

From meaning to practice: pedagogy students' perceptions on dictionary use¹

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the understanding and use of the dictionary by undergraduate Pedagogy students at a federal university, analyzing its relevance for teaching practice in Basic Education. The problem focuses on the lack of lexicographic literacy in initial teacher training, which may compromise the use of the dictionary to its full potential. Grounded in the works of authors such as Biderman (2001) and Krieger (2019), the study adopted a qualitative methodology, applying questionnaires to students in their final term. The data, analyzed in light of the BNCC (2017) and the theoretical framework, reveal a formative gap regarding the critical and creative use of the dictionary. The study concludes that the inclusion of systematic lexicographic literacy activities – such as the production of glossaries and the exploration of both digital and printed dictionaries – is imperative. Such strengthening is essential to ensure consistent pedagogical mediation and the lexical expansion of students during the literacy process.

KEYWORDS: Dictionary. Teacher education. Lexicographic literacy.

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Do significado à prática: percepções de estudantes de pedagogia sobre o uso do dicionário

RESUMO

Esta pesquisa investiga a compreensão e o uso do dicionário por graduandos de Pedagogia de uma universidade federal, analisando sua relevância para a prática docente na Educação Básica. A problemática centra-se na carência de letramento lexicográfico na formação inicial, o que pode comprometer o uso do dicionário em todo o seu potencial. Fundamentado em autores como Biderman (2001) e Krieger (2019), o estudo adotou metodologia qualitativa, com aplicação de questionários a discentes do último período. Os dados, analisados à luz da BNCC (2017) e do referencial teórico, revelam uma lacuna formativa no uso crítico e criativo do dicionário. Conclui-se que é imperativa a inclusão de atividades sistemáticas de letramento lexicográfico, como a produção de glossários e a exploração de dicionários digitais e impressos. Tal fortalecimento é essencial para garantir uma mediação pedagógica consistente e a ampliação lexical dos alunos no processo de alfabetização.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Dicionário. Formação docente. Letramento lexicográfico.

Del significado a la práctica: percepciones de estudiantes de pedagogía sobre el uso del diccionario

RESUMEN

Esta investigación indaga la comprensión y el uso del diccionario por parte de estudiantes de Pedagogía de una universidad federal, analizando su relevancia para la práctica docente en la Educación Básica. La problemática se centra en la carencia de alfabetización lexicográfica en la formación inicial, lo que puede comprometer el uso del diccionario en todo su potencial. Fundamentado en autores como Biderman (2001) y Krieger (2019), el estudio adoptó una metodología cualitativa, con la aplicación de cuestionarios a discentes del último período. Los datos, analizados a la luz de la BNCC (2017) y del referente teórico, revelan una brecha formativa en el uso crítico y

creativo del diccionario. Se concluye que es imperativa la inclusión de actividades sistemáticas de alfabetización lexicográfica, tales como la producción de glosarios y la exploración de diccionarios digitales e impresos. Tal fortalecimiento es esencial para garantizar una mediación pedagógica consistente y la ampliación lexical de los alumnos en el proceso de alfabetización.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Diccionario. Formación docente. Alfabetización lexicográfica.

Introduction

School and/or pedagogical dictionaries, which are the focus of this study, are defined by Fernandes (2023, p. 58) as instruments that “[...] aim to assist students in their learning process, whether in the phase of acquiring their mother tongue in its formal modality or a second language, foreign or not.” This understanding allows us to recognize the dictionary not merely as a repository of words and meanings, but as a pedagogical tool that supports the development of students’ linguistic and communicative competence.

From this perspective, the use of the dictionary in the school environment goes beyond the traditional idea of occasional consultation to resolve specific doubts. It becomes a pedagogical resource that can enhance students’ autonomy, foster the development of reading and writing strategies, and stimulate critical reflection on language and its uses. By promoting the expansion of vocabulary repertoire, the dictionary contributes to the formation of more competent readers and writers who are more aware of their linguistic choices.

Furthermore, Fernandes (2023) reinforces the importance of considering the formative dimension of the dictionary. When used in a systematic and contextualized way, this tool becomes a mediator in the relationship between teacher, student, and knowledge, contributing to

meaningful learning. In this sense, the conception that Pedagogy students have about the dictionary is fundamental, since, as future teachers, they will play a decisive role in the critical and creative incorporation of this resource into their pedagogical practices.

