

Aesthetic literacy in the awareness of the peasant: an analysis from the Cultural-Historical theory

O letramento estético na tomada de consciência do camponês:
uma análise a partir da teoria Histórico-Cultural

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ABSTRACT

In Brazilian schools, many teachers do not organize teaching in a way that the tasks and actions performed by students make them reach theoretical thinking. When the teacher guides the tasks and actions so that the students can perform them, little by little, the students begin to have more autonomy to perform the proposed activities, which is due to the fact that they have performed, during the performance of the activity, the mental operations during learning. We present some results of a broader investigation that aimed to investigate how the young and adult's awareness of the rural education is formed through visual signs and writing to understand their reality. Based on the Historical-Cultural theory, the method was the Didactic-Formative Experiment. It is understood that from the comic books produced by these peasants, they were able to develop their thinking in totality, moving from abstract to concrete. In this sense, they also formed his awareness of reality, which allowed him to have greater autonomy in the production of these stories, as a means of representation and transformation of reality.

Keywords: Aesthetic Literacy. Developmental Teaching. Study Activity. Rural Education. Comics Book.

RESUMO

Nas escolas brasileiras muitos professores não organizam o ensino de forma que as tarefas e ações realizadas pelos estudantes os façam chegar ao pensamento teórico. Quando o professor orienta as tarefas e ações para os alunos conseguirem realizá-las, aos poucos, eles começam a ter mais autonomia para executar as atividades propostas, pois decorre do fato de terem feito, durante a realização da atividade, as operações mentais durante a aprendizagem. Apresentam-se alguns resultados de uma pesquisa mais ampla com objetivo de investigar como se forma a tomada de consciência do jovem e adulto do campo a partir de signos visuais e da escrita para compreender a sua realidade. A partir da teoria Histórico-Cultural, teve como método o Experimento Didático-Formativo. Compreende-se a partir das histórias em quadrinhos produzidas por esses camponeses, o desenvolvimento do seu pensamento na totalidade. Nesse sentido, formaram também a sua consciência do real, permitindo-os a ter maior autonomia na produção dessas histórias, enquanto meio de representação e transformação da realidade.

Palavras-chave: Letramento Estético. Ensino Desenvolvidor. Atividade de Estudo. Educação do Campo. História em Quadrinhos.

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1 Introduction

This article is the result of a larger study conducted at the Federal University of Tocantins in partnership with the Julio de Mesquita Filho University of São Paulo. The study views Youth and Adult Education (YAE) as a vast theoretical and reflective field, beyond the mere concept of adult literacy, as is often the case. The subjects of the research were young and adult students enrolled in the Bachelor's Degree in Rural Education, majoring in Arts and Music, at the Tocantinópolis campus of UFT/UFNT². These students were enrolled in the Comic Book (HQ) course. The main objective was to investigate how young people and adults in rural areas develop awareness based on visual cues and literacy to understand their reality. The study was based on historical-cultural theory and used the didactic-formative experiment developed in the comic book classes of the same course as its method.

Data was recorded using a field diary of observations made during the experiment, video recordings of the experimental classes, audio recordings of semi-structured and individual interviews conducted with students throughout the experiment (which lasted almost six months), and visual records of the comic books produced by the students. The study analyzed the data from the perspective of historical and dialectical materialism because education is understood as a social and political practice that produces contradictions in society. Thus, the analysis of the data collected in this study can only be understood based on an understanding of the totality of the socio-historical process in which the young and adult peasant subjects are embedded.

Marx and Engels (1974, p. 20) assert that ideas are constructed by humans and their consciousness as a set of relationships directly linked to human material activity, that is, referring to their reality. Therefore, they say that “it is not consciousness that determines life, but life that determines

² The Araguaína and Tocantinópolis campuses are in the process of separating from UFT to become a new university: the Federal University of Northern Tocantins. For this reason, we will occasionally refer to UFT/UFNT.

consciousness,” because, as a social product, it will only continue to exist as long as men and their social relations, constructed throughout the historical course of humanity, exist.

In addition, the author of this research has been working with comic books for over ten years in workshops and courses for young people and adults and, in this process, has found that the interaction built between the participants, added to the production and reading of comic books created by them, has helped them to express their knowledge and creativity more easily. In this sense, considering the Historical-Cultural theory as the main epistemological matrix of this study, researching the production of comics with young people and adults in rural areas is a way of understanding how they construct their awareness of reality through art.

Our thesis is that comic books, as a broader form of literacy, because they consist of written (verbal text) and visual (drawings) signs, contribute to the awareness of young people and adults in Rural Education, from the perspective of Historical-Cultural theory. In fact, the aesthetic literacy we propose in this study can help this type of student, or even an illiterate person, to understand a text that, consisting only of letters and words, would be practically impossible for them to understand.

It is important to note that studies and research related to literacy among young people and adults in Rural Education are recent, especially regarding reading and writing through the lens of art. Given this, we understand the results of this research as a means of helping to expand new investigations on the topic, by contributing to the production of knowledge in the area.

