The concept of literacy in pedagogical activities produced within a collaborative continuing education program

Vanessa Severo Trivisiol

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THE CONCEPT OF LITERACY IN PEDAGOGICAL ACTIVITIES PRODUCED WITHIN A COLLABORATIVE CONTINUING EDUCATION PROGRAM

O CONCEITO DE LETRAMENTO EM ATIVIDADES PEDAGÓGICAS PRODUZIDAS EM UM PROGRAMA DE FORMAÇÃO CONTINUADA

Vanessa Severo Trivissio1

ABSTRACT: The objective is to analyze to what extent the concept of literacy subsidizes the activities developed within a continuing education program. We consider literacy as a tool of teaching and learning which goes beyond being literate (STREET, 2003). Procedures of analysis: 1) to identify the nature of the activities; 2) to quantify the recurrence of the activities previously classified; 3) to analyze the rhetorical organization of the unit. The analysis indicates that the concept of literacy is explored through two semantic categories: as a cognitive process and as a critical reading practice.

KEYWORDS: Collaborative Research. Continuing Teacher Education Program. Concept of Literacy. Pedagogical Unit

RESUMO: O objetivo desta pesquisa é analisar em que medida o conceito de letramento subsidie as atividades de uma unidade didática produzida em um programa de formação continuada. Levamos em consideração o conceito de letramento como uma ferramenta de ensino e aprendizagem que vai além de ser letrado (STREET, 2003). Procedimentos de análise: 1) Identificação da natureza das atividades; 2) Recorrência dessas atividades identificadas; 3) Análise da organização retórica da unidade. A análise indica que o conceito de letramento é explorado através de duas categorias semânticas nas atividades didáticas: como processo cognitivo e como leitura [crítica] de mundo.


1. Introduction

This work is inserted in a larger project called Atividades Colaborativo-Educatacionais em Contextos Escolares- A.C.E.C.E (TICKS, 2011) created in 2011 to develop a continuing teacher education program in a public school, therefore CELL, located in Santa Maria –RS. Through a collaborative research, this project opens a space for reflection about the participants’ discourses and their pedagogical practices as a way to contribute for their development as critical teachers of their practices.

We also consider that this project also allows, through this reflective space, a moment in which the participants develop awareness of language as a mediator of the whole process of teaching and learning. The umbrella project A.C.E.C.E is an opportunity for school teachers, researchers and undergraduates of the Federal University of Santa Maria to interact collaboratively and to be involved with the school

1 Universidade Federal de Santa Maria
context. Collaborative research processes entail the production, evaluation and reorganization of practices in the school context which can be reflected with teachers, coordinators, directors, supervisors and researchers; considering that all participants need to be flexible to be able to negotiate and transform their practices (MAGALHÃES, 2011).

For this reason, the main focus of this specific work is the pedagogical activities produced by the participants during the program and in this work we investigate and interpret the representations of literacy underlying this pedagogical activities, produced in that context.

2. Review of Literature

In this section we discuss the theoretical background which sustains this investigation. First we highlight some ideas on the concept of Literacy (section 3.1). After we discuss Collaborative Research and Continuing Teacher Education Programs (section 3.2) and finally we explore the concept of Representations (section 3.3).

2.1 Literacy

The word literacy is derived from the Latin “Littera” (letter) which was renamed to "the condition or state of being literate (literate)"\(^2\), in other words, "being able to read and write"\(^3\) (SOARES, 2009, p. 17). So, originally, literacy sets the condition or state of one who learned to read and write (SOARES, 2009).

Literacy is defined as the social practice of using language in particular social contexts in which reading and writing assume the central role. According to Kleiman (1998), literacy acquires multiple functions and meanings depending on the context in which it is developed and because of that literacy is also present in communicative practices. Soares (2009) defines literacy as the result of the action of teaching and learning social practices of reading and writing and using as a way to be oriented in the world. For this reason, literacy is important as a tool which helps people to be competently involved in social practices.

Vóvio and Souza (2005) argue that these practices are comprehended as models and cultural events that shape behaviors, meanings, values and attitudes, achieved and assumed in the use of reading and writing.