Thus, the dictionary is an important instrument not only for the lexical recording of a language but also as a pedagogical tool in the teaching-learning process. Welker (2004) characterizes it as a systematized collection that provides meanings, usage forms, and linguistic information. In the educational context, especially in literacy, the dictionary can expand students' vocabulary, promote autonomy in searching for meanings, and reinforce spelling, as outlined in the National Common Curricular Base (BNCC, 2017, pp. 115-129) through the skills EF35LP12, EF04LP03, EF04LP22, and EF05LP22.

The methodology adopted in this research is qualitative in nature, based on the application of questionnaires to students in the final semester of the course, seeking to understand how teacher education in Pedagogy addresses the use of the dictionary and prepares future teachers to work with this tool. The justification for this study lies in the need to strengthen teacher education regarding the lexicon and strategies for teaching the Portuguese language, contributing to a more critical and reflective linguistic education, with the dictionary as a pedagogical object. The hypotheses raised are: (i) teacher education in Pedagogy may not sufficiently address the use of the dictionary as a didactic tool; (ii) many future educators are unfamiliar with the BNCC (2017) skills related to dictionary use; and (iii) the use of the dictionary in the classroom is still underestimated, being employed only as a tool for occasional consultation rather than a dynamic pedagogical resource.

This research aims to analyze the perception of students in a Pedagogy program at a Federal University regarding their knowledge and use of the dictionary in pedagogical practices, especially in elementary education. The study is based on the assumption that many

educators do not use the dictionary in the classroom due to a lack of adequate training during their undergraduate studies, which limits its potential as a teaching resource.

Therefore, we seek to understand to what extent the initial training of educators promotes the development of lexicographic literacy and the use of the dictionary as a didactic tool.

Notes on the Dictionary

Linguistic recording is not merely an intrinsic aspiration of human beings but constitutes an essential need for the validation and recognition of a given language. As noted by Biderman (2001, p. 17), “A language dictionary describes the vocabulary of the language in question, seeking to record and define the lexical signs that refer to concepts developed and crystallized in culture.” Therefore, the dictionary inherently enables expanded access to linguistic knowledge, promotes autonomy in the search for meanings, and facilitates the learning of new lexical items, thereby enriching communication.

A dictionary is a work that compiles and records the lexicon of a language, organizing it alphabetically and generally presenting definitions, usage, etymology, among other information related to each entry (Welker, 2004). It can be understood as a guardian of words, as it records, describes, prescribes, and transmits the lexical units in use by a given group.

With the beginning of lexicographic practice in Brazil (1712), various types of dictionaries have been and continue to be developed, focusing on Brazilian Portuguese. Among these categories, we highlight School Dictionaries. Since 2002, dictionaries have been evaluated by the National Textbook Program (PNLD-Dictionaries, 2002), which aims to select, evaluate, and distribute these works. The inclusion of dictionaries in this program represents a major achievement for the field of Lexicography, as it recognizes the dictionary not only as a repository of a language’s lexicon but

also as a resource with genuine pedagogical potential. In other words, it is a didactic material that can and should be used in language classes, from the initial stages of literacy to its consolidation.

The dictionary can be used at different stages of the teaching-learning process, whether in Portuguese language classes or other areas of knowledge, since it presents the language's lexicon, and language itself is the primary tool that enables communication and the dissemination of knowledge. However, to use the dictionary effectively, teachers must be familiar with different types of dictionaries, have a well-structured lesson plan, and clearly define their objectives.

Thus, teacher education regarding the use of the dictionary is fundamental, as it supports both language mastery and the development of effective pedagogical strategies, especially in the literacy process. In this context, the dictionary is an instrument that contributes to vocabulary expansion and to the understanding of lexical structures essential elements for consolidating linguistic competence. For educators, knowledge and use of this resource are indispensable, as it forms the basis for planning activities that stimulate curiosity and encourage children's learning. In this way, the teaching-learning process is strengthened, and from the early years, habits of consultation and research are fostered, enhancing student autonomy.

Within the scope of this research, the use of the pedagogical dictionary is taken as the central object of analysis, as it is designed according to specific lexicographic criteria to meet the cognitive and linguistic demands of its target audience (students), offering explanations suited to their level of understanding.

