

THE PORTUGUESE CLASS: ON (NON) FUNCTIONAL EXPERIENCES¹

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- **ABSTRACT:** This article broaches the Portuguese class, discussing school language education for social uses of writing. It is an approach - based on reflections on (*non*) functionality of Ponzio (2008-2009) – which aims to answer the following question – problem: 'With regard to Portuguese classes in Basic Education classes located in vulnerable social environments, is it possible to test the elaboration of a didactic process – in the teaching of the social uses of writing - which is not limited to *functionality*? The theoretical basis is the philosophy of Bakhtin's language, the language of anthropology of literacy studies and the psychology of language of Vigotskian substantiation. This is a case study whose data were generated by means of documentary research on experiences of the Institutional Program for Introduction to Teaching – Pibid/Capes –, whose analysis has an interpretive basis. The results indicate possibilities of a didactic action which, taking advantage of the *functionality* that characterizes the school system and the new technologies, open spaces to education for the *non-functional*, for the uses of writing in which the word does not yield to the logic of the global market .
- **KEYWORDS:** Teaching and learning of native language. Social uses of writing. (Non) functionality.

Introduction

Possibly one of the greatest challenges today in Portuguese classes - and surely in other classes of many school subjects – is embarking on the elaboration of a *didactic process* (HALTÉ, 2008) that relies on student engagement in the proposed interaction (MATÊNCIO, 2001). Additionally, there is also the challenge that this same process converges with the conception of language that is dear to us and with the conception of *subject* intrinsic to it (GERALDI, 1991; BRITTO, 1997); that is, a conception of *language* as a *meeting² of the other word with the*

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¹ Thanks for the important contribution of Suziane da Silva Mossmann, Ailton Pereira Júnior, Natássia D. Alano, Aline Thessing and Glizauda Chaves, scholarship holders - PIBID (Institutional Program for Introduction to Teaching), and protagonists of teaching actions from which the process of generating data for this article derived.

² Meeting, for Ponzio (2010; 2013) implies what the author calls the absolute otherness, based on the concept, also his, of the unindifferent differences. We are sure that such a relationship between the self and the other

word of the other (PONZIO, 2010) and a conception of the historicized subject, which is constituted in the relation to otherness (GERALDI, 2010b). And it is also challenging to us, the comprehension that in our condition - as teachers - of more experienced interlocutors, we focus on the representations of the world of our students (VIGOTSKI, 2000), in Portuguese classes that are composed of several *literacy events* (HEATH, 1982), in which we have the task, by the logic of ethics of the profession, of 'horizontalizing' (KALANTZIS; COPE, 2006) the *literacy practices* (STREET, 1988) of our students.

By registering these challenges in the previous paragraph, we make reference, simultaneously in this record, to authors who lay the foundations of our discussions. These are theoretical approaches that we have been proposing to put into dialogism - in what we have been calling *conceptual symposium* (CERUTTI-RIZZATTI; MOSSMANN; IRIGOITE, 2013); approaches we understand on a historical and cultural basis, and which we've been negotiating in the studies that we have undertaken in our research group, the 'Written culture and schooling' group, under the 'Center for Studies in Applied Linguistics' - Nela - at the Federal University of Santa Catarina. This proposed dialogism is established between the philosophy of Bakhtin's language, the psychology of language of Vigotskian and the language of anthropology of literacy studies.

Thus, based on the challenges presented and in the light of the *conceptual symposium* mentioned, it is our purpose, in this article, to broach the topic of the *Portuguese class*, having the (non) functional nature of teaching as a delimitation. Therefore, we start from the (non) functionality concepts proposed by Ponzio (2008-2009), and we move to answer the following research question: *In the case of Portuguese lessons in Basic Education classes located in environments of social vulnerability³ is it possible to test a didactic elaboration process⁴ - in*

takes place only within the scope of the so-called absolute otherness and, therefore, within that which the author understands as nonfunctional, a concept that will be the subject of discussion in this article. We wish, however, to extend the concept of meeting covered by Ponzio also to relationships he would point out as relative otherness - in this case, relationships between teachers and students - and we do that exactly to propose that the Portuguese class be created on the unindifferent difference, that is, the difference that considers uniqueness and not the individualities. This discussion will not be addressed in this article in the depth it requires due to the limits of a text in this genre of discourse, but we make it a topic briefly in one of the sections to anchor the axis on which the article is based.

³ Based on Érnica and Batista (2011), we understand by *social vulnerability environments* those areas that tend to establish relations of self-regulation among public schools serving the same socioeconomically underprivileged clientele, a process in which one of the establishments creates 'filters' through bureaucratic requirements, such as submission of documents, parents' signature, delivery of pictures and the like, which results in a surreptitious selection process of students, determining that those in the most precarious situation with regard to family organization, and economic conditions end up by being 'poured off' from there and received by establishments with a less strict functional structuring and, in most cases, with a weaker pedagogical action.

⁴ Based on Halté (2008), we understand by didactic elaboration, the process that in the teacher action, syncretizes *scientific knowledge, reference practices and expertise*, and not just limited to the mere transposition of *scientific knowledge* to the school sphere.

the teaching of the social uses of writing - which is not limited to functionality? Our goal, in convergence with this problem/question is to analytically describe possibilities that we have seen for this, in two of these classes, doing it under an interpretive look (MASON, 1996).

For this purpose, this article is structured into three content sections: in the first, we present the theoretical basis for this discussion; in the second, we provide a detailed description of methodological procedures; and, in the third, we present and analyze empirical data from experiences of our research group at the interface with the extension, in seeking to answer the problem/question. This is an approach, according to Ponzio (2010; 2011), committed with the *Language of listening*;⁵ in the case of our group, it is committed to a Language with these contours but with an emphasis on the vulnerable social strata, which tends to be characterized by the restricted access to a full education. That is the political dimension of our research commitment.

Theoretical anchoring in *symposium*: looking towards the use of language in the *meeting* between historicized subjects

Some concepts are essential for the discussion that we propose in this article, and we occupy ourselves with them throughout this section, doing it under the perspective, we reiterate, the management of the *conceptual symposium* (CERUTTI-RIZZATTI; MOSSMANN; IRIGOITE, 2013) mentioned earlier. We highlight then, in the light of this symposium, relationships which we regard as relevant to the focus of this discussion.

The Portuguese class held as a *meeting*

Ponzio (2013) is of the opinion that relations between the *self* and the *other* that occur in the context of what he calls *absolute otherness* are those in which there can be no substitution of any of the interactants: love relationships are good examples. In such cases, singularities are needed – there are no individuals, but unique subjects, who are irreplaceable and not exchangeable. It refers to what the author calls unindifferent differences, that is, the difference exists, but we cannot be indifferent to it, because we are dealing with unique subjects, historicized in their experiences and idiosyncrasies rather than with individuals encompassed in large macro-sociological categories - for the purposes of this article, age, grade, social class, anthropological genre and the like.