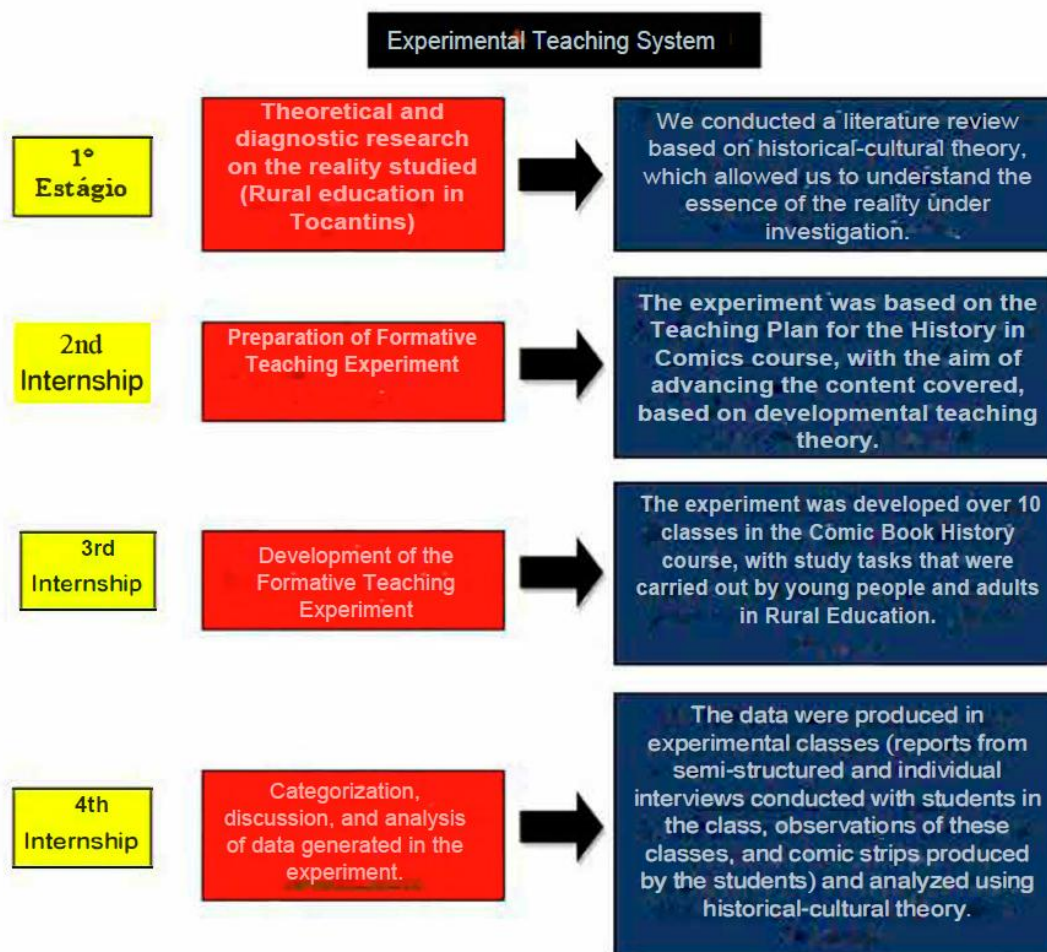
2. Methodological Approach

We began to design the experiment based on the HQ Discipline Plan and the studies conducted by Davídov (2014; 1997; 1988; 1978), Vigotski (2010; 2009; 2007; 2001; 2000; 1999; 1998), and Aquino (2017; 2015; 2013). With this, we developed an experiment with tasks and actions carried out in each experimental class by young and

adult peasant students of the Bachelor's Degree in Rural Education at UFT/UFNT, based on verbal and visual readings and artistic productions (drawings) that totaled ten (10) classes; that is, we carried out the experiment in ten classes of the Comic Book course over the course of one semester. The main idea of the Didactic-Formative Experiment is that the teaching organized by it increases the quality of learning and, consequently, the full development of students (AQUINO, 2017).

Forty students were enrolled in the Comic Book course. The students produced verbal and nonverbal texts (drawings) in certain study tasks and actions proposed in the experiment. The texts they produced cover various topics. However, for this article, we selected a verbal text from a story produced by one student and a comic book drawing by another student, both participants in this research, analyzed in light of Historical-Cultural theory.

Figure 1 – Experimental Teaching System.



Source: Prepared by the author, based on Aquino (2013; 2015; 2017).

From our perspective, the Didactic-Formative Experiment is a method that helped us organize teaching by enabling young students and adult farmers to develop their mental functions during the formation of concepts and, consequently, in the construction of their integral development, with learning as a factor in this development. In other words, this experiment is a means of investigation that made it possible to study the transformations in the mental development of young people and adults through the mediation of researchers during the activity carried out.

3. Assumptions of Historical-Cultural Theory for Research in Rural Education

Historical-Cultural theory emerged in the early 20th century in the former Soviet Union. It sought to understand and explain how higher psychological functions developed in individuals, based on the principles of dialectical historical materialism. Throughout the 20th century, it had important contributors who helped to disseminate and expand this theory, such as Lev Vigotski (1896-1934), Alexander Luria (1902-1977), Alexei Leontiev (1903-1979), and Vasily Davíдов (1930-1998). Thus, Vygotsky, considered one of the leading theorists of this school of thought, sought to demonstrate that the relationship between teaching and learning was mediated by the individual's social (developed in the historical process) and cultural relationships; that is, the development of the human mind occurs through communication and interaction with other people.

According to Luria (1992), Vigotski called this approach cultural psychology (socially structured ways in which society organizes itself, using language as the instrument that will organize the development of mental processes); instrumental (mediated nature of all complex psychological functions); historical (related to culture, the tools used by humans in the environment have been perfected and emerged over historical time and were not given ready-made). He emphasizes that the distance between science and

the nature of descriptions of the complex processes of the mind cannot be bridged until the means by which natural processes and sensations relate to the culture determined to construct the psychological functions of adults is discovered.

