

## Writing in the practices of teaching<sup>\*1</sup>

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### Abstract

The production of writing at school is a highly respected object of study for several of the domains in the field of language and education. Pursued under different theoretical perspectives and disciplinary traditions, most of the academic reflection on the subject writing, in Brazil, has been concerned with the learning processes of writing by pupils of various age groups, levels of literacy, and schooling within specific sociocultural and institutional contexts. Along a different, but complementary, direction, the present study focuses on the ways in which writing is constituted in the teaching practice, and through which it becomes a *taught object* (Dolz; Ronveaux; Schneuwly, 2007). To such end, the article is based on a corpus comprised of audio and video recordings of episodes of the teaching of writing produced in different institutional and sociocultural contexts. The way in which the relation is established between the objects of teaching, the professional gestures, and the didactic devices is analyzed (Aeby Daghé; Dolz, 2007; Gomes-Santos; Almeida, 2009; Schneuwly, 2000; 2001). From a theoretical and methodological viewpoint, the questions of the study are illuminated by the contribution of researches on the description of the modes of organization and functioning of language in school interactions, and by studies that center on the specifically didactic dimension of those interactions. The investigation of writing in the practices of teaching has enriched the reflection about the didactic devices needed at the heart of the teaching/learning practices in order to develop active ways to facilitate the access to symbolic goods.

**Keywords:** Language teaching – Writing – Teaching practice.

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*For certain, the teacher must effectively meet the pupil, must give him what he has, just like we find the other in the Thou, one offers to the other without, however, imposing on him, one reveals oneself to the other by being available.  
This kind of encounter is the human life.*

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\* To Ms. Maria - vector of hope.

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(Martin Buber, *Educação para a comunidade*, 1929,  
free translation)

Writing is a highly respected object of investigation within several domains in the fields of language and education, from applied linguistics to psycholinguistics, from textual, enunciative and discursive studies to the studies in the didactics of school disciplines, amongst others.

In Brazil, since the 1980s, projects of various epistemological natures (Franchi, 1984; Gnerre, 1985; Kato, 1986) have not just signaled the prestige of the theme of writing within the academic context of that time, but have also contributed to reconfigure the institutional boundaries and the relations of contact and of distancing between particular theoretical and disciplinary fields – such as the relations between the field of education (fundamentals and didactics), of psychology (of Piagetian or Vygotskian lineage), of linguistics (phonology, psycholinguistics, language acquisition and textual, enunciative and discursive studies), and of applied linguistics.

Particularly as a component of school practices, writing has been an object of interest in studies that deal with *corpora* created and approached under various methodologies<sup>2</sup>, amongst which:

- i. a textual approach: the study of a particular phenomenon of the textual dimension of the language, where the school context is the material *locus* in which the data of the investigation (texts produced by the pupils) are collected. This approach is present, for example, in works representative of the studies about the written production in schools, such as *Redação e textualidade* (Costa Val, 1981) and *Coesão e coerência em narrativas escolares* (Bastos, 1994);
- ii. a discursive approach: the study of pupils' languaging activity retrieved through the way in which it is materialized in the texts they produce. We see here an approach that tries to apprehend the discursive process of text production from the signs it leaves in the pupil's text or, to use a formula proposed by Geraldi (1996, p. 145), to apprehend the *processes signaled in the products*. This perspective of dealing with the text production is present, for example, in the studies developed by Abaurre (1996); Abaurre, Fiad and Mayrink-Sabinson (1997; 2003); Corrêa (2004), Gomes-Santos (2003) and Smolka (1988);
- iii. an applied approach: the study of the modes under which writing circulates inside the school, with the focus placed either on its role as a device in the

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<sup>2</sup> Rojo; Cordeiro (2004) present an interesting journey through the ways in which practices of reading and text production have been dealt with in the Brazilian school tradition since the 1980s.

construction of the interaction in schools, or on its facet of an teaching object presupposed in one way or another by all school disciplines. Thus, these investigations seek to perform the description and analysis of the *process* of generation of texts/data, and the material conditions of its emergence based, in some cases, on ethnographic approaches. Such outlook can be found in studies carried out, for example, by Batista and Gomes-Santos (2008); Gomes-Santos (2009); Guimarães, Cordeiro and Azevedo (2006) and Rojo (2006).