⁵ For the purposes of this article, we understand by *linguistics of listening*, that it has the language as its object of study taken at the meeting between *subjectivity and otherness*, which requires the *auscultation* addressed by Ponzio (2010), based on responsive understanding proposed by the Bakhtin Circle.

Therefore, with awareness that relationships between teachers and students are in the order of *otherness* - that is, in theory the interactants can be replaced, because these are individuals - we advocate here in favor of the contrary: it seems that the Portuguese classes, as well as classes in general, need to become a relationship of a different order to actually signify and re-signify in/the experiences of the subjects. And if it matters who the subjects are, and if the fact that they are different does matter, because these differences are relevant and not only distinct among them, then it seems that we are dealing with *absolute otherness*, no longer *relative*, and with *unindifferent differences*; therefore, we are dealing with *meetings*.

It is a matter of focusing on intersubjectivity, on uniqueness and on mobility (GERALDI, 2010a) that the *meeting* brings to the interactants, because we understand that such mobility that occurs in the particular characteristics of subjects are the reason why the Portuguese class exists - or any educational process - which also stems from our readings of Vygotsky (2000) about relationships between what is interpsychological and what is intrapsychological - that we prefer to treat as *intersubjective* and *intrasubjective* (based on GERALDI; FICHTNER; BENITES, 2006) - and about meaningful learning. For this purpose, we base ourselves on the Vigotskian concepts of sociogenesis and microgenesis (VIGOTSKI, 1997), aimed at understanding the historicity of the development of subjects in the situated context of interpersonal relations that they establish throughout their training.

With regard to the notion of *meeting*, Ponzio (2010, p.40) believes that “[...] there is no other first word for each one and then the meeting of the other word in which one addresses and of which requires listening”. He continues: “There is no such thing as before one self and the other, each one with what he or she has to say, and then the relationship between them.” And, most importantly for the purposes of this article: “The relationship is not *between* them, but it is precisely what each one represents in the meeting of the other word with the word of the other, and how it would not have been and probably will not be out of that meeting”. Therefore, the *meeting* is not ‘between’ them but ‘theirs’.

And we transform ourselves in this relationship, as the author suggests, when writing: “The value of the individual’s word is added and enriched by the participatory understanding of the other’s word that emphasizes all its precariousness, limitation, temporariness and fugacity; emphasizes its sense of lack, its possibility of absence; and its inseparability [...]”, (PONZIO, 2010, p.45-46). Thus conceiving, we propose to address here the Portuguese class, as a *meeting* between teacher and students, subjects who carry their historicity, in the already transcribed understanding of Ponzio (2010), “that which each one is”; hence the singularities that make them irreplaceable in the *meeting*.

However, we acknowledge that this *meeting* we discuss here is historically outlined with defined purposes within the scope of the *functionality* of relationships of the educational institution: the interpersonal relationships that occur therein have institutional training objectives; in the case of the Portuguese class, it has language education objectives.⁶ In any case, when we propose to use *meeting* for a dialogue acknowledged as *functional*, we do it exactly with the purpose of putting into question the *unindifferent differences*, about which this dialogue has been historically established.

The horizontalization of the *literacy practices* of students: taking up points already mentioned

The understanding that we record in this section broadly takes up outlined concepts that we've seen in the aforementioned research group to which we belong, through which we take the *Portuguese class meeting* with regard to writing, designing it as a set of *literacy events* - based on propositions of Heath (1982), Barton (1994) and Hamilton (2000) -, and understanding such *events* as those situations in which the written modality is part of interpersonal relations, playing a specific role therein, whether that role is a prevailing or a timely one. It is also a *meeting* in which each *event* has historically consolidated purposes: according to Kalantzis and Cope (2006), to horizontalize the *literacy practices* of students. And, understanding *literacy practices* based on Street (1988, 2000), as the set of experiments, values, experiences about/with writing that historicizes subjects, this purpose of the school action implies knowing and respecting these *practices* in their vernacular design and acting in the sense that they become horizontalized, so that students should live other experiences that are not given to them in their immediate social inclusion.

Therefore, it is important that, in the *Portuguese class meeting*, teachers routinely exercise the act of knowing the *literacy practices* of their students - their singularities - judging from their condition of interactants (HAMILTON, 2000) in *literacy events* that historicize every *meeting*. And, knowing them gradually with greater accuracy, it is for the teacher to focus on them, seeking their horizontalization. Here, based on Vygotsky's (2000), the teaching function has a skilled dialogue making it possible for students to grasp the issues they have not yet lived, known, or experienced.

⁶ Our focus is not to immerse in the spectrum of heated discussions about what is to *linguistically educate* speakers of a native language; what is of interest to us here, is to discuss the Portuguese class in the delimited scope of training for the uses of writing, but we record the explicit recognition that neither the Portuguese class, or the language education are restricted to a focus on the written modality. It concerns us due to being our object of research and, in the sections that follow, we will take the *meeting* from that perspective.

We therefore understand that the relationship between *vernacular literacies* and *dominant literacies* (BARTON, HAMILTON, 1998) is certainly the object of attention in the *Portuguese class meetings* because the *functional* action of the school, among other approaches, is to facilitate the appropriation by the students of uses of writing that, evoking the Bakhtinian thought, are historicized in big time, so that is given to them to choose between experiencing these uses only within the limits of its manifestations in the 'immediacy' of time and space, or also to do it in interrelation with other times and spaces, in *big time*.

[...] A work cannot live in future centuries if it doesn't bring together, in a way, the past centuries. If the work was born all and fully today (that is, in its actuality), and were to give no continuity to the past and keep a substantial bond with it, it could not live in the future. All that belongs only to the present dies along with it. (BAKHTIN, 2003, p.363).

We will not concern ourselves here with discussions about what we understand as *vernacular* and *dominant literacies*, because in our group, we did this with Cerutti-Rizzatti and Almeida (2013). We will not also be discussing the complexity of a teacher's action to deal with the relationship between what appears to be *vernacular* and what stands as *dominant*, because also in our group, we covered this aspect with Cerutti-Rizzatti, Pereira and Pedralli (2013). Our purpose in this article is to reflect on relations between the appropriation of the uses of writing seen as *dominant* and the right of subjects to non-functionality, because we understand that the appropriation of the uses of writing that transcend the 'immediacy' of time and space largely depends, with respect to such uses, on the exercise of that right.