It is based on these assumptions that Vigotski (2009) helped to construct the Historical-Cultural theory, with the aim of overcoming traditional psychology and the understanding of human behavior as something based on mechanistic biology. In other words, he argued that higher human psychological processes develop from social relationships and not depending on biological factors. For him, “the sign, as an external medium, similar to a working tool, mediates man's relationship with the object and with other men.” (VIGOTSKI, 2009, p. XII). In this way, individuals assimilate higher psychological functions through the appropriation of culture and develop them in interaction with other people.

Based on this thinking, the socio-historical nature of man defended by the Historical-Cultural theory and by Vigotski was fundamental to understanding human rationality and sociability, with the interaction of the individual with others being the fundamental aspect for the appropriation of culture, because “it came to be considered that specifically human aptitudes and characteristics are not transmitted hereditarily, but are adapted through the appropriation of the culture created by previous generations.” (PUENTES; LONGAREZI, 2013, p. 249).

In fact, when individuals internalize the object, they can be socialized by language to other people, such as artistic, oral, and written language. But this is only possible with the development of consciousness and through activity, by which individuals have created material and immaterial instruments to communicate with the world.

4. For developmental teaching in rural education

Vygotsky argued that good teaching “opens the door” to the development of students' higher mental functions. In this sense, although he did not make

clear in his studies his understanding of developmental teaching, which was the case with Davídov when he developed his theory referring to this study, developmental teaching had its origin in the Historical-Cultural theory based on the development of this psychological current emphasized by Vigotski, especially about the relationship between education and individual development. Considered one of the most important results of Davídov's research, developmental teaching concerns the teacher's teaching planning and the development of their students' psychic functions (PERES; FREITAS, 2014). Thus, one of its main objectives is to promote the development of students' thinking and autonomy through tasks and mental actions that can contribute to their learning progress.

In fact, Davídov's goal was to propose a theory aimed at developing theoretical thinking in students. This theory/pedagogy became known as developmental teaching. It is important to note that developmental teaching, with its roots in historical-cultural theory, is based not only on Vigotski's studies but also on Leontiev's theory of activity and the historical materialism of Marx and Engels. In fact, Davídov proposed in his thesis to analyze reality from the movement from the abstract to the concrete to understand how this movement could be applied in school teaching.

From this perspective, we understand the work of this teaching in Brazilian schools as a great challenge, since the vast majority of basic education schools still follow a traditional teaching perspective, which is no different in Tocantins. When working with young people and adults from rural areas at UFT/UFNT, during the development of the activity throughout the Didactic-Formative Experiment, the students were, at times, resistant to the way the content was taught and presented to them. Although most of them come from rural areas, they also had contact with traditional teaching in their schooling.

In this reflection, Davídov differentiates theoretical thinking from empirical thinking. In the latter analysis, abstraction, generalization, and concept are based on external features; in the former, they are based on the

internal features of the object. The latter are expressed in words, and the former are expressed in mental actions. For Kosik (1976), theoretical (dialectical) thinking is a process in motion and in constant transformation, unlike empirical thinking, which is based on facts arising from experience and systematizes them as absolute truths.

In summary, Davídov (1988) understood empirical thinking as something formed from the comparison of objects and their representations, which makes it possible to separate their most common (general) properties. This general property is known and allows certain objects to be isolated into a given class for analysis. At this point, we seek to discover the initial relationship between the integral system and its essence. Thus, empirical thinking (expressed through words and terms) is reflected in the external properties of objects. On the other hand, theoretical thinking arises during the analysis process carried out in this integral system; that is, it is mentally elaborated when objects are transformed, moving from mere representation to mental action. Thus, theoretical thinking (expressed through mental activity) explains the particular and unique manifestations of this system, from the general to the particular.

For Kosik (1976, p. 44, author's emphasis), totality does not mean all things, because individuals always add new facts to reality, and it is also impossible for them to encompass all these facts and things in their lives. Totality is, in fact, “reality as a structured, dialectical whole, in which or from which any fact (classes of facts, set of facts) can be rationally understood.” In other words, concrete totality understood as reality transforms, creates, and develops itself. Otherwise, it becomes a false reality, that is, a pseudo-concrete reality.

Since reality is a structured whole that develops, creates, and transforms itself, knowledge of facts for reality refers to knowledge of the place where these facts fit into it (KOSIK, 1976). In other words, we cannot understand the art of comic books and their reality through the reality of quantum physics, for example. Although we encounter different realities throughout our lives, each of these has its specificities and phenomena. In this

sense, the totality in the dialectical perspective has its parts in constant interaction with the whole (which is unfinished), taking effect in the creation of content and its development as a meaningful structure.

Regarding theoretical thinking, Kosik (1976, p. 36, author's emphasis) states that the rise of the abstract to the concrete is not the passage from the sensible to the rational, since the abstract denies the sensible and the immediate. Thus, this movement of thought is the method of knowing reality, since “the method of the ascent from the abstract to the concrete is the method of thought; in other words, it is a movement that acts on concepts, on the element of abstraction.”

As can be seen, teaching focused on the development of theoretical thinking enables students to learn to understand an object more broadly, to develop their creativity, to develop as a person, to transform the surrounding objects, and to have autonomy and self-control over their actions. Therefore, from a historical-cultural theoretical perspective, developmental teaching can help them form an awareness of reality.