Street (2003, p. 78-79), on the other hand, mentions that “the concept of literacy practices in these and other contexts not only attempts to handle the events and the patterns of activity around literacy events, but to link them to something broader of a cultural and social kind”. Therefore, literacy is a tool for reflecting, teaching and learning social aspects which are related with the written language. For this reason, we can think that literacy goes beyond being literate; it is also to bring a text to life and know how to establish relations between the text itself and society. Therefore, we can understand that literacy is a way in which we discover ourselves by reading and writing.

\(^2\) O estado ou condição de ser literate

\(^3\) Capaz de ler e escrever
Literacy is a social practice, not simply a technical and neutral skill; that it is always embedded in socially constructed epistemological principles. It is about knowledge: the ways in which people address reading and writing are themselves rooted in conceptions of knowledge, identity, and being. It is also always embedded in social practices, such as those of a particular job market or a particular educational context and the effects of learning that particular literacy will be dependent on those particular contexts (STREET, 2003, p. 77-78).

In the previous quotation the author mentions that literacy is connected not just with texts, but it is about knowledge with what we understand and do with these texts. In relation to this, literacy as a social practice is purposeful and embedded in broader social goals and cultural practices at the same time that literacy practices involve more than actions with texts but these practices also are connected to what people do with literacy in relation to their own practices of life (BARTON; HAMILTON, 2000). We can also agree with Kleiman (2007) when she mentions that an activity that involves the use of written language (an event of literacy) is not different from other activities of social life: it is a collective and cooperative activity because it involves multiple stakeholders with different types of knowledge that are mobilized with common goals among the participants.

![Figure 1 - Visual representation about the concept of Literacy](image)

**2.2 The concept of Literacy in Brazil**

The discussion around the term *literacy* emerged from the educational sciences and the Linguistics field around the eighties in Brazil through foreign publications. Magda Soares (2009) reviews that the term *literacy* appears in the book of Mary Kato in 1986 for the first time in Brazil, but just in 1988 the term was defined differently from
“alphabetization” by Leda Verdiani Tfouni in her book “Adultos não alfabetizados: o avesso do avesso”. In addition to this, Tfouni argues that literacy is related to political and social aspects which can be connected to educational mechanisms.

According to Tfouni (2010), the term literacy emerged from the perception of linguists who believed in something beyond “alphabetization”. Literacy and “alphabetization” are acquisition processes of a writing system. She differentiates “alphabetization” from literacy whereas the first one is the individual acquisition of writing/reading and the other is focused on social and historical aspects of reading/writing acquisition by the society (TFOUNI, 2010).

From the publications of “Parâmetros Curriculares Nacionais para o Ensino Fundamental”, published in 1997, by MEC, the approach and the term literacy were inserted in the national education. Therefore, from this publication on, literacy received more attention in the educational context (BRASIL, 1997).

For this reason, the term literacy should be distinguished from “alphabetization”. Literacy is the condition of being literate, educated, and especially able to read and write. It is considered variable and depends on the social, a political, cultural context in which is thought. It is the result of action in teaching and learning the social practices of writing and reading and Alphabetization is the action of teaching and learning to read and write (SOARES, 2009).

It is important to highlight that Paulo Freire, our Brazilian critical educator, had already developed around the sixties discussions about the social appropriation of reading and writing in relation to what he called “cultural action for freedom” (FREIRE, 1989).

Although Freire does not mention the term literacy, his approach was already connected to it as he proposes to construct a contextual teaching which enables learners to access cultural democratic knowledge. He argues that “alphabetization” can be acquired through social, cultural and ideological processes. Freire defended that we need to learn according to “our world” and “where we live” (FREIRE, 1989). In other words, he proposed the idea of learning connecting text and context. As a consequence of this, Freire’s approach is on the basis of what later was called literacy (BRANDÃO, 2005).

Nowadays, literacy is discussed and appears in many Brazilian authors’ books and according to Adelma Barros-Mendes (2010) in order not to promote exclusion, the ideal solution is to combine a systematic teaching of alphabetic notation with everyday experience of literacy practices that allow the participant to be involved and indeed inserted in social life. Although the processes of literacy and alphabetization are different they are inseparable, but can occur separately (SOARES, 2009).