The Development of Lexicographic Literacy in Teacher Education and the Use of the Dictionary in Pedagogical Practices

Lexicographic literacy is defined by Rodrigues-Pereira, Zacarias, and Nadin (2023, p. 18) as:

[...] the ability of the user to competently use a lexicographic repertoire, making the most of the various types of information recorded in a dictionary according to their needs for production and/or comprehension (Rodrigues-Pereira; Zacarias; Nadin, 2023, p. 18).

As indicated in the excerpt above, lexicographic literacy consists in developing the competence to recognize, understand, and mobilize the different elements that constitute a dictionary – whether structural, semantic, or pragmatic – in order to use it autonomously, critically, and productively. It goes beyond the simple act of consulting entries, integrating the dictionary as an instrument for linguistic reflection and knowledge construction.

Considering the need for teacher education and lexicographic literacy among educators, Borba (2003, p. 16) emphasizes that “a dictionary should never be regarded merely as a simple repository or collection of words; rather, it should serve as a guide for usage and, as such, become a primary pedagogical instrument.” For educators, such training is indispensable, as it directly influences how they guide their students in the conscious and effective use of this resource, contributing not only to vocabulary expansion and lexical precision but also to the development of metalinguistic competencies, which are fundamental to reading, writing, and critical thinking.

Pedagogical practice aimed at developing critical awareness of language use helps students understand language as a social and functional tool for interaction, recognizing that mastery of the lexicon is a fundamental element for the full exercise of communicative competence. As Soares (2000) states:

Students should not rely on the dictionary only in Portuguese classes but should develop the habit of using it while studying any subject. It is the responsibility of all teachers to cultivate this habit in their students, because striving for linguistic growth is not the exclusive task of the language teacher, but of all their colleagues [...] (Soares, 2000, p. 123).

Thus, lexicographic literacy emerges as a fundamental practice in teacher education, as it enhances both the educator's individual linguistic development and their mediating role in student learning. Literacy encompasses the social practices that involve language use, and in this sense, the dictionary can be understood as an essential resource for fostering critical reflection on language and its various uses. Systematic work with this tool promotes the development of linguistic awareness and expands vocabulary repertoire, encouraging greater autonomy in students' discourse production.

Furthermore, each dictionary is designed for a specific audience and purpose, which requires a pedagogical choice aligned with the educational project and the objectives of linguistic and cultural development. However, the pedagogical potential attributed to the dictionary is not always realized in school practices, revealing a gap between theoretical assumptions and the reality experienced by students.

Therefore, it is the teacher's role not only to encourage consultation but also to guide students regarding the possibilities for critical exploration of the dictionary, transforming it into an active and meaningful learning tool. Educators must be familiar with different types of dictionaries (monolingual, bilingual, pedagogical, specialized, among others) and their functions in order to develop teaching strategies that promote critical and autonomous use. In this process, the dictionary is a fundamental tool

because it: i) expands the educator's lexical repertoire, allowing them to work with different linguistic registers; ii) promotes appreciation of linguistic variation, combating prejudice and fostering respect for dialectal differences; iii) supports the teaching of Portuguese, especially in the literacy process, where understanding word meanings is essential; and iv) contributes to students' critical development by encouraging autonomous research and reflection on language use.

However, for the dictionary to be effectively incorporated into pedagogical practices, it must go beyond occasional consultation and become a regular resource in the teaching-learning process. One effective strategy is to promote regular consultation during reading and writing activities, encouraging the search for meanings, synonyms, and antonyms. This expands vocabulary and fosters student autonomy. Working with different types of dictionaries, whether print or digital, allows for exploration of language in its multiple dimensions, adapting to students' needs and realities.

Another relevant strategy is to discuss the historical and cultural evolution of words, relating them to social contexts and demonstrating how language reflects cultural, political, technological, and identity transformations. This critical perspective helps students perceive language as a living and constantly evolving phenomenon. Finally, the use of playful activities – such as word searches, the creation of thematic glossaries, and debates about meanings – makes learning more engaging, associating interaction with the lexicon to games and challenges that stimulate curiosity. In this way, the dictionary ceases to be viewed as a merely normative instrument and becomes an ally in the development of more reflective, critical, and culturally aware readers and writers.

In light of this, the following question arises: does teacher education in Pedagogy provide adequate training regarding the knowledge and use of the dictionary in Portuguese language teaching during the literacy process? The intention here is not to criticize the program, but rather to reflect on

strategies that may contribute to teacher education, considering that the use of the dictionary in the classroom is established by the BNCC (2017).