5. Aesthetic literacy with young people and adults through comic books

The studies on literacy addressed in this research were important because they helped us characterize aesthetic literacy. In addition, they broadened our understanding of literacy, in line with Historical-Cultural theory. Our goal was to make important contributions to the dialogue on the theoretical foundations of this study, especially from this theoretical perspective. Although some authors address literacy in early childhood education, we found it possible to discuss new forms of literacy in education with young and adult subjects in Rural Education because, as Vigotski (1999) said, concepts should not be unique and immutable; they should be constantly revised because, as they are working tools, they wear out with use.

Much is said in the scientific literature about written culture and oral culture, both considered historical marks of socialization among people in society. However, within this context, there is literate culture, which points to social literacy, based on knowledge of the world and experience, and school literacy,

which refers to the specific skills provided by learning.

Writing, observed Kleiman (1995), is fundamental for people to communicate and socialize with each other. However, it goes unnoticed by people considered “illiterate” by society, such as those from the lower classes or even peasants living in various rural communities, who have little or no access to this technology. A simple letter written by an elderly woman, a recipe prepared by a peasant woman, a shopping list, among other things, which may seem like an easy task for most, are major obstacles for less literate groups to communicate and, in a way, become participatory in a society that increasingly excludes them.

Mastering different uses and functions of writing means discovering other worlds and information and socializing through different verbal and nonverbal languages. It is necessary to understand and consider the writing of other people, in this case, young people and adults in rural areas. Their life experiences have been built in groups with varied literacy practices that, if not in line with the technological world, dialogue with new ways of understanding reality, communicating, and therefore socializing. Their practices bring with them a world full of cultural objects, experiences, and knowledge, reflected in the arts, in the way of teaching, of communicating, in short, in the way of interacting with the world around them. It is from this that literacy studies prove to be important and fundamental in this research.

This reflection allows us to say that considering literacy practices constructed in the peasant context is to reinvent the practices of communicating and socializing with the world. Given this, schools must be dynamic in building a connection between what is taught and learned in the countryside and what is taught and learned in school, as they should not be disconnected from the knowledge of the countryside and the city. These are different identities and cultures that must be heard, never silenced. In this sense, emphasis is placed not only on literacy constructed with and from these subjects, but also on the different practices and uses of language in the social and cultural context.

Based on this reflection, we highlight rural schools from different rural areas, with their respective cultures. Although learning in rural schools is similar (or equal) to that in schools located in urban areas, it is necessary to point out the relevance and need to consider the knowledge, experiences, and diversity of the subjects (children, youth, and adults) who attend rural schools. In other words, there is a discrepancy between what is taught in city schools and rural schools, and therefore, it is important to consider this context in the teaching and learning process of the student.

One of the objectives of the school should be to offer students different literacy practices, also understood as “multiple literacies or multiliteracy,” which consider the literacies that the subjects bring with them. In fact, these literacies include not only reading and writing but also other semiotic forms such as images, music, and the arts, among others. Thus, it is possible to say that “it is necessary to expand and democratize both the literacy practices and events that take place in school and the universe and nature of the texts that circulate there.” (ROJO, 2009, p. 108).

In this regard, we find that many students in rural education, coming from rural public schools, have a history of schooling permeated by autonomous literacy. Thus, when they arrive at university, they bring with them difficulties with academic reading and writing. For young people and adults from rural areas, this becomes a greater challenge, as they arrive at university with a significant gap in the teaching and learning process of reading and writing learned in their schooling. In addition, it is important to note that this reality is not only true for university students who come from rural areas, but also for the majority of students from Brazilian public schools.

With that, we understand in this investigation autonomous literacy as distinct from Historical-Cultural theory, since that theory defends knowledge in constant transformation and developed from the interaction of humans with their environment as they appropriate culture and in contact with other humans, transforming their reality, which, at the same time, modifies them;

therefore, the knowledge and learning that this theory advocates are not considered absolute or uniquely true, which are defended by autonomous literacy. On the contrary, ideological literacy, from the perspective of Historical-Cultural theory, considers the complex and contradictory reality of the individual, as well as their diverse and plural social and cultural contexts of which they are a part and develop as a historical subject.

With this reflection, we affirm that Rural Education is contaminated with ideological literacy, as it contains a diversity of literacies in different social and cultural practices of reading and writing in which young and adult peasants participate. In addition, it should be noted that the teaching of reading and writing in school does not consider the reality of the peasant. Given this, we argue in this research that comic books, by enabling young people and adults to produce their own story texts, as well as drawings and the use of signs they knew little about, such as drawing, to represent their reality, constitute a relevant language that, if worked on in line with the context of these students, can enable them to become aware of their reality and, therefore, improve their reading and writing processes. In other words, it is one of the possibilities for literacy among young people and adults in rural areas.

In this regard, Kleiman (1995, p. 11) emphasizes that the concept of literacy only began to spread in Brazil when an attempt was made to separate studies focused on the social practice of writing from literacy studies. She refers to “a set of social practices, whose specific modes of operation have important implications for the ways in which the subjects involved in these practices construct relations of identity and power.” For the author, these studies on literacy accompany the social evolution of writing since the 16th century, when literate bureaucracies emerged in cities, starting with the appearance of the State as a political unit.

In the cycle discussed, it is necessary to value and bring local popular culture into the educational environment, rather than just considering the elitist, standardized culture that circulates in schools and universities, both in cities and

in rural areas. In this vein, contributing to the expansion of the concept of literacy, Rojo (2009, p. 10) states that this term refers to “a very diverse set of situated social practices that involve systems of signs, such as writing or other forms of language, to generate meaning.”