The appropriation of the *dominant literacies* and the *right to nonfunctionality*

Ponzo (2008-2009), recognizing that the lexicon of Italian language does not record the words 'infunzionale' and 'infunzionalità', understands that life is not life without the right to what he calls *nonfunctionality*. The author conceives *nonfunctionality* as that which stems from the lack of interest, utilities and defined purposes. To address the concept he often uses the example of affective relationships. He writes:

Ciascuno di noi sa che è alla propria infunzionalità che vorrebbe che l'affetto altrui fosse diretto. In un rapporto che ci coinvolge fortemente, nel senso che è un rapporto decisivo per noi – non un rapporto di lavoro – un rapporto decisivo nel senso affettivo, nel senso del volere bene a qualcuno e del desiderare che anch'egli voglia

bene a noi, sappiamo con certezza che il valore di questo rapporto consiste nel suo essere "desinteressato". (PONZIO, 2008-2009, p.32, author's emphasis)

This is a concept that stems from a criticism of the author to the fact that everything today can become merchandise, including the so-called *immaterial labor*, along the lines of what we do in universities. The criticism of the author focuses on how the university operates in favor of *functionality* with a credit system which results in the computation of hours, just like the logic of the labor market, which pays per hour. Universities, Ponzio (2008-2009) notes, are intended 'to qualify for the labor market': graduates must be able to 'sell their immaterial labor'. He observes in his criticism that today, everything can be turned into merchandise.

This discussion leads us to a reflection that appears based on considerations of Silvestri (2013) on the 'modern concentration camps'. According to him, devices like Facebook act as true concentration 'stables' of human herds, which are addressed in ways previously outlined for the purposes of the market, not being for free that managers of such devices today constitute the largest fortunes in the world and fight among themselves seeking to propose new 'stables' that encourage 'human herds' to migrate in droves. We understand that the transition Orkut - Facebook seems to be an example of a consolidated migration as such, opening the way for others that are foreshadowed. Ponzio (2013, p.16) warns us about this when he records that "[...] *a livello mondiale, nella globalizzazione attuale, [...] a un mercato universale corrisponde una comunicazione universale che veicola gli stessi bisogni, le stesse esigenze, gli stessi desideri, gli stessi immaginari*".

It is in the understanding of this thinker that a time when rushing and showing off were 'rendered' human needs for the purposes of a global market. In this wake, we believe that devices like Instagram and Twitter, alongside Facebook, are examples of these new 'concentration camps' and we add, fields that unlike *Auschwitz-Birkenau*, do not retain subjects by force of arms, but by the exacerbation of narcissism, exhibitionism, vanity, voyeurism and the like. Today we are a civilization marked by haste and self-exhibition.

Our discussion does not, of course, dismiss the fantastic revolution of what social networks mean in the manner of how the global interaction happens today, transcending a relationship of 'one-to-many', as it took place in the pyramidal configuration of mass communication, to the configuration of 'many to many', as it occurs with the communication network (DANESI, 2013). We acknowledge the fantastic progress that this represents for more symmetric sociopolitical relations, which are examples of the recent episodes of popular mobilization in the history of Brazil and the world: there is no charismatic catalyst leader; the crowds self-

organize in the relationships between individuals. As a social phenomenon, however, there are many constituent faces of these networks, among which there is the one we deal with here: a strong commitment to a *functional* logic of the global market.

And, in this context, our students are characterized by the need for constant changes in focus of attention, evidence of that seems to be in the manner of how they divide their attention between multiple focuses at the same time, and change such focuses with a speed that adult immigrants in new technologies find difficult to understand. Programmers of massive television and film attractions – the mass media of the ‘one-to-many’ logic (DANESI, 2013) - have dealt with this challenge in transforming plots and scenes, so that each of the focuses do not take more than two or three minutes, giving place to the next focus, because any extension entails risks of losing the viewer’s attention. This is a search, by these media, to approach the accelerated and fleeting logic of the network format.

According to Ponzio (2008-2009), we can understand this as the architecture of the global labor market: keeping changing in order to remain on the market. This market is still characterized by the need to force, as soon as possible, the obsolescence of property already acquired by the consumer, in such a way as to promote the acceleration of the movement of goods: a new software does not ‘run’ on the hardware that we have; therefore, we need to change both, which leads to the multimillion partnerships between producers of one and other products⁷. This process seems to be twofold: while it is reorganized in attention to these new behaviors, it ratifies them – if it does not produce them - with their commercial propositions.

The consequences of these contemporary changes clearly seem to focus on the school sphere and, with regard to language education, with a focus on writing, seem to lure us into a dangerous training case for *functionality*. We understand as being necessary, here, a longer reflection on this issue and, therefore, we consider initially that studies of *literacy*, especially with Street (1984), have made us realize historically how the uses of writing were associated with erudition, the reading comprehension as a synonym for reading literary works, a sacrosanct and elitist posture about the uses of writing, kept, often, from the condition of humanity inherent to the capacity for abstraction of the real, those preliterate societies or even individuals who didn’t take over the writing systems.⁸ *Literacy* studies certainly constitute a substantive contribution to a new way of dealing with writing also in the process of schooling and have proven to be fertile in shifting

⁷ An example of partnership between Nokia and Microsoft (Available at: <<http://gizmodo.uol.com.br/microsoft-e-nokia-oficializam-parceria/>>. Access in: 30 mar. 2015.) and Samsung and Google (Available at: <<http://www.tudosobremktdigital.com.br/google-e-samsung-fecham-parceria-contra-apple/>>. Access in: 30 mar. 2015).

⁸ An example of studies of David Olson, Patricia Greenfield and Angela Hildyard, mentioned by Street (1984).

conceptions in this field in the school environment, mainly in Brazil, based on the several publications on the subject by Angela Kleiman.

If, however, this contribution is substantial, we must take into consideration that, as tends to be the case when academic theories gain scientific popularization (BORGES NETO, 2004), in this case in the school environment, understandings of all kinds seem to derive from these same theorizations. Britto (2012), along these lines, draws attention to the risk of embarking on a writing conception very closely linked to the everyday *functionality* when we exacerbate our look towards this same daily life. However, we understand that it is up to us to highlight this issue, which we consider delicate, both for the possibility of resuming an understanding of the uses of writing very focused on learning - than Street (1984) and Kleiman (1995) contributed to redeem us - and the possibility of disregarding this same learning in the name of a disproportionate attention to the *ecology of writing* in a corruption of the sense given by Barton (1994). And, in doing so, we often incur in what Street (2000, p.19) warns us not to do: "Nevertheless, I think the *ways* in which the term 'multiple literacies' becomes adopted at times falls into the trap of reification".