The present contribution is part of this journey of reflection about writing in schools, which has been consolidating within the Brazilian academic context since the early 1980s<sup>3</sup>. Despite recognizing itself in such journey, this study, as I shall make clear in what follows, has its focus on an aspect relatively neglected by the researches – *the writing that is taught* (Almeida, 2009). In other words, this study proposes to describe and analyze school practices in which writing is object of teaching, focusing on the modes in which it is specifically constituted in the forms of teacher work, that is to say, the statute that surrounds the teaching work, through which writing becomes a taught object (Dolz, Ronveaux and Schneuwly, 2007).

Next, I present theoretical and methodological elements involved in the investigation of the teaching of writing within the forms of teacher work, so as to characterize the viewpoint from which the present study observes school writing.

### **The writing and the teaching work**

For Chervel (1998) the investigation of effective teaching/learning practices, in its relation to the historically valued pedagogical conceptions and to the public policies for the regulation and increment of education, consists in an investment distinct from, and complementary to, that implied in the study of the macro-objectives of teaching. It represents the sphere of *pedagogical reality*:

L'étude des finalités ne peut donc en aucun cas faire abstraction des enseignements réels. Elle doit être menée simultanément sur deux

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<sup>3</sup> Given the ample circulation it had in Brazil, the collection coordinated by João Wanderley Geraldi (see Geraldi, 1984) is an important record of the complex relationships between language and teaching in Brazil's historical context during the last three decades.

plans, et faire intervenir une double documentation, celle des objectifs affichés, et celle de la réalité pédagogique. (p. 24)<sup>4</sup>

The author's perception is fruitful as an initial working hypothesis insofar as it implies in the recognition of school practice – and of the practice of teaching writing at school –, going beyond at least three more or less complementary perspectives: i) the perspective of that *which it lacks*; ii) the deterministic perspective, according to which everything *touched* by the school turns necessarily into something smaller, inferior: that is to say, the school lessens everything that comes into it; iii) the reproductivist perspective, according to which the school is nothing more than the space of the reproduction of ideological structures and values produced outside it, and imposed upon it.

Forsaking these three modes of dealing with the school is a requisite to avoid the risk of considering the practices of the teaching of writing as an endless process of substituting supposedly novel practices/conceptions for those regarded as old, regarding them instead as a process of interweaving or *sedimentation* (Schneuwly; Cordeiro; Dolz, 2006) of multiple practices. The ways in which this sedimentation process takes place in the history of the teaching of Portuguese still awaits investigation by the Brazilian academic community.

Some of the signs of the multiplicity of these teaching practices can be reassembled by the same terms that historically attempted to establish them in the school practice, namely:

- i. writing as "composition": associated to the notion of creativity, the act of writing as aesthetic expression and effect of inspiration. A recurring task consists in the *composition in view of a figure*;
- ii. writing as "redaction": associated to the idea of clarity, of precision, the act of writing as the act of exposing/arguing. The recurring task consists in the production of a dissertation, the writing genre par excellence of the textual tradition of the school in Brazil and in other cultural contexts;
- iii. writing as "textual production": associated to the idea of process, of work. The task in this case emphasizes the conditions implicated in the production of the written text, namely, the objectives, the statute of the interlocutors (I and you) as spatiotemporal coordinates, the material support and the textual organization, which presupposes a focus on the process of construction of

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<sup>4</sup> "The study of the objectives can never forego the real teaching. It must be conducted simultaneously along two planes, and call upon a double documentation – that of the prescribed objectives, and that of the pedagogical reality." Excerpts of texts unavailable in Portuguese were translated by the author.

signification, and also a concept of text as "the very *locus* of the interaction, and the interlocutors as active subjects who – dialogically – construct themselves and are constructed in it" (Koch, 2002, p. 17).