2.3 Collaborative Research and Continuing Education

The continuing teacher education program was develop here in an Estate school in Santa Maria (RS) with the following purpose: to create a space for critical and collaborative pedagogical production for school teachers to be in contact with different perspectives and question the constant scientific and technological advances and social changes that influence how teachers act and discuss their actions in their daily teaching
practices. It is a way for teachers to bring sense on learning and meaning within their pedagogical practices.

According to Magalhães (2002), collaborative research presupposes all participants become researchers of their own actions through critical reflection and negotiation on how the discursive practices in classroom are organized. Considering that, the researcher and the teacher need to be flexible to be able to negotiate and resignify their pedagogical practices.

Accordingly, the collaborative research creates possibilities for reflection of theories and practices. Therefore, the research approach can be connected with continuing teacher education programs that are focused on to comprehend and transform senses and meaning of teacher’s pedagogical practices.

Magalhães also argues that when pre-service teachers have on epistemological conceptions inherited from positivism (which emphasizes the application of techniques as “absolute truths” that fit in any context), this perspective does not help problematize the school contexts. The author adds that the school context is constituted by heterogeneity given by different representations brought from interagents from different domains. Therefore, this process of collaboration offers opportunities also for undergraduates to become researchers of their own action (MAGALHÃES, 2002).

Furthermore, collaborative work is connected to democratic and revolutionary behavior, and here the objective is participation by learning from each other and negotiating meaning on whatever it is that their work entail. In other words, dialogues are connected with collaborative actions. In this context, participants should feel comfortable enough to share their understandings and knowledge (MAGALHÃES; FIDALGO, 2011). It is important to create this critical collaborative process for understanding, questioning and transforming practices through intentional negotiation of conflicting interpretations of practices and theories during the discussions. This way the participants can resignify their pedagogical practices.

**2.4 Representations**

Representations are understood as the meanings constructed socio-historically by individuals as they participate in different activities in the social contexts they belong to (CASTRO, 2004). Representations are chains of meanings which are constructed in the negotiations among the participants through the interaction, considering the values, expectations, beliefs in relation to the world and their own social context. These meanings are linked to theories of the physical world, norms and values socially instituted and put to test the knowledge, power and act of its agents against ideological social issues, policies, and so forth (CELANI; MAGALHÃES, 2002).

Representation when understood as a cultural process, establishes individual and collective identities which are connected with personal questions, as “Who am I?” “Who am I would be?” (WOODWARD, 2005). Considering that, representations can be transformed and by analyzing them we can reflect about what we are in the social world as professional educators.

Representations act symbolically in a way to classify our relations around the world. According to Woodward (2005), representations include the practices of significations and the symbolic systems through meaning construction, which define us
as human beings. It is through the meanings produced by these representations that we give sense to our experiences and to what we are.

They are based on the negotiations and meanings constructed by human activities and through social interactions individuals construct and reconstruct their representations of these realities (CASTRO, 2004). Representations of pedagogical practices constitute the contents to be taught, procedures and attitudes that the teacher has to give account of in specific situations of teaching and learning (CASTRO, 2004).

Fairclough (2003, p. 124) mentions that representations are connected with “different discourses, perspectives in the world and they are associated with the different relations people have to the world”. In addition, these discourses can be changed when people get involved in different practices or when they are exposed to new situations and genres that offer to them possibilities to (re)create and (re) construct their representations about the world.

Representations can be cognitive structures which function to facilitate communication between members of a collectivity because of their shared or consensual form. Heretofore, a representation may be significant to a group not because the group produces it or because it directly defines the boundaries of the group identity, it may simply be targeted upon an object which is important to the group or person at a specific time (BREAKWELL, 1992).

In this research, we analyze what representation of literacy subsidizes the activities produced within a collaborative continuing teacher education program.

3. Methodology

In this section we present the context of the investigation and participants (section 4.1), corpus (section 4.2), and finally the procedures and categories of analysis (section 4.3).