We like, in the seminal approach of Barton (1994), the metaphorical look of *ecology* because it raises smooth harmonization; therefore it cannot be held hostage to excesses. The situated uses of writing - in the historical-cultural, socioeconomic and political logic under which they are produced in each of the different human groups - do not compose hermetic universes to changes, because it depends on the movement of historicizing itself; as far as they don't, comprise universes so open to the exotic worlds that they lose their own historical references. This *ecological* look - trying to escape the corruptions - pleases us because, in our view, it is constructed on the basis of balancing,⁹ which certainly is not due to the impositions of others, but to negotiations taking place in interpersonal relations within those groups, in the healthy tension with what is external.

Balancing these views seem to be the challenge of the school, under penalty of bowing - in the metaphor that Saviani (2008) takes from Lenin - to the opposite side of erudition and - drawing upon the criticism of Ponzio (2008-2009) made on a broader plane of human life - falling into the trap of *functionality* that serves the global market. Let's clarify it: the haste of the focus of attention of our students and the way they deal with new technologies challenge us, which like our earlier discussion, causes changes in the market while at the same time endorses them. Thus, before the incommensurability of these challenges, we find ourselves pressed to organize our classes based on new technologies, on the understanding that adapting Facebook, Twitter and similar to strategies or teaching resources, for

⁹ The use of *balancing* here aims to denote *movement*, which does not seem as evident in the word balance; we distance ourselves, in that use, of any relations with the Piaget's thinking.

example, we would be moving towards, in fact, the *meeting* with our students in order to obtain a minimum interactional convergence that makes the class happen (IRIGOITE, 2011), because in theory we would be 'using their language'.

In this eagerness of 'technologization' as synonymous with contemporary school action, again, not uncommon, we run into another of the slip-ups that Street (2000, p.21) warns us about:

In developing a multi-literacies view, then, it is important to guard against a kind of determinism of channel or technology in which visual literacy, in itself, is seen as having certain effects which may be different from computer literacy. The focus would then be on the mode, on the visual media and other kinds of channels are actually given meaning. It is the social practices. I would want to argue that give meaning and lead to effects, not the channel itself.

Perhaps, then, we should pay closer attention to the social practices that have electronic devices as mediators and not overestimate such devices in themselves. Possibly, the seemingly intense entry - a data that requires further confirmation in specific research - from devices such as Facebook in our Portuguese classes deserves our attention, while, for example, electronic devices like Kindle and the like, which are suitable for reading materials with a greater density of content, freeing us from the discomfort of the light from computer screens, are still so uncommon in our search for modernizing classes, which obviously has more complex socioeconomic developments.

Anyway, it's worth asking: would such devices imply a time and a gathering that we are no longer used to? Today would we become trapped by the need to *post* things quickly and also to access quickly the answers of others in a rush? Would we have to learn again that to *answer*, as Bakhtin (2003; 2010) wishes, can also be done in silence [of the gathering]? If we think about how we read in-depth texts on ordinary computer screens, with several 'windows' open in parallel, so as not to lose our 'response times' to the demands of another person's haste, it seems that in fact this 'gathering' is an impracticability in contemporary life, in which 'to disconnect' often implies a sense of 'remaining on the sidelines of ' a time of rapid changes.

The question to be taken into account is to what extent we are not reifying the concept of *literacy*, against which Street (2000) warns us, and taking this concept to prioritize the electronic devices themselves - as hostages to a post-modern behavior - and, in occasional exacerbation of this behavior, failing to examine more carefully the nature of social practices to which such electronic channels lend themselves to. Still in connection with this issue, to what extent don't such practices serve a *functionality* that matters to the global market? The

entry of devices such as blogs and Facebook at school is on a dangerous slide: from one side, the need to make our classes converge with advances of humanity as civilization and the great benefits that this means from several points of view; from the other, the risk of doing it to service a voracious global market that penetrates these same advances.

Today, in the light of discussions of Ponzio (2008-2009) for human life in its broadest sense, we understand that we must, in the *functionality* of the school action, enable the knowledge of the sacred right to the *nonfunctionality* to our students, which is implied, according to the author, in our human condition. In this discussion, he argues that the most basic terracotta pot, made by human groups from different cultural conformations, is not limited to the *functionality*, showing some sort of fligree ornament, completely 'unnecessary' for their intended functional purposes. Even when eating, food being the basic condition of human survival, the configuration of the 'dish' adds to the mere status of 'food to be eaten', so much so that the cuisine is historically nicknamed 'art'.

We understand that today, in Portuguese class, we walk toward a dangerous servility to what is functional whenever we exacerbate, in our approaches to writing, the 'necessary' uses for the rushed daily life of humans with an abbreviated retirement, attached to the 'immediacy' of everyday life and, above all, of a day by day with the configuration that we referred to earlier, based on Silvestri (2013), times of exhibitionism, narcissism, voyeurism, rush, superficiality and the non-deepening.

According to Ponzio (2008-2009, 2013) among the uses of the word - for us here, the written word - that which least lends itself to *functionality* is the use in literature, because such use does not fit the Orwellian logic of newspeak, which is based on the possibility of control of the tongue, on the absence of double meanings, a logic very close to *functionality*. We understand that when Street (1984) warns us of the need to look at writing from other angles, in order to see more than just the standards, he is possibly bending the rod to the other side in search of a necessary balance because it is inclusive. Perhaps, in the mistaken exacerbation already mentioned earlier, we are bending too much to the other side and again losing the balance in teaching actions, in the uses of writing in Portuguese classes, too committed to *functionality*. Facebook posts, pictures of Instagram, Twitter messages, entries to blog, the listings on hypertext, if not - also out of these devices - the recipe, the label, the classified ad and the like, in a list of genres of discourse - or, based on Galdi (2010a), in their reifications - are establishing relationships of everyday 'immediacy'.

This undoubtedly concerns uses of writing that require a school approach in a Portuguese class that addresses social practices imposed by the written form, but we understand that *ecology* comes according to Barton (1994), there

must be a place for the use of the written form in the exercise of the sacred right to *nonfunctionality*, like the literary expressions which have gained *big time* just because they are not established in response to a market for immediate consumption. According to Bakhtin (2003), as mentioned in the previous section, that which belongs only to the present dies with it, because in order for a work to earn *big time*, it needs to engage with the present and the past. When the uses of writing are restricted to serve the market, they tend to become trapped in the rush of the present and they do not win the horizon of the *big time*.

