

## **THEORETICAL-METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES BETWEEN THE SOCIO-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE OF LITERACY STUDIES AND THE HISTORICAL-CULTURAL THEORY<sup>1</sup>**

### ***APROXIMAÇÕES TEÓRICO-METODOLÓGICAS ENTRE A PERSPECTIVA SOCIOCULTURAL DOS LETRAMENTOS E A TEORIA HISTÓRICO-CULTURAL***

### ***ENFOQUES TEÓRICO-METODOLÓGICOS ENTRE LA PERSPECTIVA SOCIOCULTURAL DE LOS LETRAMIENTOS Y LA TEORÍA HISTÓRICO-CULTURAL***

Camila GRIMES<sup>2</sup>  
Mariana Aparecida VICENTINI<sup>3</sup>  
Edson SCHROEDER<sup>4</sup>  
Adriana FISCHER<sup>5</sup>

**ABSTRACT:** Approximations between the sociocultural perspective of literacies and Historical-Cultural Theory can contribute to research in Education, with a focus on language, which often does not address the theoretical-methodological complexity of Historical-Cultural Studies. Our objective is to identify approximations between such theories, explaining possible contributions they can bring to theoretical-methodological approaches. The regularities are aspects related to the text and context, relationships between the subject and the world; constitution as a subject and human development; construction of meanings and construction of knowledge. The discussions on analysis are essentially theoretical, focus on microgenesis, approaching ethnography as deep theorization and microgenetic analysis. The contributions emerge as comprehensive analysis indicators, which can guide procedures in research in Education, allowing deeper views on subjectivation processes: a) the degree of abstraction and generality relations; b) guided participation; c) cultural artifacts and mediated action; and d) the processes of signification.

**KEYWORDS:** Sociocultural perspective of literacies. Historical-Cultural Theory. Research in Education. Microgenetic analysis. Ethnography as deep theorization.

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<sup>2</sup> Regional University of Blumenau (FURB), Blumenau – SC – Brazil. PhD student in Education. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0105-4046>. E-mail: [cgrimes@furb.br](mailto:cgrimes@furb.br)

<sup>3</sup> Regional University of Blumenau (FURB), Blumenau – SC – Brazil. PhD student in Education. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6256-2904>. E-mail: [mvicentini@furb.br](mailto:mvicentini@furb.br)

<sup>4</sup> Regional University of Blumenau (FURB), Blumenau – SC – Brazil. Professor of the Graduate Program in Education. PhD in Science and Technology Education (UFSC). ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8917-2017>. E-mail: [ciencia.edson@gmail.com](mailto:ciencia.edson@gmail.com)

<sup>5</sup> Regional University of Blumenau (FURB), Blumenau – SC – Brazil. Professor of the Graduate Program in Education. PhD in Linguistics (UFSC). ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9787-2814>. E-mail: [adrfischer@furb.br](mailto:adrfischer@furb.br)

**RESUMO:** *Aproximações entre a perspectiva sociocultural dos letramentos e a Teoria Histórico-Cultural podem contribuir para a pesquisa em Educação, com enfoque na linguagem, que, frequentemente, não aborda a complexidade teórico-metodológica dos Estudos Histórico-Culturais. Nosso objetivo é identificar aproximações entre tais teorias, explicitando possíveis contribuições que estas podem trazer para enfoques teórico-metodológicos. As regularidades são aspectos relacionados ao texto e ao contexto, relações entre o sujeito e o mundo; constituição como sujeito e desenvolvimento humano; construção de sentidos e construção do conhecimento. As discussões, essencialmente teóricas, recaem sobre a microgênese, aproximando a etnografia como teorização profunda e a análise microgenética. As contribuições emergem como indicadores de análise abrangentes, que podem nortear procedimentos na pesquisa em Educação, permitindo olhares mais aprofundados sobre processos de subjetivação: a) o grau de abstração e as relações de generalidade; b) a participação orientada; c) os artefatos culturais e a ação mediada; e d) os processos de significação.*

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** *Perspectiva sociocultural dos letramentos. Teoria Histórico-Cultural. Pesquisa em educação. Análise microgenética. Etnografia como teorização profunda.*

**RESUMEN:** *Las aproximaciones entre la perspectiva sociocultural de los letramientos y la Teoría Histórico-Cultural pueden contribuir a la investigación en Educación, con foco en el lenguaje, que muchas veces no aborda la complejidad teórico-metodológica de los Estudios Histórico-Culturales. Nuestro objetivo es identificar aproximaciones entre tales teorías, explicando las posibles contribuciones que pueden aportar a los enfoques teórico-metodológicos. Las regularidades son aspectos relacionados con el texto y el contexto, relaciones entre el sujeto y el mundo; constitución como sujeto y desarrollo humano; construcción de significados y construcción del conocimiento. Las discusiones, esencialmente teóricas, se centran en la microgénesis, abordando la etnografía como teorización profunda y análisis microgenético. Los aportes emergen como indicadores de análisis integral, que pueden orientar los procedimientos de investigación en Educación, permitiendo visiones más profundas sobre los procesos de subjetivación: a) el grado de abstracción y relaciones de generalidad; b) participación guiada; c) artefactos culturales y acción mediada; y d) los procesos de significación.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** *Perspectiva sociocultural de los letramientos. Teoría Histórico-Cultural. Investigación en Educación. Análisis microgenético. Etnografía como teorización profunda.*