3.1 Context of investigation and participants

The investigation was developed in a public school (primary and adults education, EJA), located in a low-income neighborhood in Santa Maria, RS. The school has 350 students which are distributed into three shifts: morning, afternoon and evening.

The participants from school:
- 1 supervisor teacher;
- 4 teachers of initial primary grades;
- 4 teachers from elementary school;
- 1 teacher of EJA.

The participants from UFSM are:
- 2 researchers
- 14 students envolved in a course called Oficina de formação continuada no contexto da escola pública, offered in the 2nd semester of 2013.

3.2 Corpus
As it was presented in the introduction section this work is inserted in a larger project, which develops a qualitative research, i.e., a collaborative study in which the participants (including researchers) were involved with a continuing teacher education program. These participants took part in reflective sessions during 2012/2013 when the concepts of literacy and interdisciplinarity were discussed, in order to build a socially situated concept of literacy. During these two years, four pedagogical units were produced. The corpus of this particular investigation is one of these units which explores the theme “environment” (ANNEX I).

3.3 Unit production context

The main focus of this investigation is the pedagogical unit entitled “Desenvolvimento industrial, populacional e urbano e suas consequências – uma perspectiva interdisciplinar”. This unit was produced considering the perspective of interdisciplinarity, which we can understand as an articulation of different knowledge areas within a particular activity. This sub-project involved three teachers from different areas of knowledge (geography, science and history), including the author of this paper and another student from UFSM. The activities explored these areas of knowledge.

In fact the activities were developed with the purpose to create a space of discussion between the academic students and the teachers to produce a pedagogical unit for the school and its students. At the same time it was a possibility for these teachers to put into practices the concepts of literacy, which they had been discussing along 2012/2013.

The development of the activities involved three steps. Initially we decided on the theme and the objectives of the sub-project to define the contents regarding the areas of knowledge (geography, history and science). Secondly, we collected texts from different genres (news piece, comic strip, cartoon, video animation) to be explored in the activities and thirdly we developed activities considering pre-reading, reading and post-reading strategies. Considering this, we selected different multimodal genres that were more appropriated to the audience: 6th graders.

4. Procedures of analysis

The procedures of analysis were: 1) to identify and classify the nature of activities in the unit; 2) to quantify the recurrence of the activities previously classified; 3) to analyze how the rhetorical organization of the unit explores the theme “Desenvolvimento industrial, populacional e urbano e suas consequências - uma perpectiva interdisciplinar”.

4.1 Semantic categories

To analyze the activities we consider three literacy concepts as semantic categories: literacy as decoding, literacy as a cognitive process and communication, and literacy as “reading (critically) the world”. These categories (Chart 1) were identified in
the discourse of the participants during the reflective sessions previously analyzed by Silva (2014) and were taken as reference in this analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semantic Categories (Literacy as...)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decoding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive process and communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading (critically) the world.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Rojo (2004), decoding implies basic skills which are recognized during the “alphabetization” process, such as to know how to read recognizing words globally, the alphabet and evaluating reading fluency. Rojo (2004) argues that decoding is just one of the skills involved in literacy practices in contemporary society. Thereafter, Rojo (2004) points out that a cognitive process is a mental work which involves previous knowledge of world, social practices and linguistic knowledge beyond the phonemes.

Finally, Freire (2001) argues that critical reading facilitates the process of alphabetization and literacy. To develop critical reading it is necessary to know the reality around us, to know how to express oneself in writing what we have learned from social practices being able to act critically in the world. As Cervetti, Pardales and Damico (2001) mention reading critically “is an act of coming to know the world (as well as the word) and a means to social transformation”.