And we understand that the uses that gain the *big time* tend to do so by a movement of junction of voices, even if by homologations (PONZIO, 2008-2009), approaching them to the *official ideology* (BAKHTIN, 2009) and that reverberates the plane of human ontogeny (VYGOTSKY, 1997), which, in Cerutti-Rizzatti and Almeida (2013), we associate the *dominant literacies*. Still based on reflections by Ponzio (2008-2009, 2013), the literary word does not surrender to the Orwellian logic, because it is full of multiple meanings. Looking for opposing this Orwellian logic, we are concerned with what we believe to be a progressive loss of spaces in Portuguese classes in the meeting with the uses of writing that gained big time, often on the grounds that they are incompatible with the hurry to change the focus of attention, this haste to enunciate and respond to the enunciation of another, with which the *meeting* takes place by written means, because it is not face-to-face any longer; it is mediated¹⁰ by technology.

If this reflection is undertaken minimally, it seems to us that, in fact, many of our Portuguese classes – as pointed out by Ponzio (2008-2009) in philosophical discussion about what makes a man today – are isolated in *functionality* that serves the labor market in the harrowing overall logic under which this market is established. There seems to be no more time for *anything*, for the lack of purposes and objectives, for ‘disinterested’ human meetings, for, finally, according to the author, what is essentially human and that characterizes man: the right to *nonfunctionality*. There is no more time because time is money. Ponzio writes (2008-2009, p.25, author’s emphasis):

Oggi i giovani nell’università lo sanno: devono addestrarsi per il “mercato del lavoro”, lasciando perdere e “giustamente” rifiutandosi essi stessi di apprendere tutto ciò che “non è spendibile sul mercato del lavoro” perché sono convinti che “il lavoro rende liberi”.

¹⁰ Daga (2011), in the light of Vygotsky (2000), conceives mediation as corresponding to the psychological tool of symbolic mediation that provides humans with the intersubjective relations between them: the words. As mediation conceives instruments that provide this same interaction, but in the range of electronic devices. We share this insight because we understand that involves media coverage of a substantive difference from the point of view of how they are shaped culturally.

Time is a condition of competition in the global market [of human relations], which requires that we plug-in the haste of enunciation and of the superficial response, which seems illustrative of the determination that we enunciate in 140 characters;¹¹ after all, the market for electronic devices probably does not expect more than that of our interpersonal relations. To deal with this new reality in the school environment seems to be a substantive challenge for whose confrontation we must build new intelligibilities, an attempt that we have rehearsed in the sections that follow.

Methodological procedures: in search of ways for new understandings

In this section we will deal with registering the methodological procedures underlying the argument made in this article, which seeks to answer the aforementioned question-problem, which we resume here: *In the case of Portuguese lessons in Basic Education classes located in social vulnerability environments, it is possible to test a didactic preparation process – in the teaching of the social uses of writing - which is not limited to functionality?* It is an approach of a qualitative interpretative nature (MASON, 1996), typified as a *case study* (YIN, 2005; ANDRÉ, 2010). The search field is a public school in Florianópolis - SC - to students who are characterized for belonging to socially vulnerable strata (ÉRNICA; BATISTA, 2011). We syncretize, in this approach, actions that interface teaching, research and extension within the Institutional Program for Introduction to Teaching - Pibid¹² - Portuguese, maintained at the Federal University of Santa Catarina with scholarships from Capes/MEC and coordinated by us from July 2010 to March 2013.

The *case study* is the work of a group of scholars¹³ in two high school classes from the same school, in Portuguese classes, in search of ways to deal with the uses of writing of the *big time* with students characterized by the already mentioned haste and contemporary superficiality. Participants, in addition to the scholarships, are the students of the classes in question, interacting in the *Portuguese class meeting* with regard to teaching and learning the uses of writing in the *dominant literacies*.

¹¹ As it takes place on Twitter.

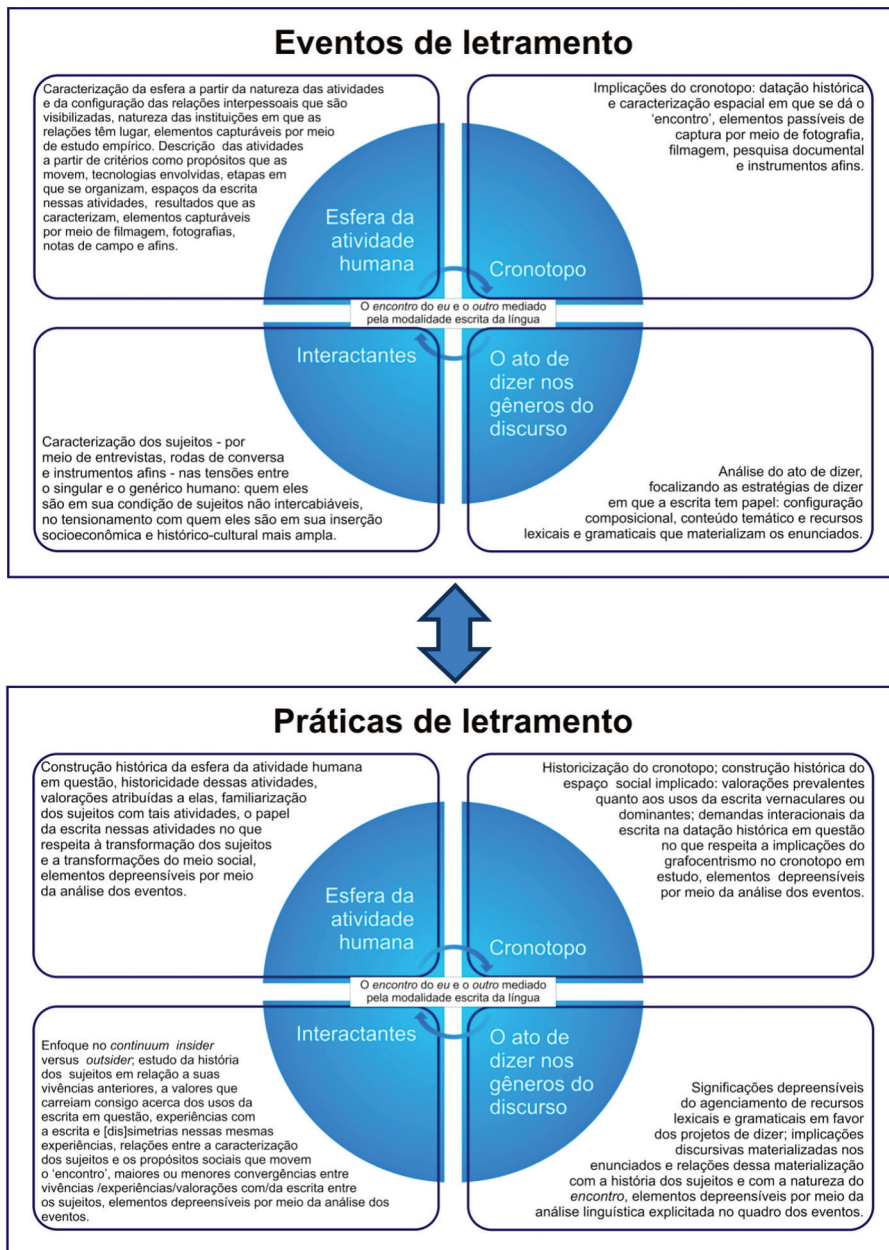
¹² Scholarship program of the MEC via Capes, whose goal is to qualify the training process of graduates in different areas for teaching, anticipating their entry into the school sphere under the guidance of teachers from areas linked to universities.