Discussions on the Dictionary and the BNCC: Possibilities in Pedagogical Practice

Integrating the use of the dictionary in the classroom is a fundamental strategy for developing the skills outlined in the BNCC (2017), particularly with regard to lexical literacy and the strengthening of reading and writing competencies. By proposing the skills EF35LP12, EF04LP03, EF04LP22, and EF05LP22, the BNCC (2017, pp. 115-129) recognizes the role of the dictionary not only as a reference tool but also as a pedagogical resource that fosters autonomy, critical thinking, and the expansion of students' linguistic repertoire. Let us examine what each of these skills entails.

Skill EF35LP12 (BNCC, 2017, p. 115) proposes that students should “consult the dictionary to clarify doubts about the spelling of words, especially in cases involving irregular phoneme-grapheme relations.” This skill goes beyond simple spelling correction, as it encourages students to understand how language functions at multiple levels. In this sense, the use of the dictionary is particularly relevant in dealing with irregular phoneme-grapheme correspondences, which may create uncertainty in writing and require consultation to verify the correct form of words.

Pedagogical work, therefore, should guide not only consultation but also the critical interpretation of dictionary entries, fostering, as Antunes (2009) argues, the development of linguistic awareness and the appropriation of language as a social practice.

Skill EF04LP03 (BNCC, 2017, p. 115) indicates that students should “locate words in the dictionary to clarify meanings, recognizing the most plausible meaning for the context that prompted the consultation.” This involves understanding that many words are polysemous and that it is up to the reader to determine, according to the communicative situation, which

meaning corresponds to the text in question. In this process, dictionary use is not limited to mechanically searching for definitions; rather, it requires the ability to interpret and relate meanings.

Kleiman (1995) emphasizes that literacy occurs through social practices, and the activity of choosing among different meanings in a dictionary represents a concrete exercise in critical literacy, as it involves interpretation, contextual analysis, and reflection on language use. Let us now consider the final two skills addressed here.

Skill EF05LP22 (BNCC, 2017, p. 129) proposes that students should “read and understand dictionary entries, identifying their structure, grammatical information (such as the meaning of abbreviations), and semantic information.” This is an essential step in enabling students to interpret entries critically, moving beyond simple mechanical consultation.

From this perspective, the dictionary also serves as a resource supporting text production, as it allows students to enrich their vocabulary, verify spelling, and adjust lexical choices according to the discourse genre being developed. In this way, it acts as a mediator in the writing process, helping students become more conscious authors of their linguistic choices. This view aligns with Vygotsky (2007), for whom cultural tools – such as the dictionary – mediate cognitive development, and with Soares (2002), who conceives literacy as a situated practice in which linguistic resources are accessed according to communicative goals.

Skill EF04LP22 (BNCC, 2017, p. 129) indicates that students should “plan and produce, with a certain degree of autonomy, entries for children’s encyclopedias, whether digital or printed, considering the communicative situation and the topic/purpose of the text.” This practice enables students to understand the logic of organizing and presenting lexical information, exercising clarity, objectivity, and adequacy to the target audience. Moreover, by producing entries, students develop greater awareness of how language functions and the importance of selecting the most appropriate

meanings and examples, thereby strengthening their linguistic and discursive competence.

Additionally, this skill encourages students to analyze different meanings of the same word, recognizing that meanings change depending on the context of use. This reflection not only strengthens lexical competence but also fosters a critical view of language as a dynamic and constantly evolving phenomenon. As Bakhtin (1992) reminds us, the meaning of words is always historically and socially situated, which means that exploring multiple meanings promotes an understanding of language as a living and heterogeneous practice.

Thus, pedagogical work with the dictionary, in alignment with the skills proposed by the BNCC (2017), should encompass several essential dimensions: i) understanding the structure and organizational logic of the dictionary, recognizing its basic components – such as entries, grammatical class, definitions, and usage examples – as well as the principle of alphabetical order. This competence can be developed through activities such as creating a “mini-dictionary” or glossary, which helps students internalize the logic of lexicographic works; ii) locating words and conducting critical consultations, understanding the function of graphic signs, abbreviations, and symbols that indicate different meanings, thereby promoting careful reading of the information provided. Activities such as “The Dictionary Entry Race”⁴ illustrate this dimension, encouraging students to quickly locate words and discuss the most appropriate meaning in context; iii) identifying and interpreting multiple meanings, developing the ability to select the correct meaning according to context, as in the polysemy of the word “banco” in Portuguese, which may refer either to a financial institution or a seat; and iv) valuing linguistic variation and combating prejudice, considering the dictionary as a record of lexical and sociolinguistic diversity.

