

## PRODUÇÃO DE CURTAS-METRAGENS EM CONTEXTOS DE SALA DE AULA: LEITURA E FRUIÇÃO DA LINGUAGEM CINEMATOGRÁFICA

### *SHORT FILMS PRODUCTION IN THE CLASSROOM CONTEXT: CINEMATOGRAPHIC LANGUAGE READING AND FRUITION*

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**RESUMO:** A educação brasileira tem muitos desafios. Um deles é a necessidade de trazer para o cotidiano da escola o uso de ferramentas digitais que possibilitem o surgimento ou ampliação de competências de leitura da cultura imagética na qual os alunos vivem imersos. Nessa conjuntura, o presente trabalho pretende descrever os elementos da linguagem cinematográfica de que os alunos envolvidos no projeto se apropriaram após participarem de um conjunto de atividades cujo fim era a produção de curtas-metragens, partindo do pressuposto de que essa apropriação lhes permitirá a leitura e fruição proficientes da cultura fílmica que circula em nossa sociedade. Para levar a efeito esse objetivo, pedimos aos alunos que respondessem um questionário de pesquisa que versava sobre três curtas-metragens produzidos por eles mesmos durante os anos em que cursaram o Ensino Médio. Os dados foram analisados a partir dos conceitos teóricos de *Habitus* e Capital simbólico, propostos por Bourdieu (2003 e 2005) e Neves (2007). Os resultados mostraram que os alunos compreenderam a linguagem do cinema que lhes foi ensinada, uma vez que passaram a construir referentes sobre ela no questionário de pesquisa que responderam.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Leitura. Escrita. Letramento. Audiovisual.

**ABSTRACT:** *Brazilian education has been facing a lot of challenges: one of them is the necessity of fostering the use of digital tools at schools on a daily basis, to help emerging or expanding the students' reading competences from a culture of images in which students live in. From this perspective, this paper focus on describing the elements of cinematographic language that students involved on a project have appropriated after their participation in activities in which the main purpose was the production of short films, from the assumption that this appropriation has allowed them to be proficient in reading the film culture that is within in our society. To accomplish the objective, students answered a survey about three short films produced by them throughout their high school years. Data were analyzed in light of the theories of Habitus and symbolic Capital proposed by Bourdieu (2003 and 2005) and Neves (2007). The results have shown that students understood the cinematographic language that was taught as they have built references about it in the survey.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Reading. Writing. Literacy. Audiovisual.*

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## Introduction

This paper focus on analyzing the contributions that a school assignment about short film productions can develop when it comes to reading and enjoyment competence. The short films were produced by students of the State School Ministro José Américo de Almeida in a small town called Areia, in Paraíba State, in Brazil. The assignment was developed during the Portuguese classes at that school through two projects: the first one is called “*Cinema em gêneros escritos: a aventura conhecimentos em textos*” (2015), it was produced in four classes by the First Year of High School students (nearly 120 Pupils). The short film produced, called “Assombrassão” (available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t389WleIaYM>), was a result of a set of activities from writing production applied during the four classes. Among all students, only eighteen were interested in doing the workshop to produce the short films.

The second Project called “*Gêneros textuais para brincar, estudar e conhecer*” (2016), focused its attention on the students who had produced the short films in the previous school year. For these students, it was offered workshops about ‘The language of cinema’ and how to finish a script based on the literary text “*Poema tirado de uma notícia de jornal*”, from which was produced the short film “*Filme tirado de uma notícia*” (available at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sXiCF1Vuy\\_0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sXiCF1Vuy_0)).

During 2016, when the second Project was nearly concluded, a call for “Gira Mundo Finlândia”, a Paraíba’s government program, which in its first edition selected 20 teachers who work for the State with the intention of bringing benefits to the State’s educational system. The interest in this program came up because of Finland’s great achievement in education and the close relation between traditional education and new technology the Finns identify.

To apply for this program the Project “*Cinema em gêneros escritos: a aventura, conhecimentos de textos verbais e verbo visuais*” was created and submitted. This Project was developed in 2017 and, as one of the selected for this program, it took the author to Finland to observe the achievements from the natives of this country in education, as well as the improvements that could be included on this project which encompassed the possibility of collaborative writing by the use of tools such as *Google Docs*, the placement of students in the center of the learning process, and the organization of “Home Groups”, which are work groups, a common practice used to compile students’ productions and promote learning with classmates’ collaboration,

when the one who understood better a subject learnt in class helps bringing encouragement to the others who have not learned the subject in class. Vygotsky (1996) states that this increases the chances of making proximal development becomes real development.