Although in the denominations above there exist not just conceptions about writing and its learning, but also certain *modi operandi* of the teaching of writing, these modes in which writing is taught, as I mentioned above, were only partly investigated. In the metaphor by Margonilinas and Perrin-Glorian (1998), the place of the teaching work in the investigation of teaching/learning practices remained *between brackets* until the 1980s<sup>5</sup>. The focus was on the relation of the pupil with the objects of knowledge:

L'enseignant, dans un premier temps inclus dans la situation, doit se retirer de ces situations quasi-isolées pour permettre l'interaction de l'élève avec une situation qui sera bientôt qualifiée de "adidactique" (Brousseau, 1986); il ne fait pas partie de l'objet d'étude. (p. 8)<sup>6</sup>

Within the wide field of studies about the relations between language and education in Brazil, the work of the teacher has been historically diluted in the figure of the *method*, both that dedicated to *literacy, to the teaching of the code*, and that dedicated to the exercise of the writing by means of the *writing techniques* during basic schooling. Beneath the figure of the method lies a discourse *about* the teacher, *about how she represents her practice* and *about* what it would have been like if she had occupied other positions as subject. It is not unusual for it to be a discourse about the deficit. It seldom is a discourse *with* the teacher, based on following, recording, describing, and interpreting the actual practices in which he takes part within school life. When it is taken into account, the work of the teacher often constitutes a place in which one searches for – and many times supposes to find – the justifications for the so-called pupils' reading and writing learning difficulties. Assuming the relevance of such endeavor in the investigation of the teacher work, the challenge is then to outline the dimension of this work that we want to focus on.

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<sup>5</sup> The authors put forward a historical journey of the insertion of the role of the teacher in the studies on didactics in France.

<sup>6</sup> "The teacher, at first included in the situation, must withdraw from these quasi-isolated situations to make room for the interaction of the pupil with a different situation, thus regarded as 'adidactic' (Brousseau, '986); the teacher is not part of the object of study."

In the present case, the interest resides in understanding the materiality of the work of the teacher in its depth, simultaneously textual and didactic, such as it comes forth, for example, in Gomes-Santos and Almeida (2009), in which the authors point to the need of

going deeper into the analysis of data produced in teaching practices, employing a focus that seeks to deal with verbal interaction without neglecting the discussion of the didactic dimension that constitutes it. In other words, it requires dealing with the discursive operation of the interaction in the classroom, avoiding the risk of dissociating linguistic (discursive) analysis from didactic reflection. (p. 135)

In other words, the point is assessing, based on a conception of the school as a "hybrid form" (see Tardif; Lessard, 2005, p. 100), how the linguistic shapes the teaching work whilst being shaped by it (Simon; Ronveaux, 2007). Some of the theoretical elements put forward by Gomes-Santos; Almeida (2009) and Chaves; Gomes-Santos (2008) allow us to make this problem more precise:

- i. the teaching activity is conceived as labor – grounded on the concept of labor as developed in historic materialism –, whose realization is mediated by instruments, and leads to the voluntary modification of the object. This implies the presence of three components of the work: human action, the object modified/to be modified, and instruments;
- ii. the peculiarity of the teaching work resides in the fact that it does not act upon inert matter; it has as its object of transformation the ways of thinking, doing and speaking of the pupils and, as its instruments, the semiotic signs and instruments. It is a "matter" that offers various kinds of resistance to the action of the worker – it does not simply act, but also reacts (Tardif; Lessard, 2005);
- iii. such peculiarity of the teacher's work stems largely from the fact that it is a process of double semiotization (Chevallard, 1985) through which a given object of knowledge is unfolded into the didactic situation: first, it is presented as an object of teaching in its unity, entire, finished; then, as object of study in its topics, decomposed, broken down, punctuated. There are here two complementary movements of the teaching activity – respectively, the presentification and the elementarization;
- iv. in close articulation to these two global movements, other *didactic movements* appear, such as those described by Aebly Daghe and Dolz (2007):
  - a. resorting to didactic memory and anticipation: consists in bringing up previous or future works on a given object, the latter works in the form of anticipation, with the purpose of establishing coherence between the work to be developed in that class and the whole sequence of the work;
  - b. formulation of tasks: consists in the cause of and the entrance into a didactic device; the task is the instrument that institutes the object of