⁴ “The Dictionary Entry Race” is a playful activity involving quick searches in the dictionary. The goal is to locate the word announced by the teacher as quickly as possible. The student who first finds the entry and reads its definition aloud to the group is the winner.

Pedagogical practices should value linguistic diversity, analyzing regional variants such as “ônibus” and “coletivo” as legitimate usages. Furthermore, the dictionary should be integrated into reading and writing activities to expand vocabulary and avoid repetition, promoting student autonomy through individual research on unfamiliar terms in literary texts.

In conclusion, working with the dictionary in alignment with the BNCC (2017) skills goes beyond the traditional view of it as a mere reference tool and places it at the center of the literacy process. By fostering student autonomy, encouraging critical reflection on language use, expanding lexical repertoire, and promoting appreciation of linguistic diversity, the dictionary establishes itself as a pedagogical resource capable of enhancing reading and writing practices in their social and cultural dimensions.

Methodology

This research is qualitative in nature, as it prioritizes understanding the meanings that individuals assign to their experiences, a key aspect of qualitative research as indicated by Minayo *et al.* (2007). Therefore, we seek to understand, from the participants' perspective, the conception of teacher education in Pedagogy regarding knowledge and the use of the dictionary in the classroom. Since this topic is rarely addressed in Pedagogy programs, we chose to collect data through a questionnaire administered to students in the final semester, as they have completed the entire course and are thus able to report whether activities involving dictionary use and the skills EF35LP12, EF04LP03, EF04LP22, and EF05LP22, established by the BNCC (2017, pp. 115-129), were addressed during their training.

The research was developed in articulated stages in order to ensure a critical analysis of the object of study and the production of

relevant empirical data. Initially, an analysis and discussion of the BNCC (2017) were carried out, with emphasis on the skills that indicate the use of the dictionary as a pedagogical resource in the teaching-learning process of the Portuguese language. This stage made it possible to define the normative framework and identify the competencies to be explored in teaching practice.

Subsequently, a data collection instrument was developed through an electronic form created in Google Forms, consisting of four objective and open-ended questions. The questionnaire was distributed to Pedagogy course WhatsApp groups, resulting in a total of twelve participants.

Finally, a qualitative analysis of the responses was conducted, focusing on understanding the participants' conceptions regarding the use of the dictionary in pedagogical practice and its relationship with the guidelines of the BNCC (2017). This analytical process sought to articulate theoretical contributions with empirical data in order to highlight both the challenges and the potential of the dictionary as a didactic resource in the school context.

Analysis and Discussion

After administering the questionnaire for data collection, the responses were organized into four distinct tables, each corresponding to one of the questions posed. To ensure the systematization of the information, in our analyses, each table was structured into two columns: in the first, the generic label "participant" was used, followed by a sequential number indicating the order in which the responses were recorded, along with the indication of gender, identified by the letters "F" (female) and "M" (male) in *Google Forms*. This procedure was adopted in order to preserve the anonymity of the respondents. In the second column, the responses themselves were presented.

This organization not only ensures the confidentiality of the participants but also allows for a clearer, more objective, and methodologically appropriate analysis of the collected data.

Table 1: Question 1 – During your Pedagogy course, were you encouraged to use the dictionary in your academic activities? If so, in what way?

Participant Identification	Responses
Participant 1H	Yes, through Google.
Participant 2H	There was no encouragement from the instructor to use this resource.
Participant 3M	No, sometimes I searched on my own because I preferred answers with explanations.
Participant 4M	Yes. In some courses, the use of the dictionary was part of the content studied. In the Literacy 1 course, for example, we read pedagogical concepts provided by CEALE. In others, professors encouraged us to look up the etymological meaning of words to support the use of concepts.
Participant 5M	At the beginning, yes, to look up words that were unfamiliar to my vocabulary.
Participant 6M	No.
Participant 7M	No.
Participant 8M	Very little. Only in a specific course. We were assigned a book, and each student had a role in each chapter. For example, if we were assigned the role of “lexicographer,” we had to use the dictionary.
Participant 9M	No.
Participant 10H	I do not recall studying dictionaries; it was only mentioned as a textual genre.
Participant 11M	No.
Participant 12M	I was never encouraged.