In order to understand how these semantic categories are explored in the sub-activities, we consider different reading competences previously used by Brum (2012), based on Rojo (2004) and Motta-Roth (2008). These reading competences were used to analyze the rhetorical organization of the unit and are described in Chart 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chart 2 - Reading competences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>DECODING</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding differences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>between writing and other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>graphic forms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mastering graphic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conventions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognizing the alphabet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>alphabetic nature of our</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>writing system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mastering the relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>between graphemes and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>phonemes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Knowing how to decode words and written texts

Checking hypothesis

Knowing how to read, by recognizing words globally

Generalizing

Expanding the perception to bigger portions of the text

Producing local inferences

5. Results

The first step of the analysis was to identify and classify the nature of the activities in the unit, considering the categories of analysis previously presented in Chart 1. We were able to identify the presence of two categories (cognitive, critical reading) along the activities (Chart 1). We could not identify any decoding activity probably because it is a unit in which the target audience is sixth graders. As discussed, decoding involves competences related to the initial process of literacy in which the students are learning how to decode words, recognizing the alphabet, and other decoding competences. Therefore, we understand these competences have already been developed by the target audience in their previous school years.

Table 1 - Identification of the concept of literacy subsidizes the activities (semantic categories of analysis).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXERCISE</th>
<th>SUB-ACTIVITIES</th>
<th>CATEGORIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>a), b), c), d), e)</td>
<td>Cognitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>a), b), c), d)</td>
<td>Cognitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e) f-1,2,3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>a), b)</td>
<td>Critical reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>a)</td>
<td>Cognitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>a), b), c), d), e)</td>
<td>Cognitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>a)</td>
<td>Cognitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>a)</td>
<td>Critical reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>a)</td>
<td>Critical reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>a), b), c), d)</td>
<td>Cognitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e)</td>
<td>Critical reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Cognitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>1,2,3</td>
<td>Cognitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>a), b), c), d), e), f)</td>
<td>Cognitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXTRA ACTIVITY</td>
<td>a), b),c)</td>
<td>Critical reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>a), b), c), d), e)</td>
<td>Cognitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>a), b), c), d), e), f)</td>
<td>Cognitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>a)</td>
<td>Critical reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>a)</td>
<td>Cognitive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the second step of analysis, we quantified the data in order to identify the recurrence of the categories in the unit (Table 2).

Table 2 - Results of the quantitative analysis of the concepts of literacy subsidizes the activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEMANTIC CATEGORIES</th>
<th>Number of sub-activities</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Reading</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the data presented (Tables 1 and 2), we can see that there is a higher recurrence of activities that explore the concept of literacy as a cognitive process (82%), while the concept of literacy as a critical reading process (18%) is much lower. According to Rojo (2004), the cognitive process and the critical reading process allow the student to be constantly relating his/her previous knowledge to the world. From these results, we can say that the unit focuses on developing reading strategies by making some relations exploring students’ world knowledge. We can infer that most of the activities proposed by the unit explore the concept of literacy to help students recognize and connect their previous knowledge to the world.

Finally, we analyzed (Chart 3) how the two most frequent semantic categories are rhetorically organized to explore the theme of this unit- “Desenvolvimento industrial, populacional e urbano e suas consequências”. In general terms, we could observe that the rhetorical organization of the unit consists basically on two or three exercises that explore cognitive aspects in terms of producing global inferences, activating world knowledge and Locating/copying information, and afterwards one or two of critical reading in terms of relating text and student’s lives and producing text about the topic discussed.

Chart 3 - Rhetorical organization of the unit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITY</th>
<th>SUB-ACTIVITIES</th>
<th>CATEGORIES</th>
<th>READING COMPETENCES (ROJO, 2004; Motta-Roth, 2008)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>a), b), c), d), e)</td>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>Anticipating and predicting text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>a), b), c), d), e)</td>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>Producing global inferences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f-1</td>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>Activating world knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f-2</td>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>Checking hypothesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f-3</td>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We can visually represent these reading processes proposed in the unit as follows (Figure 1).

Chart 3 and Figure 1 show the rhetorical organization of the unit. The reading process proposed seems to contribute to reflect and position students in order to act critically in their social context. In other words, it’s important to highlight that this is a cyclical process in a sense that students are invited to analyze the text through cognitive reading strategies and also construct a critical opinion about the topic being discussed.

Another important point is the fact that there is a concentration of cognitive activities at the beginning of the unit (exercises 2 and 5, for instance, have five sub activities focusing on cognition), with more critical reading activities being explored in the end of the unit (Chart 3). The first impression is that the unit prepares the student to understand the text by developing cognitive actions and after asks them to position themselves towards the topic.