Adding some ideas to the definition of literacy with young people and adults, Mollica (2009) also states that literacy means multiple socio-political-cultural knowledge. Thus, this term also applies to those who are not literate, which reinforces the idea of separating the process of literacy from that of literacy.

However, Kleiman and Sito (2016) assert that recently the concept of literacy has undergone different designations due to the different social practices of reading and writing that have emerged in different cultural contexts and also the fact that there is a diversity of verbal and nonverbal languages in society. It also began to refer to that person “who is considered literate, even if they are not literate, because they are part of a culture that allows them to have the knowledge to perform calculations, decipher words, among other things.” (MOLLICA, 2009, p. 170). It is from this moment that multiliteracies emerge, characterized by the emergence of texts with images, which point out that “texts are not composed only of words, but of multiple other systems of meaning, such as sound, oral, gestural, imagery, and graphic; that is, literacy is not only about writing.” In short, studies on literacy must also address visualities; therefore, images.

It is possible to observe in these authors different ways of conceptualizing what literacy is, but with one similarity: literacy is understood as a social and cultural practice that involves reading, writing, and orality in different contexts, such as those involving young people and adults. Based on this definition, we can understand aesthetic literacy as something that broadens this concept by incorporating art into the reading and writing processes of young and adult peasant students.

6. The awareness of young people and adult peasants through verbal signs in comic books

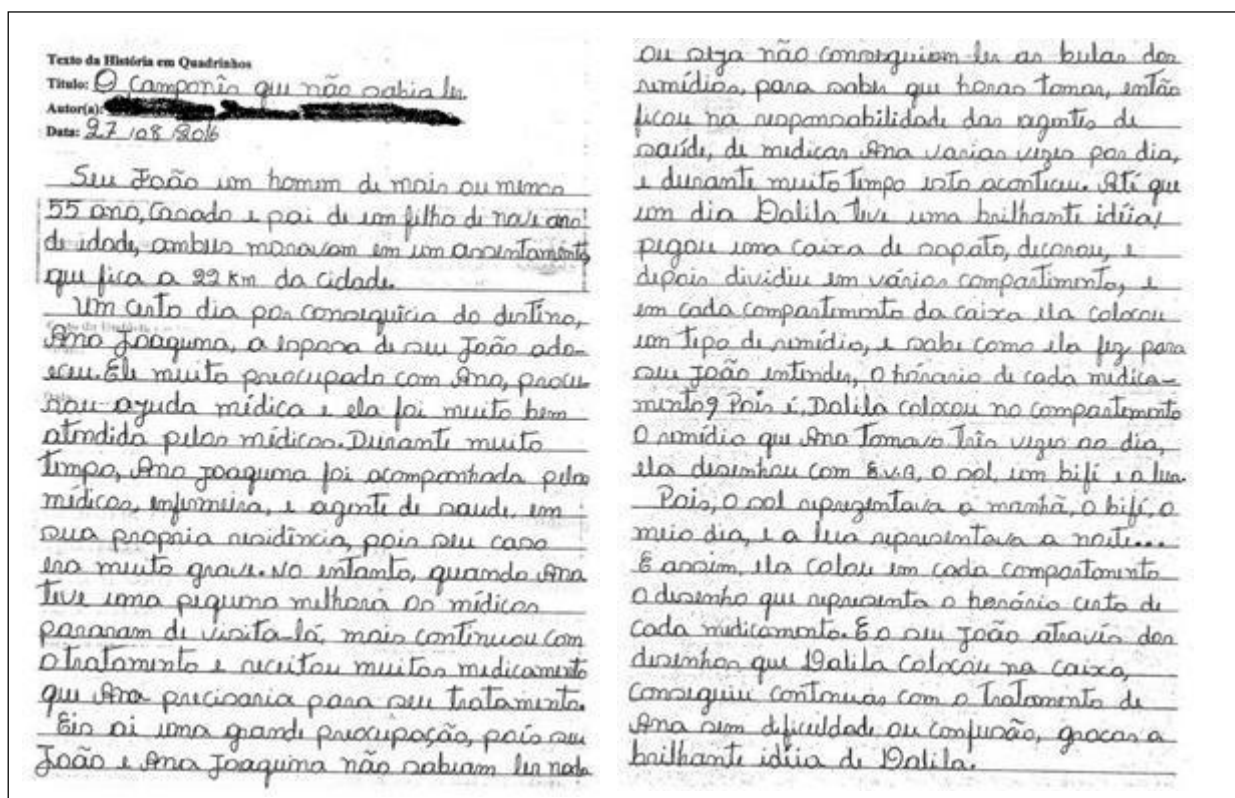
Rural education is a concept that is still evolving and has been expanding over the years. In addition to having its roots in popular education, it is an educational movement organized by rural workers and social movements that seek quality education that meets the needs and knowledge of the peasant population, as well as fighting for the transformation of social conditions in rural areas (CALDART, 2012; 2011). The subjects of Rural Education come from different places and have extensive popular knowledge about their culture. They are family farmers, riverine communities, quilombolas, extractivists, artisanal fishermen, agrarian reform settlers, indigenous peoples, caíçaras, as well as those who produce their material conditions of existence from work in rural areas (BRAZIL, 2010).

As a category of analysis in the educational sphere, Rural Education also seeks to discuss practices and public policies aimed at rural workers, even those developed elsewhere and under different names, using the relationship between the countryside, politics, and education as a basis for guiding questions about the reality of rural life (CALDART, 2012). Thus, understanding this reality and diversity and problematizing it in the educational and scientific spheres should not be considered something neutral and unimportant; on the contrary, it should be present in the reflections produced in educational research.