Source: Prepared by the authors.

The data indicate that most participants did not receive systematic encouragement to use the dictionary during their undergraduate studies, with its use being limited to occasional situations or isolated experiences in certain courses. This reality reflects the gap already identified by Krieger (2007, p. 302), who states that “[...] improving the conditions for dictionary use in schools is directly linked to the lack of lexicographic knowledge in teacher education. Hence the importance of incorporating lexicographic studies into teacher training”.

In other words, the absence of systematic practices related to dictionary use throughout teacher education compromises the development of lexicographic literacy. Thus, if future educators do not experience activities involving the critical and productive use of the dictionary during their training, they are more likely to reproduce this methodological gap in their practice within Basic Education.

Table 2: Question 2 – What is your general perception of the use of the dictionary as a pedagogical tool in teaching?

Participant Identification	Responses
Participant 1H	For me, it is an indispensable resource that has helped me discover a new way of writing.
Participant 2H	The dictionary as a didactic resource is important for discovering words, meanings, and other grammatical aspects.
Participant 3M	For me, the dictionary has many possibilities, both in its physical and online formats.
Participant 4M	Personally, I have great appreciation for the dictionary, especially the printed one, not only for its ability to reveal the history and meaning of words, but also for the way they are organized within a logical alphabetical system. I consider it a highly valuable pedagogical tool, which I usually include in almost all of my lesson plans. However, I admit that, when applying it in practice, I encounter some difficulties, since its use requires prior knowledge

	that needs to be part of students' daily routines in order to facilitate word searches in the dictionary.
Participant 5M	For me, it is limited to finding word meanings; I have not considered other uses.
Participant 6M	I think it is important to avoid gaps during literacy or even in the development of student learning.
Participant 7M	Important.
Participant 8M	Very important!
Participant 9M	Distant from current reality.
Participant 10H	Fundamental for the conception and understanding of conscious reading.
Participant 11M	I believe it is an important tool that contributes to writing, but it is used very little nowadays, especially as technology advances and online searches become easier and more practical.
Participant 12M	It is important for understanding the meaning of words.

Source: Prepared by the authors.

The responses reveal that most participants perceive the dictionary as a highly relevant pedagogical resource. Terms such as “indispensable,” “important,” “fundamental,” and “extremely important” appear in several statements, indicating a consensus regarding the value of this tool in the teaching-learning process.

These perceptions are directly aligned with the theoretical discussion proposed by Krieger and Müller (2019), who argue that the dictionary goes beyond the function of a mere repository of words and constitutes an instrument of cognitive and cultural mediation, capable of enriching students' cultural and linguistic development. Such views also converge with the idea that the dictionary supports the construction of textual comprehension, extending beyond simple consultation.

Some participants highlight its role in supporting reading, writing, and word discovery, demonstrating a direct association between the dictionary, literacy, and vocabulary development. There are also responses that reflect a more critical and in-depth perspective, such as that of

participant 4F, who emphasizes the dictionary's logical organization and historical value, while also pointing out the difficulties in its use, as it requires prior knowledge from students. This position reveals an awareness that the dictionary is not merely a consultation tool but demands specific skills for its effective use.

On the other hand, some participants express a negative or limited perception, such as participant 5F, who restricts its use solely to consulting meanings. Participant 9F, in turn, considers it “distant from current reality,” suggesting a mismatch between contemporary pedagogical practices and this resource.

Thus, the data highlight two perspectives: on one hand, the recognition of the dictionary as a valuable pedagogical resource; on the other, the identification of its limitations and challenges in use, such as its restriction to meaning lookup and the perception that it is outdated in relation to digital technologies.

Table 3: Question 3 – How do you imagine the dictionary can be effectively used in elementary education, especially in the early stages of literacy?