- teaching and creates the conditions that allow the teacher to presentify it in the classroom, and to the pupil to appropriate it;
- c. use of didactic devices: consists in making use of an apparatus of teaching instruments (material support, instructions and modes of working) to show the different dimensions of the object within the processes of presentification and elementarization/topicalization;
  - d. regulation and evaluation: consists at times in "obtaining information on the status of pupils' knowledge, being positioned either at the beginning of, in the course of, or at the end of a learning cycle" (Aeby Daghe and Dolz, op. cit., p. 2), in which case it is the *internal regulation*; at other times it consists in conducting the very construction of the object, operating inside the school activities, stimulating an exchange with the pupil, in which case it is the *local regulation*. Evaluation is a particular type of regulation;
  - e. institutionalization: consists in making explicit, and conventionalizing, the status of a knowledge to be learned and employed by the pupil, and checked up on by the teacher, if he or she so chooses (Sensevy, 2001 apud Aeby Daghe and Dolz, op. cit.). In other words, it consists in conferring concept to a knowledge, endowing it with a generality that can be mobilized in other contexts, different from those in which the object was presentified and elementarized/topicalized.

In the following section, I return to two previous studies (Gomes-Santos and Abreu, 2007; Gomes-Santos and Almeida, 2009) that illustrate the efforts to reflect upon the writing that is taught. Revisiting part of the data analyzed in those studies, I intend to point out the implications of the description and analysis of teaching practices for the field of language studies and for the field of education.

### **Two episodes<sup>7</sup> in the teaching of writing**

The two teaching episodes that follow are situated in different institutional contexts; they are, however, related since they represent situations in which writing plays a central role: the first situation consists in a class of the first year of Fundamental Education, with children who are in the process of learning to read and write; the second situation has as its context an EJA class (Education of Youngsters and Adults).

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<sup>7</sup> *Episode* is taken here as "an event of variable duration whose temporal dimension is defined by the fact that the medium/scenario created remains the same, directed at the same didactic objective" (Schneuwly, 2000, p. 25).

### ***The teaching of writing in a literacy class***

The episode under consideration took place in a class composed of 22 (twenty-two) pupils, with ages between 8 and 11, all experienced at school for having repeated the first grade up to three times. Virtually all of them were pre-syllabic, being therefore at the beginning of their literacy process, and they were all MB's<sup>8</sup> pupils for the first time. The classroom is located in a building adjacent to a municipal school of fundamental education in the borough of Curuçambá, in the outskirts of Ananindeua, a town belonging to Belém's (Pará State) metropolitan area.

The group of classes during which this episode happened had as its teaching object an autobiographical narrative entitled *Zeca*, extracted from a didactic book and chosen by the teacher to initiate the first academic bimestrial period of the first grade class with the purpose of dealing with the pupils' life. It consists in the following excerpt:

#### **Zeca**

[...] My name is José Carlos, but everybody calls me Zeca. I'm ten, and I was born and have always lived in São Paulo. I'm a city animal, raised in an apartment, used to traffic, noise and pollution.

My father is a bank manager, and my mother is a teacher. A family on tight budgets. Since I was little I have attended our local municipal school. I have many friends and, perhaps because of that, I don't have many fears. I know everybody that lives around our building. Riding my bicycle up and down, I'm a well-known character of my neighborhood. That's it! This is me. [...]

In the line of text production, the task proposed by the teacher to the pupils consisted in narrating their autobiographies orally; she would record them in writing, then type them into the computer, print them, and gather them in a volume that would be added to the school library.

The classes that preceded the production had multiple readings of the text accompanied by dialogues between the teacher and the pupils. The fourth reading had the purpose of leading to the reflection about the mother's profession in *Zeca* and, after that, about the professions of pupils' mothers. Excerpt (1) below reveals the *elementarization/topicalization* of the object (Aeby Daghé and Dolz, 2007): the

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<sup>8</sup> MB are the teacher's initials, used to preserve her identity.



teacher conducts the rereading of the text with the purpose of dealing with the profession of pupils' mothers as a topic in the class<sup>9</sup>.

(1)

P: so, today we are taking just this bit here, we'll think about Zeca's mother's profession, and then, each one of you will, those of you who feel like it, will write about your own mother's profession; Zeca's mother is a teacher, what work does a teacher develop? What work does she do?