In the next topic, we will describe the participant's involvement in the research, as well as the instruments and methodological-theoretical process that supported the research.

### **The students, the survey and the theory**

The students involved in the first Project were from four groups of the First year of high school (equivalent to Sophomore -10<sup>th</sup> grade), who studied in the afternoon in 2015, which were, classes C, D, E and F that added up to approximately 120 students. The students developed activities related to textual production for synopsis, aiming at enabling them to identify the source problem of the plot and the elements that built the narrative. This first group was organized based on workshop proposals from the website <http://www.telabr.com.br/oficinas-virtuais/sala/roteiro>. When this stage was accomplished, which was mandatory, it has been verified that the production was efficient for students to understand the four parts of the narrative, which are: exposition, complication, climax and resolution. After that, the possibility of engaging in a short film production was provided. The eighteen students that were interested in this second part of the assignment were mainly from C group.

In 2016, when these students were in the second year of high school (Junior – 11<sup>th</sup> grade), they were allocated in different groups: B and C. At this time, they were not invited to write synopsis, but rather to conclude a script, as it was almost done, we just did a group reading. However, after a debate, a change was suggested for the last scene, what got them to accomplish the movie “*Filme tirado de uma notícia*” which did not end with the death of João Gostoso (as in the poem), but with the repercussion and valuation by the radio listeners in a cafeteria.

The Project in 2017 was developed in the same format as in 2015 and it was performed with classes A, B and from the third year of high school (Senior – 12<sup>th</sup> grade), but after the mandatory stage of textual production, none of the students from this grade went to the meeting for the film preparation and only nine students from the other grade showed interest in participating in the film shooting. The project has been

carried out ever since and the objective it is to apply for the *Arte em Cena Festival*, organized for High School State students.

Therefore, only students that were involved in the two parts of this Project were invited to participate in this research: writing and production of a short film, since that enabled us to verify if they improved the elements from cinematographic language that would allow them to enjoy and become proficient readers of movies. Consequently, the questionnaire that provided data for this research was presented to only 18 students, from these 16 answered, since it was not mandatory. Therefore, it was considered satisfactory and representative for the analysis, as it corresponds to almost the total of students. Though this number is a small amount if compared to the number of participants in the writing activities, the answers from the students can offer support to the achievement of this research objective.

The research questionnaire generated the data for this analysis. Concerning that, Machado e Brito (2009) declared that this procedure is ideal to the text analysis that the teacher himself argues about his/her teaching practice<sup>2</sup>, since the observation and the interpretation of the researchers are not sufficient to understand all the social agents' complexity. However, the authors highlight that there are difficulties when it comes to the procedures that aim at getting information from oral or written interaction between the researcher and the social actors from a group of questions that, due to the lack of the interviewer's neutrality, produce laconic answers, which are generalized and reproductive of the expected discourse.

This slant that the interviewer could assume in his/her questionnaire could implicate the data analysis. To prevent this from happening, Machado and Brito argue about the necessity of a theoretical and methodological rigor in data analysis, as well as the two questions categories that must be chosen according to the researching goals. The first category is the total questions, in which information demanded relates to the true value of global propositional matters through Yes/No answers. The second category of questions listed by the authors is the partials, which are:

[...] composed by interrogative pronouns in which identification of one of the phrase constituents is required (such as in "Who broke the vase?") and that brings the assumption of the existence of a genetic

<sup>2</sup> That is the research case, once the author from this article investigates a group of practices performed by himself in his own classes.

information (such as ‘someone broke the vase.’) in relation to the previous question. (MACHADO; BRITO, 2009, p. 146-147).

In this work, the total question category coexists with the partial one. The first one corresponds to an interrogative part and it was used as a referral for the student, providing direction concerning a specific element of the cinema language. The second part of questions, the partial ones, was used to verify if students added the information that was consolidated and if that information became part of his/her knowledge repertoire.