¹³ The experiences that provided the basis for the data presented here, as mentioned in the opening of this article, result from the performance of the following scholars: Suziane da Silva Mossmann, Ailton Pereira Júnior, Natássia D. Alano, Aline Thessing and Glizauda Chaves; and took place at school with high school classes in the years 2011 and 2012.

For the generation of the data analyzed in the following section we use as a base the documentary research, understood as a strategy in favor, here, of the case study and not as a kind of research in itself (YIN, 2005). The documents that we use are the design of performance in classes and lesson plans produced by these scholars. We have also used the documentary memory of classes planning meetings and written notes made from evaluation collective discussions of those classes after their completion, documents we have produced or to which we had access in the role of coordinating the work performed. These two classes were attended in different years, but we combine both experiences here because of the focus of the article; thus, the *case study* brings together the experiences of two groups, but its uniqueness occurs because of the experience of dealing with the *nonfunctionality* in the same educational environment, albeit at different times and classes.

For the analysis process, we make use of redefinition of the analytical framework for *practices and literacy events* proposed by Hamilton (2000). This redefinition derives from propositions of our research group which resulted in a diagram recorded by Cerutti-Rizzatti, Mossmann and Irigoite (2013). We reproduce below this diagram and avail ourselves of its analytical categories to give treatment to the data generated and seek to answer the question-problem from which this study derives. Considering each of the parts of this diagram - as follows - we take the Portuguese class as *meeting* and analyze it the condition of a set of *literacy events* - first part of the diagram - which constitute in a certain a) sphere of human activity, in a b) chronotopic dimension, and c) historicized interactants that relate d) through the act of enunciating - by writing means. In the contact with the set of *literacy events* that make up the *Portuguese class meeting*, we perceive the *literacy practices* - **second part of the diagram** - with implications in these same four categories: a) sphere of human activity; b) chronotope; c) interactants; and d) specifics of the *act of enunciating*. Below is the representation, as it is mentioned in the article.

Diagram 1 – Hamilton's resignification



Source: Cerutti-Rizzatti, Mossmann e Irigoite (2013).

Having detailed the methodological routing procedure, we set out for the discussion of empirical experiences, in the next and final section, doing it on the basis of analytical possibilities that we see in this diagram, constructed from the aforementioned conceptual symposium between Bakhtin's philosophy of language, anthropology of language of literacy studies and the psychology of language of the Vigotskian basis.

A look at the *nonfunctionality* of life through the *functionality* of the portuguese class

We are confident that the school is part of the universe of *functionality*, because it serves interests and historically delineated purposes and meets the requirements of the labor market. We teachers are paid per hour, exactly under the overall logic, object of reflection of Ponzio (2008-2009). Thus 'shaped' in this *functionality*, we tend to act in favor of it. There is, however, in our understanding, a dimension that somehow distinguishes us because we deal with human development - and, at least in theory, we should not deal with human *conformation* - and perhaps in this orifice is our redemption of *functionality*, that is, we can exercise the escape - invariably curtailed, but always an escape - to the *nonfunctional*. We will try to be clear about it in this section.

Bearing in mind the first part of the integrated diagram registered in the previous section, we take the Portuguese lessons, in the two classes which we are dealing with here, as a meeting between scholars and students. We do not distinguish between the two classes, not because we understand them as uniform - our conception of the historicized subject (GERALDI, 2010b) does not allow us to do it - but because, for the approach of this article, this distinction does not seem relevant. In this *meeting* between scholars and students, various literacy events (HEATH, 1982) took place, among which we delimit a group of them: the *literacy events* mediated by the story '*O homem da cabeça de papelão*' ('Man with the cardboard head'), by João do Rio,¹⁴ *events* that took place in both classes, each with its idiosyncratic contours.

¹⁴ João do Rio is a pseudonym used by João Paulo Emílio Coelho Barreto, a writer and journalist from Rio de Janeiro. The story appears in the work *Antologia de humorismo e sátira*, of Magalhães Jr. (1957). This is the story of Antenor, who is accustomed to an unusual ethical behavior among his people and because of this, was regarded as 'abnormal' and socially alienated. After pressure from his immediate interactants, he leaves his head with a watchmaker 'for repairs'; a period during which he starts using a cardboard head that has an uniform configuration to everyone, the reason why he subverts his behavior to an entirely opposite conduct which he had until then. This change leads to his popularity, social climbing and the conquering of the woman he loves, who had rejected him before. Sometime later, he is casually faced with the watchmaking place and he goes inside to find out about his head when he is informed that it didn't need any repairs because it was especially perfect. Antenor, however, does not hesitate in refusing his former head, preferring to continue with the cardboard one.

These *events*¹⁵ took place in the school environment, a sphere of human activity in which the reading of a short story is necessarily *functional* because it aims to 'educate for reading short stories'; in this sphere, the (b) interactants were the mentioned scholars of the Arts and Literature Course, historicized by a solid and extensive training in readings with the status of scholars, whose *literacy practices* (STREET, 1988) are characterized by the valuation of the works that gain *big time* (BAKHTIN, 2003) and that we understand as the *dominant literacies* (CERUTTI-RIZZATTI; ALMEIDA, 2013). Further, students from both classes were placed as interactants, historicized for belonging to vulnerable social environments where the school in question is located and is characterized by literacy practices in whose consolidation the erudition of the literary canon does not tend to manifest, because levels of education and access to cultural goods of prestige are not provided to such a segment, as reported by data generated in applied questionnaires and preliminary studies conducted by scholars in tracing the profile of the uses of writing in these groups of students.¹⁶

As to the (c) *chronotope*, everyone, scholars and students, like us, live – considering the reflections of Ponzio (2013) - under the projection of a contemporary capitalism that is erected on the logic of the labor and consumption globalized market. Our immediate experiences, then, cannot in any way be immune to the global capitalist projection,¹⁷ because our time and space are permeable to it. Hence all interactants of the *Portuguese class meeting* that is the subject of our reflection live this time that Silvestri (2013) characterizes as 'immediacy', voyeurism, narcissism and the like that we referred to earlier, that are perceived as such, or are distinguished from this condition: they live it because like it or not, they project themselves into the chronotope. Anyway, still based on the diagram, as to the (d) act of enunciating, it materializes in the short story '*O Homem da Cabeça de Papelão*' (The Man with the Cardboard Head) and, as such, does so in a metaphorical language that certainly does not lend itself to the Orwellian logic of absolute objectivity. Thus, risking a very particular interpretation by us of the propositions of Ponzio (2008-2009), we understand that we have here an invitation to the *nonfunctionality*, although in the *functional* action of the school. The risk remains, and we will open it below.

