumfit points out that it is required more than reading skills to understand a piece of literature. A reader of literature has to develop some abilities on how to use language and to convey meaning through this language. In his opinion, “responding to literature is not a matter of basic understanding of the language of the text. It is the significance of the text that is important to the good reader, not its ability to be translated exactly” (ibid, p.187). Accordingly, a good reader needs to be very attentive to the things that are or are not said in a text. And inferences are very important in this context, in this activity of reading and understanding a literary work. In order to develop this ability of a confident and proficient reader of literature, Brumfit suggests that “the teaching must develop the literary awareness which is implicit in learner’s ability to use language at all, and sensitize learners to the conventions of the literary tradition” (ibid, p.186). If so, teachers must call student’s attention to the overtones of the words, and to the unsaid in a text.

Nevertheless, teaching is not as easy as it seems; especially literature, and especially in our contemporary society, it demands hard work, experience, sensibility, sensitivity, knowledge to mention but just few skills. It is necessary to establish quite clear our objectives and goals, what kind of students we have, what can be their necessities and goals. But these are just part of the challenges involved in teaching, because it also has to compete with different technologies that attract, and, sometimes, deviate student’s attention during the learning process. One of the most difficult aspects of teaching literature, for Brumfit, is that this activity has to do with ability and not with knowledge. A teacher needs to, more than knowing the subject to be taught, be skilled, confident, and competent in order to create possibilities for students to learn. Showalter also emphasizes “that if students are not learning, no matter how brilliantly we perform or indoctrinate, we are not teaching. In order to be effective teachers we have to think about how to help them learn” (SHOWALTER, 2003, p. 36). Such statement just ratifies what Paulo Freire once pointed out: “teaching does not exist without learning” (FREIRE, 1982, p.26). In this sense, a teacher needs to be a challenger and an instigator of student’s curiosity in order to provide an effective environment for the learning process.

According to Brandão, “traditional approaches are far too dangerous in the process of learning” (BRANDÃO, 1999, p.17). She understands that to be effective teachers, professionals should change their old perspective of a teacher-centered class,
of believing that they know everything, and that they should not be questioned. Even more importantly, though, she believes that this change of perspective can be effective for both sides – teacher’s and student’s – as she says “the teacher, if in the centre of knowledge, does not ask; s/he demands. This is different from the teacher whose role is that of a tutor: s/he intervenes and supervises” (ibid, p.17). In so doing, both teacher and students share the benefits of this new practice; both can learn and teach, and both can improve intellectually.

Roughly speaking, teaching literature differs from teaching any other subject, as I have mentioned before, it is a very subjective and complex issue. Being prepared for this task requires more than knowledge of the subject to be taught itself and hard work. It demands sensitivity, especially if we are living in a different moment in history like ours, and we are facing a different society than that we used to know, than the one we were taught in. For this reason, teachers should be very attentive to students’ contributions in class, and they also should be in a constantly reevaluation of their practice and their roles to follow the changes that this contemporary society presents.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF LITERATURE IN THESE LIQUID TIMES?

In order to adapt to these new times and to follow the changes that are happening, literature also needs to remodel itself. In a sense, I think literature is remodeling itself with the inclusion of the media and other technological resources. Accordingly, literature needs to reconsider its usability, importance and constitution in order to maintain its attraction to new readers. Certainly, it is possible to say that we are now witnessing the rise of what the professor of Digital Culture Raine Koskimaas calls the “new media”, which she also named as “digital literature” (KOSKIMAAS, 2000). Koskimaas proposes that the digital literature comprises three different meanings: digital publishing (eBooks, Audiobooks as MP3 files), scholarly hypertext (which include hypertext and multimedia implementations of classics), and cybertexts (ibid.). Koskimaas also asserts that digital works are “experimental writing”, which she names “technological avant-garde”⁴ (ibid.). The appearance of this new media might be very helpful for the evolving of literature. In this sense, it is possible to assert that this new trend might be an important tool that traditional literature should use to modernize itself and to become more attractive to the new generation of students that are under the era of technology. I do not believe that traditional books will disappear because of this new media, but, rather, I think this new trend is a way of calling the contemporary readers’ attention to the old media – printed books. This new technology is not an enemy, it should be used as an allied and a bridge to the traditional one; the contemporary reader can become more interested in traditional literature through digital literature. Therefore, I believe that the teaching literature has to readapt itself to this new era, student, and technology. As it is possible to witness in this contemporary generation, almost every

---

⁴ This source of information is retrieved from the file on internet named *Teaching literature: Code and Culture*, which address is on the references at the end of this paper. It does not present a date in it.