The language appropriation was verified from the answers given to the research questionnaire, considering that language is capable of discrediting human actions. Therefore, if students learned the elements that constituted the sense in the audiovisual narrative, they had this semiotized in the answers for the survey.

To verify if the required language appropriation occurred, we find support in the theory presented by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu and to present the analysis of the written text that constitutes the *corpus* of this research, we consider Maria Helena Neves.

Bourdieu (2005) defines *Habitus* as a set of propensities that allow the individual to act within a series of practices of a typical group of agents and from a *symbolic capital* that, according to the French sociologist,

It is not another thing but the capital, whatever species you are, when perceived by an agent equipped with categories of perception resulted from the structure incorporation of its distribution, i.e., when it is known and recognized as something obvious.” (BOURDIEU, 2003, p. 101).

Therefore, when students, in their answers, argue about an element in the cinema language, a group of signs that in this paper is supported by Martin’ (2007) explanations, it is understood that they are appropriating these practices and structure of this symbolic capital, which is in the cinema as an artistic language.

From the Linguistics point of view, to verify this addition, the analysis will be carried out from the creation of language reference net (NEVES, 2007), that occur when a linguistic interaction is provided, composing statements in which participants establish object based on discussion, i.e., institutions that consist in terms of predication, institutions from a mental construction. Therefore, if a student describes a specific scene

or sequence of it from the lexical that is not set, in other words, s/he built the referents, i.e., s/he understood the relation between an artificial language and the world language. Neves states “Whoever investigates an expression is investigating what the speaker refers to when using an expression.” (*Op. cit.* p. 76).

### **The students and their appropriation**

There were 11 questions in the survey answered by the students, which was answered a year or months after finished the process of producing the short movies. The first one requested that they assigned a pseudonym for themselves, the same as they will be referred in this paper. It catches our attention the fact that they might have experienced pleasure when performing the assignment, since one of them called himself “João Gostoso”, a character from Manuel Bandeira’s poem which was one of the adaptations used in the research. Questions from 2 to 4 referred to the genre and the amount of films that they watched per month. Question 5 was about the language of cinema in an open sense. Question 6 was about the genre classification of films produced in 2015 and 2016. Questions 7 to 10 investigated whether their mental model internalized the determinant language elements in the elaboration of short films *Assombração*, *Filme tirado de uma notícia* and a documentary. The last question speculated about the possibility of redoing one of the films and changing something in it. The analytic effort focused on the answers given for the next to last group of questions, i.e., the ones between 7 and 10.

Question 7 instigated the student to talk about the image and sound relation in the composition of a typical feature in horror movies.

#### *Example 1*

*Igor: Yes, it was the very high pitch sound.*

The question seemed to conduct the learner, what suggested a bias in favor of the general question category, but when he did not point out the sound as the main element of fright, the question offered to the student the necessary space for expressing themselves. The answer from a student, Pedro, is quite representative of the utterance that it is, in general, supported in nominal syntagmas as “pitch”, “sound” and “high”, to describe the scene when the character took fright and woke up scared of the noises from an old radio from which he heard the expression “Burn devil”.

A little more on Pedro's description:

*Example 2*

*The boy was dreaming and wakes up scared of the radio, that turns on by itself and plays "Burn devil". The image and the sound.*

It is noticed here a more consistent description of the horror movie feature, built by the *noir* photography, which the atmosphere is perceived by the student when he uses vocabulary such as "dreaming", "scared" and "alone" that are quite common in this kind of movie that takes place in the scares the universe of children. The horror atmosphere is synthesized in the word "image" and reinforced by the term "sound", from where the element "Devil" result, which is related to a group of Judaic-Christian beliefs, and thus terrorizes the puerile universe.

From a total of 14 answers analyzed in this paper, seven highlighted the sound as a predominant element on the construction of the movie, three of the students stated that it was the dark image and four of them affirmed that it was the fast cuts that appear progressively and frequently in the narrative when it got closer to the end. These numbers denoted that 50% of the students realized the strength of the sound on the construction of an audiovisual narrative.

Question 8 referred to the "*Filme tirado de uma notícia*" which was an adaptation of "*Poema tirado de uma notícia de jornal*", by Manoel bandeira. In the verbal language, João Gostoso's suffering is described by the author through the long verses illustrated in his work, his house, the social negligence and the almost non-existence joy, they appear semiotized in the short movie from the color pallets used by the film photography which built three acts of the movie: the first is, mainly, yellow to express work and disagreements at home; the second is strongly characterized by blue as an indicative of the subject vulnerability, when death is near; and the third is represented by red when death<sup>3</sup> is imminent or sealed.