In this sense, in light of the analyses constructed here from this first category, Davídov (1988) highlights that the study activity on which he based the experiment carried out with the Rural Education class is effective when students develop the corresponding actions through tasks. During the development of this activity, in addition to assimilating theoretical knowledge, the students formed their consciousness, becoming more autonomous; that is, they gradually acquired the ability to learn without the help of the teacher, as occurred in the production of comic books at certain moments of the experiment reported here.

However, another story deserves to be analyzed in this research: student C5, 41 years old and a resident of a Settlement Project in the state of Maranhão, produced a text about a real event that occurred in her community, involving reading and writing. In her story, she shows that it is possible, through visual language, for an illiterate person to communicate with objects from their reality. However, for effective communication, it is necessary to develop one's thinking to understand it and attribute meaning to it, as was the case with the characters Ana Joaquina and João.

Chart 1 – Text from the comic strip by student C5



Source: Prepared by the author. (2016).

In the story of student C5, it is possible to observe the contribution of visual signs to the understanding of reality by two illiterate peasants. As they could not read or write, two important linguistic actions, they needed to learn a language that would enable them to communicate with the world around them, and it was

through the internalization of these signs that they were able to achieve this process. However, for this to happen, the character Dalila had to represent the objects (medicines) so that, in relation to the social practices they establish and their life experiences, they could develop their thoughts.

In this regard, Davídov (1988, p. 111) makes a pertinent contribution: it is through the comparison and separation of the properties of objects that understanding is guided, with a view to giving them some concept. It is from this that it is possible to differentiate objects. For the author, this generalization guides the beginning of knowledge production, since this idea refers to empirical thinking, whose main objective is to classify objects based on abstraction (concept). Thus, “if the principle of understanding consists of abstract identity, formal unity, in exchange, the principle of dialectics, of reason, is concrete identity as the unity of different definitions [...]”. In other words, the definition can change if it develops.

In other words, after the two peasants internalized the concepts, they related them to their real-life situation (the need to take medicine), in which the concepts were in concrete form. Although both the abstract and the concrete complement each other dialectically, empirical knowledge alone is not enough for them to arrive at theoretical thinking.

In this reasoning, as they become aware of their illiteracy, they position themselves as important subjects who demand access, permanence, and adequate conditions to attend school, with the goal of learning to read and write and to use verbal, visual, and oral languages to meet their needs. In this way, by appropriating these signs, they can critically modify and interfere in their reality.

It is worth noting that one character played a key role in this story: Dalila, as the mediator in the reading process carried out by Ana and João, acting as the more experienced individual who taught the less experienced ones, working within their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). In this regard, Historical-Cultural theory understands that it is through interaction with more experienced

individuals that the individual internalizes and appropriates language, which is fundamental for the development of higher psychological functions. In this case, they assimilated visual signs from the thought process carried out with the help of the character Dalila, the protagonist of the story.

This analysis allows us to affirm that, for the development of higher psychological functions, the participation of an individual (mediator) who is more experienced than the individual performing the activity is necessary, as it is important for that individual to learn from the experience of another. A basic example of this occurred in the student's story, when the character Dalila was the most experienced person to teach the two less experienced illiterate peasants. In addition, the social, cultural, and historical context in which the individual is inserted is the basis for the development of their higher psychological functions. That is, these functions develop from social relationships, signs, and other tools that humans create for specific purposes and use to satisfy their needs.

Rural Education was born as a mobilization of social movements against the capitalist logic that saw the countryside as a place of business, of expulsion of the people who lived there, affirming that this space did not need education, but profit and merchandise. In this sense, this new model of education emerged to fight against a hegemonic logic, as it denied the rights, knowledge, cultures, and identities of a people who only want to fight for what is theirs and what is rightfully theirs. In effect, Rural Education fights for an emancipatory and humanizing education, as the countryside is a space of struggles, contradictions, and power. In this analysis, it is possible to affirm that young people and adults in the countryside want to continue being farmers and fight for land and agrarian reform, as they need better living and working conditions in the countryside.

7. Aesthetic literacy raises awareness among young people and adults in rural areas through visual signs in comic books.

Rural Education has been striving to assume its leading role in Brazilian higher education by attempting to articulate popular knowledge, that is, the knowledge and experiences of young people and adults from rural areas with scientific knowledge, creating new forms of research, new objects of study and questions, as well as involving subjects such as quilombolas and indigenous people, among others, both at the undergraduate and graduate levels, which is of utmost importance for thinking about and proposing new public policies that contribute to the advancement of Rural Education in Brazilian society. It was from this context of discussion and analysis that we shared some results of this research developed with young people and adults in Rural Education.

Young people and adults in rural education build knowledge through different means, one of which is art. In addition to being an area of knowledge, and therefore human knowledge, art provides creative learning, which leads students to fully develop their mental abilities through study activities that are fundamental to the development of thought. Because it is an essentially human production, contributing to the production of meaning in the teaching and learning process and being present at different moments in life, art is important for education and, therefore, necessary for life.

In time, we chose to bring to these analyses the comic strips drawn from the texts produced by the peasant students, as we understand that to understand them and make sense of the interpretation of reality revealed by dialectical logic, it is important to situate them in the peasant context in which they are inserted and of which they are a part, in the socio-historical process.