Considering these rhetorical organization, now we analyze the reading process the unit explores, providing evidences and excerpts from the corpus of this investigation. We emphasize two main moments as examples of the cyclical process identified in the rhetorical organization. First, we highlight the activity in which students are asked to anticipate and predict contents (Excerpt 1).
As we can observe in Excerpt 1, the activity asks students to consider their previous knowledge to analyze the images and their respective origin. Rojo (2004) argues that this kind of exercise helps students to anticipate contents that are coming along the unit, and also, makes students relate with what they have already studied. The author also mentions that it is an opportunity for students to do a quick reading.

In the following activity, differently from the first example, there is more than one reading competence being explored. We identified *producing global inferences*, *activating world knowledge*, *checking hypothesis*, *comparing information* and *activating world knowledge* again (Excerpt 2).
Initially, the reading competence that we found in the letters a), b), c) and d) in the previous activity is producing global inferences. In these sub-activities, students are going to discuss a general view about what helps them to understand and recognize each image. At the same time, these activities make them understand and retake relevant information. Rojo (2004) mentions this reading competence helps students do an effective reading. She evaluates that not everything is explicit in a text; thus, students need to consider all the meaning already constructed and their previous world knowledge to produce inferences about what is presupposed in the text.

Afterwards, in the sub-activity e) the reading competence identified is activating world knowledge. The sub-activity asks students to retake contents in a way to guarantee an effective students’ reading. Therefore, they need to explore better the image to sustain their answer by providing helpful elements. Rojo (2004) explains that this competence makes students relate their extensive knowledge of the world with what is required in the question to understand the text.

The last sub-activity f explores three different reading competences. The first, f1, is checking hypothesis, as we can observe in the end of excerpt 2, the first question asks students to identify the city in the images. Students have already discussed about these images and now they are going to check if what they inferred is correct. Rojo (2004) affirms that this kind of practice helps students to confirm or disconfirm their hypothesis to construct an efficient reading. Thereafter, the f-2 sub-activity asks students to compare two specific images and it is an attempt to stimulate students to construct a critical reading to increase their understanding about the topic. Thus the reading competence identified in this sub-activity is comparing information. Finally, the last sub-activity, f-3, returns to the activating world knowledge reading competence, as students describe the city they have recognized. As we mentioned before, students are
going to reflect and relate their extensive world knowledge to what is proposed in the text.

The next exercise proposed (Excerpt 3) in the unit belongs to the critical reading category. We can observe that up till now students are practicing cognitive competences, and now they are challenged to position themselves in relation to what they have already discussed.

Source: Caderno didático: Programa de formação continuada da Escola Celina de Moraes, 2014, p. 34

Excerpt 3 - Activity which explores the cognitive process

As we can perceive in the Excerpt 3, the sub-activities a) and b) invite students to analyze and answer the questions as a reflection and identification of problems in their context. Students need to recognize the images and connect them with their own social context. By doing this, the reading competence explored is relating text and students’ lives. Based on Motta-Roth (2008), this strategy of bringing the text near students’ lives makes them reflect and position themselves critically about the topic.

In a second moment (from activity 9-12, Table 1), the unit explores interchangeably the two semantic categories, cognitive and critical reading processes. To specify this, activity 9 asks students to answer questions which correspond to the video they have already watched (Excerpt 4).
This kind of exercise demands a mental action from students, because they need to recognize and to connect their previous knowledge with what is proposed in the exercise. Thus, the reading competences being developed in the sub-activities \(a),\(b),\(c)\) and \(d)\) is **Producing global inferences**. According to Rojo (2004), this competence allows students to make an effective reading, because they are going to seek out clues in the text connecting it with a set of meanings already constructed as well as their knowledge of the world.

In the following sub-activity, \(e)\), differently from the first moment presented, there is a critical reading semantic category being developed soon after activities which explore cognitive processes. Thus, we can infer that now the unit starts to challenge students to associate and to know how to connect the text with their social context and also with their previous knowledge. Consequently, it is an attempt to make students position themselves to act critically (Excerpt 5).