The question related to this topic was: "In '*Filme tirado de uma notícia*' different tones of color (or color pallets) were used to express João Gostoso's social and emotional status. "Can you identify the colors that were used and what they tell you about the character?". Once more, the general question led the correspondent to the colorful universe of the narrative, and the partial question since the colors were not

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<sup>3</sup> João Gostoso did not commit suicide in the movie, He is murdered.

mentioned. The answers below were, respectively, from students: Mariana, João Gostoso and Paulo Roberto.

*Example 3*

*The colors used were: blue, I don't remember, Yellow, the worker's effort as it was in the movie.*

*Example 4*

*Yellow = shows the kind of heat in the fair*

*Blue = The fear tone*

*Red = death*

*Example 5*

*Red represents blood.*

As a group, the three examples are representative in the analyzed *corpus*, as they illustrated the students' fragmented language, the lack of verbal predications that compound a more detailed analysis, but at the same time they justify the option of analyzing their texts from the observation of the referential chain, since it is possible to see in their answers some nominal groups that confirmed the decisions made during the process of movie construction. Mariana, even not mentioning the three colors got the correct senses for two of them, João Gostoso demonstrated he could understand the photography used in the film, as he indicated the predominant color on each act of the movie by using words that rearranged the atmosphere suggested by the color of the narrative episode. Paulo Roberto, on the other hand, mentioned only one color: red that, probably, should cause a real impact on him as it was associated to Death.

Regarding the documentary, the research questionnaire mentioned two scenes: one with the History teacher and the other with a prayer lady. Both were filmed twice because these "characters" were not characterized enough. At the remake, the teacher appears supported by a scenario full of books and the prayer lady in a rural environment where she lives.

It was asked in the questionnaire if the students knew why the scene was remade. None of them provided the expected answer and twelve answered only "No" or "I don't know". Two answers that were different from the average were from João Gostoso and Mariana, respectively:

*Example 6*

*It's to correct mistakes, if I am not mistaken.*

*Example 7*



*They were made to observe the the prayer ladies' opinions; the way they pray.*

In the example 6, João Gostoso talks about a “mistake”, but not so sure about it, as he finishes the answer with a conditional sentence “if I am not mistaken”. Another linguistic fact that supports the uncertainty in João Gostoso’s answers is that the mistakes were not detailed. It is not about a mistake but rather an improvement, since the interviewees were the focus and this happened from a composition of a scenario that encompasses characteristics of our culture. In the example 7, Mariana focused her effort to describe only the figure prayer lady and disregard the History teacher, besides she did not mention, similarly to the other student, the characters’ composition according to the place they live, which characterizes their practices.

After this phase of students’ text analysis, we can state that, in two-thirds of the answers were written by them, the appropriation of the Symbolic Capital occurs, called cinematographic language in this paper. When answering questions related to the work done in the past, they also demonstrated that the referential language became part of his/her mental model, which is an indication that film reading and enjoyment developed into part of their *Habitus*.

It is necessary to carry out a final assessment of the experience throughout the work.

## Conclusions

This paper aimed at analyzing the cinematographic language appropriation by students involved in a project related to short film production, which started in 2015 and was adjusted for 2016 and 2017.

The data analysis showed that the students understood the elements of the cinema language (sound and photography) focused on the work developed in the first two years. That did not happen in the project developed in 2017, since the elements of language (character/space) focused on the course project were not indicated in their answers, thus the students built a referential chain about the first, but they did not do that for the second, i.e., they did not absorb the relation between space and characters construction in the narrative.

Based on this, it seems certain that the students developed a *Habitus* for reading and enjoying the cinema production, but this only raises another question: what

happened in the two projects that, after years, the students still kept mental models referring to what was lived, while the experiences from these few months in 2017 did not provide the same learning?

While the research mentioned above is not consolidated yet, it is necessary to find a solution for the student who do not learn and this answer could be found in my experiences lived in Finland, such as work group organization to analyze the films produced and, after that, preparation of seminars that can be presented to the other school mates about the elements of language that underline the narrative.

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