Participant Identification	Responses
Participant 1H	It encourages reading and curiosity, leading children to discover multiple meanings for the same word.
Participant 2H	The dictionary can be used as a complement in content such as grammatical classes, syllabication, and others.
Participant 3M	It can be used to encourage the production of texts based on keywords, helping children become accustomed to research, so they may not face the same difficulties I experienced when writing my undergraduate thesis.
Participant 4M	Some ideas for using the dictionary include searching for unknown words after reading texts, creating collective dictionaries, and – especially in the literacy phase – developing dictionaries with multisemiotic

	resources (such as words, images, meanings, smells, and textures). This also allows exploration of the structure of the dictionary, since one of its main characteristics is its logical alphabetical organization, which can contribute to understanding the reading and writing system during early literacy. Moreover, contact with this material sparks curiosity and can enrich students' linguistic repertoire.
Participant 5M	Perhaps it can be used to help learn the alphabet.
Participant 6M	-----
Participant 7M	The dictionary can be used in early grades in a very practical and engaging way. It helps children better understand alphabetical order, discover the meanings of new words, and learn correct spelling. It can be incorporated into games, word searches, and reading and writing activities. Additionally, illustrated children's dictionaries are more appealing and facilitate comprehension. In this way, children gradually develop autonomy and learn to use this tool in their daily lives.
Participant 8M	The dictionary is important but underused. It encourages the search for knowledge and the meanings of words.
Participant 9M	-----
Participant 10H	I believe the dictionary helps in discovering new words and connecting them to new cultures.
Participant 11M	As a methodology, it can be used in group activities to stimulate children's curiosity and interest.
Participant 12M	It can be used as a research tool for children, through which they can learn new words.

Source: Prepared by the authors.

The responses presented in the table above show that participants recognize the pedagogical potential of the dictionary in the early grades, associating it with the development of vocabulary expansion, understanding of alphabetical order, autonomy, and curiosity.

Participants (1M, 3F, 7F, 10M, 12F) highlight the use of the dictionary as a resource that fosters curiosity, the discovery of new words, and the

expansion of linguistic repertoire. This perspective aligns with Biderman (2001), Fernandes (2023), Krieger and Müller (2019), among others, who argue that the dictionary should not be seen merely as a consultation tool, but as a resource for linguistic development, capable of expanding students' vocabulary and cognitive abilities. Furthermore, the encouragement of autonomous dictionary use, evident in participants' statements, reinforces the role of investigative practice in the learning process.

Participant 2M, in his response, suggests the use of the dictionary as a complement in the study of grammatical content (such as word classes and syllabication). This view is closer to a more traditional conception of the dictionary, as discussed by Antunes (2009), who criticizes reducing the dictionary to a normative manual, while acknowledging that its use can be productive if integrated reflectively into teaching practices.

Participant 4F stands out for proposing approaches such as the creation of collective dictionaries, the use of multisemiotic resources (words, images, smells, and textures), and the appreciation of alphabetical organization. This perspective expands the function of the dictionary beyond simple consultation, exploring it as a dynamic pedagogical resource.

Additionally, responses such as that of participant 7F emphasize the potential of the dictionary in playful activities (games, reading, and writing), highlighting the importance of illustrated dictionaries for children. The data indicate the need to bring the dictionary closer to students' school reality, making it accessible, engaging, and functional in the teaching-learning process.

Some participants, such as 5F and 8F, still demonstrate a more limited perception of the dictionary, reducing it to the search for knowledge and word meanings. Overall, the data presented and analyzed reinforce the importance of developing lexicographic literacy from the early years of schooling, so that the dictionary ceases to be merely a normative resource and becomes a dynamic instrument for literacy development.

Table 4: Question 4 – Do you believe that the Pedagogy course adequately prepared students to use the dictionary in the classroom? In what way?

Participant Identification	Responses
Participant 1H	No. There is no encouragement aimed at using the dictionary.
Participant 2H	The course does not adequately prepare us to use dictionaries, especially in specific subjects such as Portuguese Language and Literacy.
Participant 3M	No. But I think it is because our course is very fast-paced; it would need more time to cover everything necessary. In my view, the use of the dictionary should be more strongly required, and schools should also emphasize it more.
Participant 4M	In my view, the course did not specifically prepare us to use the dictionary as a pedagogical tool. However, it prepares us to reflect on different ways of developing a lesson using various resources, since it is impossible to be trained to use every pedagogical tool available. From this perspective, it is up to the teacher (student) to think about and explore the available resources. Therefore, I do not believe the course prepares us directly for dictionary use, but rather points to paths, possibilities, and tools that enable pedagogical practice.
Participant 5M	No.
Participant 6M	We used the dictionary very little, or almost not at all.
Participant 7M	Not exactly; it could have prepared us better.
Participant 8M	I believe not!
Participant 9M	No.
Participant 10H	No. We only had two very basic Portuguese language courses; we did not work directly with any dictionary or similar resource.
Participant 11M	No. I do not recall any course that used the dictionary, except for the Libras class.
Participant 12M	It did not prepare me; everything I know I learned in basic education.