EISSN:2236-6385 http://www.seer.ufrgs.br/cadernosdoil/
adolescent has a cellphone, a pen drive, and a MP3 of their own, as well as most of the families have computers or free access to internet through Internet cafés. Thus, we should acknowledge that technology is becoming part of almost all branches of our society. If ordinary people succeed in coexisting with technology, literature and professionals of the area also need to find a way of coexisting and dealing with it.

Accordingly, I believe that one of the roles of this “technological avant-garde” such as “digital literature” in these ‘liquid times’ is to maintain the literary flame alight. This “experimental writing”, including ebooks, audiobooks, and hypertext fiction, can become an allied on behalf of the old technology – printed books. If so, through this experimental technology authors, teachers and readers can promote a net on behalf of literature.

In order to exemplify what is happening in teaching practice nowadays I will mention a scene I witnessed at university some time ago. It was a situation in which a professor became very surprised and disturbed because a student introduced a work in which one of Shakespeare’s plays had been recreated by an environment on the internet named Twitter. This information surprised the teacher in such a way that her first reaction was rejection. This professor could not recognize the virtual written work as a piece of art. It might have happened because that work differed a lot from the kind of literary work that she was used to know, that she was used to teach. It is possible to say that this is a good example of these ‘liquid times’: the changes are interfering in our sense of solid established structures. What disturbed that traditional teacher might have been the fact that a cherished text such as Shakespeare’s had been rewritten then by some amateurs, by common people, and to make things worse, it was being shown and spread through a vehicle such as internet. Nevertheless, this particular teacher did not to consider the possibility of such activity becoming a bridge between literary material and a new vehicle – the internet. It is a kind of material that it is possible to use in favor of education, and also in favor of the maintenance of reading activity.

CONCLUSION

As I have mentioned, in the first section of this work, literature is a subject that cannot be well defined, and that there is no consensus in relation to its meaning. Similar to our society, this subject suffers some influences and ends up changing. In the past, critics believed that they could define literature quite well; as time passed, this well-established definition did not fit literature anymore. As I have also mentioned before, we are living in “liquid times”, in a moment of instability, of changes, and of what Bauman calls “an age of uncertainty” (BAUMAN, 2007, p.94). This perspective gives us a sense that the ground is not under our feet anymore, that we are walking on quicksand and we cannot predict what is going to happen in our lives in near future.

The practice of teaching literature, in accordance with those issues approached, needs to be constantly discussed, researched, reinvented, and reevaluated. Therefore, it is difficult to analyze the present-day because it is so recent. We are living the moment,
sometimes it is necessary to spare a time to understand better and formulate an idea of what is happening. It is difficult to be sure about a definition for literature and its role in this moment in history. It is just possible to make some suppositions and inferences.

Thus, teaching deserves an especial attention be it literature, language, or science. We are living a delicate moment in history and students are not interested in learning anymore, and, it is necessary to rescue education in our society. And, to do this, it is necessary a big change. As very well put by Paulo Freire, “to teach is not to transfer knowledge, but to create the possibilities to its production and its construction” \(^5\) (FREIRE, 1996, p. 25). If so, it is necessary that we, as teachers, create new possibilities to apply during this new era. A teacher should be attentive to the old and the new technologies and ways of teaching. We can never discard the old precepts as soon as we have a new one. Indeed, what we should do is to readapt the old one to a new perspective. Freire also says that “someone who teaches learns teaching and someone who learns teaches learning” \(^6\) (ibid, p.25). In doing so, a teacher can learn with a young student and a young student with an experienced teacher. For example, a student can show a teacher how to use this new technology, and students can learn with a teacher how to appreciate a work of art. It is necessary to be an open minded teacher to do this. Sometimes a person is so radical that he or she cannot accept novelties. And it is very common to find at university or at schools teachers like these. In this sense, learning is a process of two ways: it is worth for both teachers and students, and for this to be true it is just required open minds.

This movement of pursuing a definition for literature, of understanding these ‘liquid times’, and the attempt to adapt literature to this contemporary scenario leads me to a conclusion that this is a potentially endless movement. It seems that, since the beginning, despite all the considerations and contributions of these important authors, theoreticians, critics and sociologists, this research does not advance sufficiently to solve all the questions raised. In this sense, the contribution of this article to teaching literature might be the maintenance of the discussion about the subject in order to offer a constant evaluation of this practice of teaching, which seems to be a common characteristic of this new scenario, of these ‘liquid times’.

REFERENCES


\(^5\) My translation to “ensinar não é transferir conhecimento, mas criar as possibilidades para a sua produção ou sua construção”.

\(^6\) My translation to “quem ensina aprende ao ensinar e quem aprende ensina ao aprender”.

EISSN:2236-6385 http://www.seer.ufrgs.br/cadernosdoil/