With these guidelines, we begin the analysis with the comic strip produced by student M2, sharing below the drawings that seek to represent, among other information, some elements of the visual language worked on in class throughout the Didactic-Formative Experiment, which made her explore her context a little more.

Images 1 and 2 – Comic strip produced by student M2.



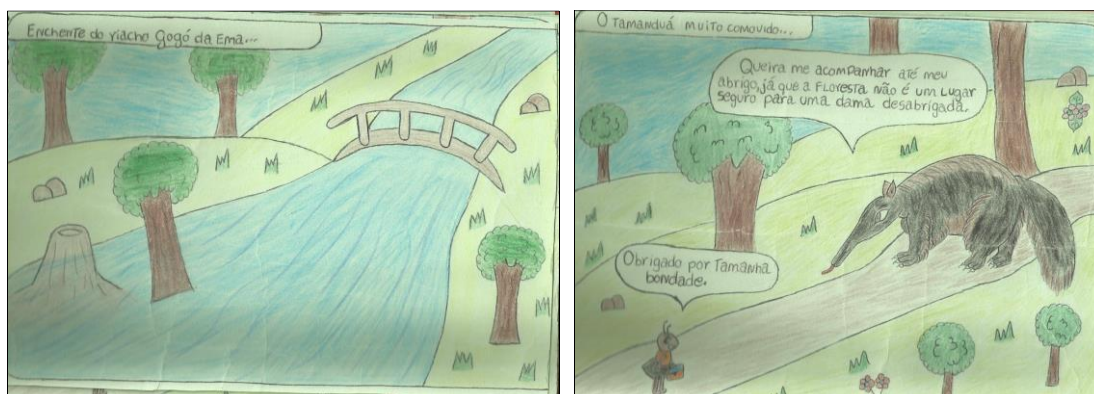
Source: Prepared by student M2. (2016).

Images 3 and 4 – Comic strip produced by student M2.



Source: Prepared by student M2. (2016).

Images 5 and 6 – Comic strip produced by student M2.



Source: Prepared by student M2. (2016).

Images 7 and 8 – Comic strip produced by student M2.



Source: Prepared by student M2. (2016).

Images 9 and 10 – Comic strip produced by student M2.



Source: Prepared by student M2. (2016).

Images 11 and 12 – Comic strip produced by student M2.



Source: Prepared by student M2. (2016).

Image 13 – Comic strip produced by student M2.



Source: Prepared by student M2. (2016).

Right in the first comic strip, you can see the caption, which represents the narrator's voice. This feature is important for situating the reader in the unfolding of the story and providing other important information to aid in their understanding. However, in panels 8, 9, 10, and 11, there is another visual feature characteristic of comics: the thought bubble, whose main function is to combine what can be heard with what can be seen (visual and verbal signs), resulting in the image of speech or thought, for example.

In addition, student M2 organized the speech bubbles according to the dynamics and needs of her story, which means that the reader must read in the sequence determined by the story in order to understand it. In the same comic strip 11, it is possible to observe an onomatopoeia, marked by the visual sign “zup,” intending to show the reader a graphic sound indicating that the ant character is moving to climb the tree to escape the anteater's action. It is important to note that one of the most characteristic features of comic strips and widely used in this language is onomatopoeias. These refer to the graphic sounds of the stories, which can take different forms, depending on the action developed and the author's creativity. They can be present inside or outside the speech bubbles.

This fantastical story, similar to a fable, reveals the struggle for survival in the countryside, which, although represented by two characters from the animal world (ant and anteater), still shows the essence of reality: being aware that she needed to climb the tree to survive the attack of the anteater, which actually wanted to trick her in order to “taste” her; therefore, fighting for life, which is something that many peasants constantly do in rural Brazil when faced with the conflicts that exist in the countryside in the struggle for Agrarian Reform.

Thus, the story told by the student leads us to think about art in its dynamic and moving aspect, because through the thoughts and emotions it provoked in her, it made this student reflect on her social relationships. In other words, by appropriating visual signs characteristic of comic books in the act of telling a story through text and images, the peasant woman made her story dynamic, representing a reality created and visually modified by her from her thoughts, but which still refers to her life in the countryside.

From this perspective, it is important to highlight that the visual signs of these stories led the young people and adults in Rural Education to produce gestures and expressions of the characters, which are quite evident in the drawings they created, allowing us to affirm that the images have a high capacity for information, which means that they need to be read and interpreted.

It became evident in these analyses that the actions took place within the comics, causing the narrative constructed in the story to advance from comic to comic, always obeying the Western reading process: from left to right.

In the analyses carried out here, it is possible to affirm that the comic strips produced improved the understanding of young people and adults of being and living in the countryside, since almost all the stories they produced show people going to the countryside rather than to the city. In addition, for some of them, it was enjoyable to travel long distances to be at university, which was revealed in these stories through visual and verbal signs, important elements of the psyche in Vigotski.

Therefore, the social and cultural context of these students reflects the true reality of rural life, deeply marked by social inequalities, low levels of schooling, and conflicts in the countryside and struggles over land, rather than a false or merely apparent reality.

We also note that the development of creativity among young people and adults in Rural Education in the construction of story drawings, as well as the organization of teaching and study tasks in the experiment, did not follow “traditionalism,” as they performed the tasks differently, not working with models, copies, or ready-made concepts characteristic of traditional teaching; that is, they rejected formal logic in the production of comic books. This was fundamental for them to advance in their learning and arrive at theoretical thinking.