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Based on the statements of participants (1M, 2M, 5F, 6F, 8F, 9F, 10M, 11F, and 12F), this scenario of fragility is reinforced, also evidenced in the empirical results of the studies analyzed in the theoretical framework, which demonstrate the lack of effective pedagogical practices involving dictionary use in Basic Education. This imbalance shows that if teachers are not trained to understand the structure, functions, and uses of the dictionary, they will hardly be able to work with this resource in a meaningful way in their future teaching practice.

Participant 3F associates this gap with the “fast-paced” nature of the course, indicating that the absence is not due to a devaluation of the resource, but rather to a lack of time and space within the current curriculum. This reflects the need for more intentional planning regarding the teaching of dictionary use both in undergraduate education and, by extension, in Basic Education.

Participant 4F brings an important nuance: although acknowledging that the course did not directly address the dictionary, she highlights that the training encourages reflection on different pedagogical resources, leaving it to future educators to seek out and explore such strategies. This position can be seen as reflecting the principle of appropriate and productive use of dictionaries, as well as the need for teachers to understand the possibilities of different lexicographic resources in order to integrate them into the teaching-learning process.

In general, the participants’ perceptions show that, although the dictionary is recognized as an important pedagogical tool – both for supporting literacy and for expanding vocabulary – its effective use is not strongly encouraged in teacher education. The participants identify several didactic possibilities, such as games, research activities, and collaborative tasks. However, they also point out limitations resulting from the lack of preparation during their training.

This reality confirms the reflections of authors referenced in this study, such as Biderman (2001), Krieger (2007), Krieger and Müller (2019), Soares (2000), among others, who advocate for the dictionary as an instrument of linguistic mediation. Therefore, it is essential to emphasize the need for lexicographic literacy that enables future educators to explore the multiple functions of the dictionary in the classroom.

Conclusion

This study aimed to analyze the perception of students in a Pedagogy program at a Federal University regarding the role and use of the dictionary as a pedagogical tool, reflecting on its relevance to teacher education. The justification was based on the hypothesis that lexicographic literacy is rarely addressed in a systematic way in initial teacher training programs, which may limit the methodological repertoire of future educators and compromise the critical and creative use of the dictionary in the classroom.

The initial hypotheses – related to insufficient training, lack of knowledge of BNCC (2017) skills, and the restricted use of the dictionary – were confirmed by the empirical data. The questionnaire responses revealed that encouragement to use the dictionary during undergraduate studies is occasional and does not constitute a central element of the curriculum. It was also observed that many students are unaware of the BNCC (2017) skills that recommend dictionary use, as well as its multiple functions beyond simply searching for meanings. This scenario reinforces the criticism regarding the lack of systematic experiences with the dictionary during initial training, which has implications for future pedagogical practice.

The qualitative analysis of the data showed that students recognize the dictionary as an important resource, associating it with the development of reading, writing, and vocabulary expansion.

However, they also reported difficulties in incorporating it into teaching proposals, confirming the need to include experiences in the Pedagogy curriculum that enable the critical appropriation of this resource. The guiding question – whether the Pedagogy program adequately prepares students to use the dictionary in the literacy process – was answered negatively by most participants, highlighting a gap in teacher education that deserves institutional attention.

In light of this, we emphasize the need to include specific courses or modules on lexicography and lexicographic literacy in the curriculum, as well as the development of pedagogical practices that encourage guided consultation, the production of glossaries, the creation of mini-dictionaries, and the critical analysis of dictionary entries. Such activities would enable future educators to understand the dictionary not merely as a normative instrument, but as a cultural mediator that fosters critical reflection and students' discursive autonomy.

As a continuation of this study, it is recommended that dictionary use be integrated throughout the entire Pedagogy program, particularly in disciplines related to literacy, linguistics, children's literature, and didactics. In addition, the adoption of interdisciplinary projects involving the creation of thematic dictionaries and the analysis of both digital and print dictionaries can better prepare educators to use this resource to its full potential.

Finally, this study reaffirms that the dictionary should be understood as a strategic ally in teacher education and in the development of students' critical literacy. Strengthening lexicographic literacy in initial training is therefore essential for the dictionary to be consolidated as an instrument of linguistic and pedagogical empowerment.

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