¹⁵ We emphasize with italics and underscores, in this section, the categories of the diagram mentioned in the previous section.

¹⁶ In the activities we undertake in this program, the teaching experiences of scholars were always preceded by studies to outline the profile of the class with respect to their effort to understand *literacy practices*.

¹⁷ To Ponzio (2013), global capitalism is organized from a wide projection that shapes the processes of production and consumption, with broad impact on social relations as a whole.

The option of the scholars at the time of selecting the short story was faced immediately with a set of concerns, among which the length of the text¹⁸ was initially the more distressing, since the students were not used to longer readings, especially without pictures - again, the rush addressed by Silvestri (2013). An additional challenge was the metaphoric language, the sociopolitical criticism that the story constitutes the relations of meaning and the assemblage of required prior experiences. The question, however, more blatantly disturbing was how to make those students enjoy the reading of the story, they liked doing it; how to make the reading touch them - in the sense of triggering the profound feelings that we have mentioned in our articles based on Geraldi (2012) -, that touched their human condition. In other words, how could we try to invite them to taste the sacred right to *nonfunctionality* in an action marked by the integrity of the Portuguese class itself?

Such afflictions were accompanied by the awareness that education for the use of writing require activities that - based on Kalantzis and Cope (2006) - horizontalize the *literacy practices* of students. In this case, activities that contribute to prevent isolating them in the sociogenesis where its microgenesis is developed (VIGOTSKI, 1997), the scholars being the more experienced interlocutors, in theory, are able to share with those students (VYGOTSKY, 2000) experiences with the literary universe that contribute to the broadening of their own literacy practices. With the highlighting of such challenges, it is considered that, despite all the concerns being, in our view, highly relevant, we will stop then only at the first - the extension of the story - and at the last of them - to prove the possibility of enjoying them.

Considering the *literacy practices* of the interactants and bearing in mind the specificities of the materiality of the *act of enunciating* in the text of the short story in question, we chose, in each class, to test an interface with the image, with the movement, with the fragmentation in "smaller parts", in the certainty that to present the story in print only on white background would be inappropriate for the design of the *literacy event* on the specifics of the *meeting* with those interactants: they would possibly reject it. Thus, both groups of scholars chose to initially resort to YouTube. One of them, took advantage of a more dense¹⁹ and complex version of a Carlos Canela film, as illustrated in Figure 1 below; the other group, relying on a version we understand as less dense, of Victor Prater, as illustrated in Figure 2. The choices were made keeping in mind the grasp of the *literacy practices* that emerged from the profile of uses of writing outlined beforehand.

¹⁸ Available at: <http://www.releituras.com/joaodorio_homem.asp>. Access in: 30 mar. 2015.

¹⁹ There is the risk of subjectivity of using an adjective like that.

Figure 1²⁰ – Film: ‘*O Homem da Cabeça de Papelão*’
(The Man with the Cardboard Head)



Source: Available at: <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8n6hOsgSPnc&hd=1>>. Access in: 30 mar. 2015.

Figure 2 – Film: ‘*O Homem da Cabeça de Papelão*’
(The Man with the Cardboard Head)

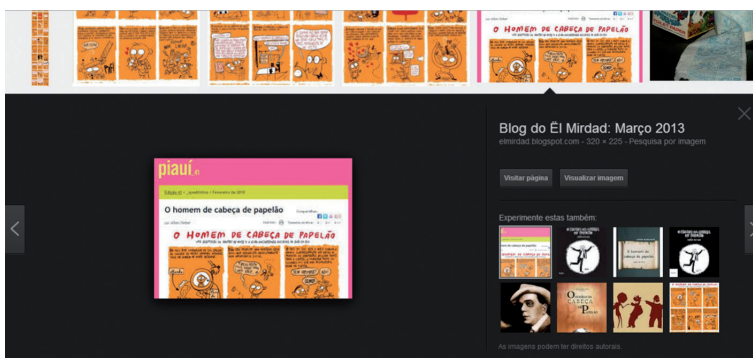


Source: Available at: <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=irjLlSIctuA&hd=1>>. Access in: 30 mar. 2015.

²⁰ We inform, in all figures, the address to access in October 2013.

Both groups also relied on the version of the short story in comics, as illustrated in Figure 3 below, always in such a way as to show the story in electronic configurations under which it was taken - the comics were also delivered in paper.

Figure 3 – Film: ‘*O Homem da Cabeça de Papelão*’
(The Man with the Cardboard Head)



Source: Available at: <<https://www.google.com.br/search?q=o+homem+da+cabeça+de+papelão+%2B+quadrinhos>>. Access in: 30 mar. 2015.

Based on Street (2000), we try to forward the uses of these electronic resources not taking them on a reification of the devices themselves, but in attention to social practices that were used them to establish themselves, that is, the short story on film and in comics. In order to start the work making use of image and sound in a ‘quick’ contact with the story, was the way found for the presentation of the story, now in its original version, but still not in whole, just the graphic spot on the white paper. The feature that we used was different in both groups: in one of them, we took the short story in its electronic availability and, with the use of such resources, we presented it to the students, making it in parts – we admit it, almost in a ‘homeopathic dose’ - as illustrated in the following figure, one of several pieces of cut for presentation in gradual sequence. In the other group, we conducted an almost theatrical oral reading, performed by the three scholars in action there. Thus, either in the ‘homeopathic’ images, or in the almost theatrical oral reading, we sought to bring the students into contact with the version of the story as a spot on the paper.