This development was only possible through the study activity carried out by them in the experiment, as it was in this activity that the young people and adults in Rural Education developed their mental processes and, consequently, their awareness as historical subjects of being and living in the countryside. In addition, they managed to overcome the difficulties presented throughout the construction of their stories, which was fundamental for them to advance in their learning (ARAÚJO, 2020).

The formation of this thinking that occurred during the creation of the stories, going from the general to the particular, made the writing of these students meaningful, as it highlighted their emotions, their knowledge, their lives, and the contradictions present in rural Brazil. For these quilombolas, riverine communities, Agrarian Reform settlers, people affected by dams, indigenous peoples, members of social movements, among others, writing is not only an act of communicating with the world around them, but also a means of making it present, of exercising their citizenship, and of overcoming a pseudo-concrete reality that plagues the peasant territory. Therefore, reading and writing are revolutionary actions for them (ARAÚJO, 2018).

In this sense, we understand that both words and drawings are important for these students to become aware of their reality, important for forming their

higher psychic functions, and important for advancing in aesthetic literacy. By thinking dialectically, these students can understand how signs relate to each other in the text and how they produce meaning and information for their social and cultural environment, which is so necessary to overcome a hegemonic capitalist education that does not consider their constructed knowledge.

7. Final considerations

Rural education was not taken as an isolated object of analysis in this research, as we understand it to be an educational movement that, in addition to fighting for equal and effective education for its population, is humanizing and emancipatory, as it considers the materiality of peasant life in its context of social relations and production. Thus, the countryside is a place of production not only of labor, food, and education, but also of art, the latter being a means to overcome the capitalist hegemony that decharacterizes the peasant people.

The young people and adults in Rural Education come from a school history of traditional pedagogical practices imposed by the ruling class, which “instilled” in them what is considered right and wrong. Consequently, this negates the knowledge and understanding they have built up throughout their lives. Because they do not understand this type of teaching, they end up leaving school and university. Many are poor, black, settlers, homeless, or farmworkers, many with only elementary school education (except for those who managed, through much struggle, to enter university) and with poor schooling. That is why we believe it is important to overcome this dominant hegemony in the teaching of most Brazilian basic education schools so that classes are more developmental and closer to the reality and interests of these students.

That is why we advocate developmental teaching when working with young people and adults in rural education, as it is a way of promoting progress in their teaching and learning through study activities that enable them to develop their higher psychological functions, changing their realities as historical subjects by becoming aware of that reality itself.

Therefore, it is necessary for schools and universities to think theoretically, to provoke this need in their students, to consider and value all curricular subjects, including art, which is so undervalued in the Basic Education curriculum, and not just a few. Thus, instead of working predominantly with empirical knowledge (appearance), they should work with theoretical knowledge (essence) with their students. That is, one must move from empirical (isolated) knowledge to theoretical (totality) knowledge.

Through comic books, these students developed their aesthetic perception and recorded their knowledge about the Brazilian countryside, rejecting the appearance of reality that is quite common in textbooks, commercial comic books, and the discourse of public authorities that “ignore” its essence, by showing a different reality of the countryside. Given this, art has competently shown that the peasantry presents and reveals information that is little known to most people.

With the research carried out, we understand aesthetics as something that refers not only to a physically well-made work but also to an object or thought that has more than artistic value, that is, harmony and balance in its forms, therefore, aesthetic quality. In this context, enabling young people and adults in Rural Education to become aware of their reality through the visual and verbal signs of comic books is a way of thinking about the possibility of multiliteracy, in which aesthetic literacy is an essential aspect.

In the analyses constructed, we affirm that it is possible to discover the essence by overcoming (denying) appearance. Under this guideline, by developing their thinking from the simple to the complex (from the general to the particular), young people and adults in rural education also formed their awareness of reality, which allowed them to have greater autonomy and self-control in the production of comic books as a means of representing and modifying their reality. By emphasizing in this research that theoretical thinking occurs through the rise of the abstract to the concrete, it is possible to affirm, therefore, that this dialectical movement is understood in the totality to which young people and adults in Rural Education belong.

It is important to note, as pointed out by Puentes (2019), that developmental teaching (or learning) is based on the formation of theoretical thinking (psychic activity); consequently, this thinking cannot be taught but learned by the student during the study activity.

The research carried out allowed us to understand that by developing thinking that goes from the simple to the complex (general to particular/abstract to concrete), young people and adults in rural areas can also form their awareness of reality, which allows them to have greater autonomy and self-control in the production of comic books as a means of representing and modifying their reality. By highlighting in this study that theoretical thinking occurs through the rise from the abstract to the concrete, it is possible to affirm that this dialectical movement is understood in its entirety by young people and adults in rural education.

In a changing Brazilian society, in which social actors who were once disregarded are now demanding a say, reading and writing, influenced by the expanded notion of literacy, take on fundamental roles of exceptional added value for education and awareness. More than decoding, it is necessary to interpret and make decisions; beyond the text, it is necessary to understand the context, which enables the understanding of reality, collaborative and supportive action, and the organized search for solutions to the problems that arise in everyday life.

Thus, this research allows us to conclude that the term literacy points to a set of social practices in the context of written culture in which subjects can engage. In our understanding, aesthetic literacy is a cultural asset to which children, young people, and adults have an inalienable right, and schools and universities have a duty to pay attention to the development of a didactic proposal aimed at bringing the reader closer to the text. Furthermore, this study will have consequences for the organization of teaching programs, resulting in benefits not only for the academic community but also for all those involved in this research and for society in general.

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