An: teaching the pupil

P: she teaches the pupils

An: she writes for the pupil to learn to read and write

P: wait, let him finish and then you can speak ((addressing the pupil next to An))

An: learn to read and write and read, to know to know the alphabet

P: what else Po?

Po: for the mates, to respect all the mates, to play properly during break time and when going to eat and be quiet

An: and to learn not to be a donkey

P: but people can be donkeys?

AA: no

P: someone who can't read is a donkey?

AA: no

P: what is a donkey?

A: a horse

P: a donkey is an animal similar to the horse, isn't? from the same family of the horse, so a person can never be a donkey, a donkey is a donkey is an animal, it never goes to school and never learns to read it will never learn to write

The subtopic of the teaching object at hand in this fragment, "the profession of Zeca's mother", corresponds to the start of the reading activities on that day. At a certain point during the didactic interaction, in response to a question proposed by the teacher – *what work does a teacher develop? What work does she do?* –, the pupil An says that the teacher helps to "learn not to be a donkey", to what she replies with questions that demonstrate her disagreement with that statement (*but people can be donkeys?; someone who can't read is a donkey?; what is a donkey?*) with the intent of leading him to an idea opposed to the one previously presented, in other words, to

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<sup>9</sup> In the transcriptions we have used the following codes: *P* (teacher); *A* (unidentified pupil); *AA* (more than one unidentified pupil), and *name initials* (identified pupil). For short pauses we used *comma* (,); for long pauses *three dots* (...); for rising intonation *question mark* (?); for vowel lengthening *colon* (::); for the analyst's comments *double brackets* (()); and for text readings *inverted commas* (" ").

make him change a conception. Later, the teacher proposes to her class the first task of the day: talking about the mother's profession.

In (2) below it is again An who intervenes to talk about the work performed by the mother (at home):

(2)

An: she is hardworking she goes after work she does things at home she takes care of my little brother she makes porridge to my little brother and she is still looking for a job

P: she still what?

An: she makes porridge to my little brother and she's looking for a job

P: she is still looking for a job?

An: ((the boy nods agreement)) 'cause if she don't find a job we'll go away to Igarapé–Miri to our relatives

The two questions by the teacher (*she still what?*; *she is still looking for a job?*) were used to ask for clarification (Fávero; Andrade; Aquino, 2006; Silva, 2006) perhaps because the teacher may not have heard clearly the pupil's utterances. Considering the form of conduction of the task (oral), it is to be expected that this type of question will occur to guarantee the teacher's understanding of the pupil's perception, as well as the continuity of his/her participation in the development of the task. It is curious that the repetition of the question is understood by the pupil as a request for further information, affecting the thematic progression of his utterances in a direction that reveals an *active response* (Bakhtin (Voloshinov), 1929) with respect to the *theme/object of teaching*. This *response* or *evaluative appreciation* by the pupil appears in the non-obvious association between *lack of job* and *return to the family home*, in a town in the interior of Pará State (in the Brazilian Amazon) – Igarapé-Miri – whence the mother had already come precisely in search of improving the material conditions for her survival.

As remarked by Gomes-Santos and Almeida (2009), the object of teaching at play here – the autobiographical narrative and the topic *mothers' professions* – was *taught*, and presumably *learned*, in the intersubjective dynamics created by the question/answer pair, which points to a dialogical style of teaching.

### ***The teaching of writing in an EJA class***

The episode considered here occurred in a class of the 4<sup>th</sup> stage of EJA (Education of Youngsters and Adults): 35 pupils enrolled at the beginning of the academic year, but only 19 were attending the classes. The class is largely young. Age ranges from 16 to 29; therefore, these are pupils who carry a history of recent school dropout and/or failure. The school itself is located in a peripheral neighborhood of the town of Castanhal, Pará State.

This episode articulates several classes around the *narrative text*. In the class described next, the teacher starts by putting on the blackboard the proposal for a text production, while the pupils are still arriving for class. Being pupils that also work they are often late for the class starting at 7pm:

(3)

Imagine the following situation: today you are turning 18. On this day you receive by mail a blank sheet of paper, in an envelope with your name on it, without indication of the sender. Also, you receive as gifts a photograph of yourself and a CD. Reflect on this situation. Based on your reflection, write up a text.