Figure 4 – Film: ‘*O Homem da Cabeça de Papelão*’
(The Man with the Cardboard Head)

The image shows a screenshot of a website page. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the text 'releituras - textos' and a logo 'r'. Below the navigation bar, there are links: '[Principal] [Biografias] [Releituras] [Novos escritores]'. On the right side, there is a copyright notice: '© Projeto Releituras Arnaldo Nogueira Jr 07/10/2015 - 11:04:33'. The main content area is divided into two columns. The left column contains a cutout of a man in a hat and a small text block: 'João do Rio, Chagres J. Carlos, Revista Cereja: 1910' and 'Menu do Autor'. The right column contains the title 'O homem de cabeça de papelão' and the author 'João do Rio'. Below the title, there is a paragraph of text: 'No País que chamavam de Sol, apesar de chover, às vezes, semanas inteiras, vivia um homem de nome Antenor. Não era príncipe. Nem deputado. Nem rico. Nem jornalista. Absolutamente sem importância social.' This is followed by a longer paragraph: 'O País do Sol, como em geral todos os países lendários, era o mais comum, o menos surpreendente em idéias e práticas. Os habitantes afluíam todos para a capital, composta de praças, ruas, jardins e avenidas, e tomavam todos os lugares e todas as possibilidades da vida dos que, por desventura, eram da capital. De modo que estes eram mendigos e parasitas, únicos meios de vida sem concorrência, isso mesmo com muitas restrições quanto ao parasitismo. Os prédios da capital, no centro elevavam aos ares alguns andares e a fortuna dos proprietários, nos subúrbios não passavam de um andar sem que por isso não enriquecessem os proprietários também. Havia milhares de automóveis à disparada pelas artérias matando gente para matar o tempo, cabarets fatigados, jornais, tramways, partidos nacionalistas, ausência de conservadores, a Bolsa, o Governo, a Moda, e um aborrecimento integral. Enfim tudo quanto a cidade de fantasia pode almejar para ser igual a uma grande cidade com pretensões da América. E o povo que a habitava julgava-se, além de inteligente, possuidor de imenso bom senso. Bom senso! Se não fosse a capital do País do Sol, a cidade seria a capital do Bom Senso!' Below this is another paragraph: 'Precisamente por isso, Antenor, apesar de não ter importância alguma, era exceção mal vista. Esse rapaz, filho de boa família (tão boa que até tinha sentimentos), agira sempre em desacordo com a norma dos seus concidadãos.'

Source: Available at: <http://www.releituras.com/joaodorio_homem.asp>. Access in: 30 mar. 2015.

In the class that made use of the cutouts of the images, as shown in Figure 4, an identical version on the paper was offered to students, but the process of reading, before being individual, which tends to happen routinely as a first contact of the reader with the author through the text (RODRIGUES; CERUTTI-RIZZATTI, 2011), happened on screen, collectively, or in the dramatization we mentioned earlier, always trying to reconcile the text online, or in oral form, with the text on the paper. As the plot was known in the rereading in the cinema and comics, the reading in its original version, made in parts, accompanied by comments, seemed relatively familiar to students and we admit, in some cases, weary, given the recurrence of the narrative. In this follow-up on the screen or the option for theatrical reading, every part was constructed orally for reading comprehension, considering, as recommended by Kleiman (2001), it is in the interaction with the teacher that the student understands the text. The objective of this understanding, however, contrary to what moves us as teachers routinely, was not the search for the metacognitive exercise of reading skills in itself, but, above all, to understand the story in order to enjoy it, to understand in order to scale the human experience specifically contained in that story.

At the end of this process, the students were then invited to take the story in its textual materiality home and read it again, without compromise, without pretensions, without demands, in the pursuit of further trying to fully understand

it. The following follow-up that we did showed us that several of the students had done the reading; many others had not. Some of those who did ended up requesting suggestions for new stories of the author for them to read, now in fact without 'having been forced to do so'. In both classes, the book, with the story published, circulated among students, and in one of them, at the end, several students signed up to take the work home. Evidence of a seeding experimentation of the *nonfunctionality* of the literary word? The hope remains; as without this education cannot survive.

Surely,²¹ to *sink in*, just 'architecting the meeting' is not enough, proposing a path to new technologies and from them to the most basic and fluid readings, and getting to read the entire story, acknowledging the *literacy practices* of students and thereby making the *meeting* tangible. If we understand that such *practices* are more volatile, also due to the new technologies, and we risk showing the various representations of the story on internet platforms until reaching the version on paper, in the pursuit of 'touching the student', we do it at the risk of tiring them with the same narrative. The test whose description we substantially abbreviated in this last section, because of the article genre, despite this science, consisted of an invitation to those students to other such experiences, to find authors of other stories and prove their *nonfunctional* way of seeing the world. As for us, the question we set ourselves is how nonfunctional we effectively can be wearing the 'diving suit' that functionality feels like (based on an expression by Ponzio (2013)), which we teachers must wear. Nevertheless, we believe that these experimentations are possible.

Final considerations

Finally, resuming the question-problem that moved this article, we do not see as possible, a teaching action that does not check out who the learners are, how they live in their historical time, how they deal with the uses of writing in sociogenesis. And if our students - like us - protagonize such uses in a chronotope on which the *functional* logic of global capitalism is projected, it seems that it urges attention for us not to reify technologies, because what really matters are the social practices which use them to establish themselves: electronic devices are means and not ends in themselves; so, the attention cannot fall on them. And thus conceiving, we are confident that such practices need not be limited to the universe of *functionality* of the school institution, we can avail ourselves of them to, in the recognized *functionality* of the school institution, rehearse the exercise of educating for *nonfunctionality*, which, like in Ponzio (2008-2009), is what most effectively characterizes humans as such,

²¹ Our thanks to Ailton Pereira Junior for the content that makes up this final section.

and the school cannot waive the humanity of men because that is exactly what justifies their historical existence.

CERUTTI-RIZZATTI, M. E.; IRIGOITE, J. C. da S. A aula de português: sobre vivências (in)funcionais. *Alfa*, São Paulo, v.59, n.2, p.249-274, 2015.

- **RESUMO:** *Este artigo tematiza a aula Português, discutindo a educação linguística escolar para os usos sociais da escrita. Trata-se de uma abordagem – fundada em reflexões sobre (in)funcionalidade de Ponzio (2008-2009) – que objetiva responder à seguinte questão-problema: ‘Em se tratando de aulas de Português em classes de Educação Básica situadas em entornos de vulnerabilidade social, é possível ensaiar um processo de elaboração didática – no ensino dos usos sociais da escrita – que não se limite à funcionalidade?’ A base teórica é a filosofia da linguagem bakhtiniana, a antropologia da linguagem dos estudos do letramento e a psicologia da linguagem de fundamentação vigotskiana. Trata-se de um estudo de caso cujos dados foram gerados por meio de pesquisa documental em vivências do Programa Institucional de Iniciação à Docência – Pibid/Capes – e cuja análise tem base interpretativista. Os resultados sinalizam possibilidades de uma ação didática que, valendo-se da funcionalidade que caracteriza o aparelho escolar e as novas tecnologias, abra espaços à educação para o infuncional, para os usos da escrita em que a palavra não se rende à lógica do mercado global.*
- **PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** *Ensino e aprendizagem de língua materna. Usos sociais da escrita. (In)funcionalidade.*

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Received in February 2014

Approved in June 2014