In Excerpt 5, students need to reflect about what they have already discussed in class and then connect with their own context out of school. For this reason, the critical reading approach is explored and the reading competence is relating text and student’s lives. Based on Motta-Roth (2008), reading critically makes students acquire knowledge using it to reflect about their social context and also to transform it.

Afterwards, the unit explores cognitive processes. We can see a movement with three reading strategies developing again cognitive reading competences. For instance, we found *activating world knowledge* and *comparing information* (Excerpt 6).


Excerpt 6 - Activities which explores cognitive processes.

In exercise 10 (Excerpt 6), students need to relate their extensive world knowledge with what is required in the question. This kind of exercise makes students reflect and rethink about what they have already studied. This exercise also asks students to put in order the sequence of topics which they saw in a video. Thus, students are going to recognize and reflect about what they comprehend and saw in the video. For this reason, the reading competence is *activating world knowledge*. Exercise 11 (Excerpt 6) is asking the students to compare such words with the images; by doing it students are going to find out the relevant information in the text. Rojo (2004) mentions that this reading competence helps students to construct an active reading.

Soon after, the following activity explores another reading competence, *locating/copying information*. Rojo (2004) argues that this kind of strategy makes students be more involved with the text presented previously, because they need to seek and locate specific and relevant information in the text to understand and acquire what is being proposed (Excerpt 7).

As we can observe in the activities from exercise 11 (Excerpt 7), students need to look up for specific information which is going to help them to do a better reading and perhaps a better understanding of the text.

Excerpt 8 is an extra activity which demands from students to search information related to the garbage of their city. By doing it, students are going to construct meanings and emphasize the contents presented previously in the unit. It is an opportunity for them to position themselves and produce their own text about the topic discussed.


The reading competence explored in this extra activity (Excerpt 8) is producing text about the topic discussed. As we can see, students are challenged to produce and find their own information about the topic discussed in the unit. This enables students to be critical about what they are studying and it makes them reflect about their social context. According to Motta-Roth (2008), the main purpose is to teach through language encouraging students to make sense about the text connecting it with their own social context. It is also an opportunity to insert students in research activities out of classroom context. By giving guidelines, students are challenged to organize procedures to investigate, collect and elaborate ways of presenting their results.

6. Final Considerations and Implications of this research
This research had as main objective to describe and explain to what extent the concept of literacy subsidizes pedagogical activities produced within a collaborative continuing teacher education program.

Based on Street (2003), we can argue that literacy goes beyond being literate; it is also to bring a text to life and know how to establish relations between the text itself and society. Thus, by analyzing the unit we can infer that most of the activities proposed in the unit explore the concept of literacy as a cognitive process followed by a few activities that focus on critical reading processes. The purpose is to make students recognize and connect the activity with their previous knowledge and with their context out of school, in order to act critically in a particular social context.

Another important aspect analyzed in the unit is the rhetorical organization in which the activities are proposed: as a cyclical process. As we could observe in the analysis of the unit, this cyclical process has two main moves. In the first movement we can infer that the activities explore the concept of literacy in a way to make students to practice the reading comprehension about the main topic. According to Soares (2009), literacy is a set of social practices connected to reading and writing competences in which students are taken to be involved with their own context. The second movement explores the critical reading process. In relation to this, we can say that the activities explore literacy as the competence of reflecting about the relation between text and context by doing a critical reading about the topic. Paulo Freire (1989) argues critical reading is not just to practice reading, but also, to use it to transform the reality in which students live.

For that reason, we believe that these two concepts of literacy (cognitive and critical) stimulate students to be active agents in relation to knowledge, as they are induced to be critical thinkers about what they are learning. As Soares mentions “Literacy is what people “do” with reading and writing abilities in a specific context, and how these abilities are related with needs, values and social practices”5 (2009, p.72)

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5 Letramento é o que as pessoas fazem com as habilidades de leitura e escrita, em um contexto especifico, e como essas habilidades se relacionam com as necessidades, valores e práticas sociais.
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