At this point the pupils begin to interact with the teacher, showing other possibilities for the development of the text production.

(4)

P: now you're going to imagine that you're turning 18 and ...  
A: I'm twenty already  
P: yeah:: an envelope arrives at your place, and inside it a blank piece of paper  
A: what if it's a bomb?  
P: it's an envelope, yeah:: no way, a letter bomb?  
A: just nonsense  
P: but inside the envelope there's a blank sheet of paper, yeah:: with your name, no sender, you don't know exactly who's ...  
A: sent it  
P: sent it  
A: ah  
P: besides that, you also receive as a gift a photo of yourself and a CD, now let's see, why would someone send ...

The pupils make a few comments. The teacher himself thinks the proposal "absurd". However, he justifies the use of this text proposal by saying that it is a didactic strategy to develop the creativity of the students.

(5)

P: OK, guys, let's reflect on these questions, let's see that it's a bit absurd this because:: it's not gonna happen someone send an envelope, right?

A: and my photo and a CD?

P: yeah, a CD and::

A: imagine that, there's no accounting for taste

P: this is absurd, but it's a didactic question of mine to exercise my memory, my whole person, and to make creativity grow, let's tell this fact

When continuing with the comments, the teacher tries to give suggestions to stir up the pupils' creativity. In this gesture there is the supposition of a representationist conception of language, according to which writing is conditioned to inspiration. Hence the notion of creativity as condition and/or property of the act of writing.

(6)

P: let's, let's:: create this story telling the:: the story, what's going to be the background? ... the background like, the larger story is the birthday

...

A: ahn ...

P: isn't it? the party is going to be, let's imagine, at night, and this ... this blank piece of paper is:: you got it in the afternoon

A: I'm going to put that it was almost noon

P: then you start telling about that day, right? started in the morning ...

At this point one of the pupils criticizes the proposal. The teacher points out the need of reflection for the written production. He refers to the scheme crystallized in the school tradition of text production: the tripartite division of beginning, middle and end (or introduction, development and conclusion). The scheme of the "school dissertation" overpowers all other types of text production, such as the descriptive text, or still, the narrative text that is the teaching object of the episode analyzed here.

(7)

A: I'm sorry, teacher, but this is not making much sense

P: no it's not, but look, in the beginning yes, it doesn't make sense now, at the beginning, without reflection, make it a short story, don't forget it has a beginning, a middle and an end, it has characters, you're a character in the story, so the story will be written in the first person, you

know that, right? you're part of it, as we said before, and look out for other characters, ok?

Other suggestions are presented by the teacher. The pupils always try to give opinions and suggestions that may complement the ideas proposed by him.

(8)

P: but then ... if I was going to write my own text, I 'd look for a meaning for it, you understand? a joke? a bad joke? or a good joke? I don't know, maybe it was a girlfriend I had, for instance, who sent that photo and CD because she liked them so much

A: in the CD, isn't it, teacher?

P: ah, suddenly that blank paper would be a symbol, of something you ...

A: of peace

P: yeah, no, maybe

A: of reconciliation

P: something happened in the past and the blank paper can represent many things, it can be ...

A: now you're being more specific, I'm beginning to figure out ...

Taking into account the relation between the textual materiality of the class and its function in the construction of the economy of didactic exchange, one aspect can be pointed out as central in this episode of the teaching of written production of a narrative text – the effects of the norms with which one configures the teaching work in the appropriation of the teaching object by the pupils.

In this case, the proposed description points to two enunciative movements of the teacher/pupils partnership in the reconstruction of this object: at times the pupils try to destabilize the teacher's position by the ludic *tone* in which they *revoice* the proposal of text production and, at other times, they effectively seek to understand what is being proposed, trying to confer meaning to the object at play and to the teaching action itself.

The sequence of fourteen classes centered on the narrative text concludes with an episode on the practice of reading of/listening to a text. The task, centered on the text "*Conto erótico n. 1*" [Erotic short story No. 1] by Luís Fernando Veríssimo, had been reproduced from a Secondary Education textbook. The teacher distributed a loose sheet of paper containing the text, and begins the oral exposition with a comment on

the picture that appears in the text. Next, he begins reading aloud and the pupils follow him on the text:

(8)

P: "like this? ... is it like this ... faster? ... no, it's ok like that, a little more to ... like this? ... no, wait ... you said that ... to the side, to the side ...honey ... it was fine but you ... I know, let's start again, tell me when it's ok ... it was perfect and you ... sorry ... you lost control and lost your ... I've apologized already ... alright, let's try again, now ... like this?"

A: gosh

P: "almost, it's almost" ((laughs))

P: "tell me how you want it ... oh honey ... a little lower"

A: hum

P: "yes ... now to the side, quick" ((laughs))

P: "sweetheart I ... up a little ... like this? ... there, there" ((laughs))

P: "is it good?"

A: now that one was original, you know?

P: "yes, oh, yes, oh yes, yes" ((laughs and comments))

P: "that's it ... no, keep going ... my! but you ... look, now you've ... let me see ... no, no, further up ... here? ... more, now to the side ... like this? ... to the left, the left"

A: the guy is blind or what?

P: "here? ... that's is" ((laughs))

P: "now scratch it" ((laughs and comments))

As interpreted by Gomes-Santos and Abreu (2007), the practice of reading mediated by the teacher consists in a dialogue that orchestrates different voices. The didactic efficacy of this instrument relies on a discursive materiality that is recontextualized, in the *heat* of the school practice considered here, into a didactic instrument (Schneuwly, 2000; 2001) that contributed to the construction of the teaching object – the narrative text. The discursive materiality of this instrument is built in the interplay of the voices brought to the scene – the teacher's voice, the alternated voices of the pupils, the voice of the author of the text, the voice of the author of the textbook, all of them grounded, in Bakhtinian terms (Bakhtin (Voloshinov), 1929; Bakhtin, 1953), on socio-culturally established *value appreciations*.

**As a conclusion:** what do the teaching practices of writing teach us

Having considered the description of the two episodes of the teaching of writing presented here, it is worth problematizing the implications that looking upon these teaching practices has for the field of language studies and for the field of education. As far as the implications for the theory of language are concerned, they point, from a theoretical and methodological viewpoint, towards the problem of how to articulate concepts and devices for the description and analysis of data with a view to incrementing the reflection about *the language at school*, including the sociological, textual and didactic dimensions of school practices. An example of a notion to be incremented is that of *school literacy* and of the modes in which one dialogues with the various kinds of literacy. The distinction between the *dominant literacy* and *vernacular literacy* (Barton; Hamilton, 1998) seems less obvious when the context considered is the school one.

Studies like the ones presented here assume the school as locus of interaction through language and, along these lines, as a space in which the practices of language use are complexified as a result of the multiple languages the coexist in it. Indeed, the school language practices, beyond the semblance of inertia bestowed upon them, are complex *par excellence* because they incorporate multiple languages and literacy trajectories of those who have access to schooling, and build with it various degrees of closeness and distancing. Therefore, in my view, *school literacy* is constitutionally complex and manifold.

Concerning the implications for the field of education, they refer to the investment in understanding the functioning of language as a teaching object, in the forms with which this object is configured, on the one hand, in the teacher's work and, on the other hand, in the pupils' learning, in the ways in which they appropriate knowledges and used of the language *presentified* and active in the teaching situation. Still concerning this group of implications, the postulate of complexity is indispensable for the redefinition of the school, having in mind the role that it will have the assume as a social agent for the production/consumption of cultural good, which is central in complex literate societies like the Brazilian.

A better perception of these implications seems to constitute an important line of investigation in the field of the studies concerned with the relation between language and education, a fertile ground for those who work in the area of methodologies of language teaching. That is particularly the case for those who take language as

dialogue, as proposed by Bakhtin's thinking, and education as a means of solidarity and a space for the construction of public, negotiated answers capable of making a difference for the quality of social relations, somewhat along the lines of the *education for the community* already defended by Buber in 1929.

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