## Introduction

Literacies, understood as flexible reading, speaking, and writing practices, social in nature and, therefore, ideological and socio-historically situated, from the sociocultural perspective (BARTON; HAMILTON, 2000; STREET, 2003, 2014), are characterized as one of the theoretical strands that support this debate, a discussion that enables the evolution for the advancement of research in Education. The principles that characterize these studies point out,

according to Barton and Hamilton (2000), that (a) literacies are associated with different social contexts; (b) literacies are regulated by agencies and permeated by power relations, which leads some literacies to be more dominant than others; (c) literacies are embedded in social goals and cultural practices; (d) literacies are historically situated; and (e) literacies change, reconfigure themselves, as a result of relations in formal and informal learning contexts.

Allied to the sociocultural perspective of literacies, we also approached the Historical - Cultural Theory, developed by Vigotski (2009) and his collaborators. In this theoretical approach, the learning and development unit is discussed, with a central focus on the function of language for the processes of subjectivation. We clarify that the theory is centered on the premise that subjects consciously act on active domains that transform them, in which subjects also transform the contexts and transform themselves in the process. In this way, it refers to the instrumentally mediated relationship between subjects and between subjects and the world, on the plane of practical activity, with the emergence of important psychological formations or higher forms of psychological functioning, such as consciousness.

Therefore, such mediated relationship is an indispensable condition for what Vigotski understands as human development. More specifically, we can say that there is a change of control from the environment to the subject, the development of a voluntary regulation (as thought), from the internalization of a system of meanings<sup>6</sup> (culture as social thought). In our discussion context, we highlight the instrumental mediating and dialectical approach proposed by Vigotski: knowledge mediates the relations between the subject with itself, with the other, and with the world. Thus, our arguments, linked to the Historical - Cultural Theory, are based on the following principles: a) the higher psychological functions have social genesis and are historically determined; b) cultural mediations transform the higher psychological functions in their structure; c) the constitution of consciousness is semiotically mediated; d) learning and the development of thought are not just individual characteristics of the student, but characteristics of the student interacting with his teacher and peers, in socially constituted instructional activities; practical activity constitutes the basic unit for studying the development of the higher psychological functions (VIGOTSKI, 2004, 2009).

We propose, therefore, approximations between the sociocultural perspective of literacies and the Historical-Cultural Theory, in order to bring contributions to research in

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<sup>6</sup> From the perspective of Historical - Cultural Theory, meanings are related to the singular understandings attributed by each person, as an immanent category, constituting a unit that integrates intellect and affect and that structures the inner discourse. The meanings constitute socially shared understandings, as a social category, therefore, they constitute the social discourse.

Education, focusing especially on language studies, which often do not address the theoretical and methodological complexity of Historical-Cultural Studies. We emphasize that the psychological-dialectical approach, developed by the Historical-Cultural Theory, is not present in research from the perspective of literacy studies, which only cover the historical plans of ontogenesis and sociogenesis. However, Lillis (2008) weaves relationships with the dialectical perspective, reflecting on the materialization of thought in the form of language, approaching the Vygotskian thought. Thus, in the historical-cultural perspective, the method of genetic-historical analysis goes through four historical planes: phylogenesis, sociogenesis, ontogenesis and microgenesis. Our discussions fall, more specifically, on the plane of microgenesis, as we approach ethnography as deep theorizing (LILLIS, 2008) and microgenetic analysis (VIGOTSKI, 2004), an aspect that allows us to discern more distinctive theoretical-methodological orientations when considering the generation, organization and analysis of data.

Besides these initial arguments, which justify approximations between the two theoretical approaches already mentioned, the proposition is innovative in this area of study, since, from the searches conducted in Scielo, Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations - BDTD and Academic Google databases, a small number of researches relating both theories were found (LESSA; LIBERALI, 2012; PAULO, 2018; TOMIO; SCHROEDER; ADRIANO, 2017). However, unlike our proposal, that of conducting a study of theoretical-methodological scope approximating the theories, the research found in the survey, of empirical bias, analyze literacy practices from the perspective of Vygotskian and literacy studies, together.

Moreover, the approach of both approaches finds space in what Souza *et al.* (2020) postulate, when they state that scientific research has been increasingly recognized as an important activity for the generation of innovation and social development. In this sense, the context of academic research has been undergoing changes due to the scarcity of resources and the notion that science must assume its share of responsibility in solving society's problems. The authors define that the main challenge to be faced in the new century would be the establishment of a solid research system, capable of promoting the development of a science, such as Education, not dissociated from the great social problems.

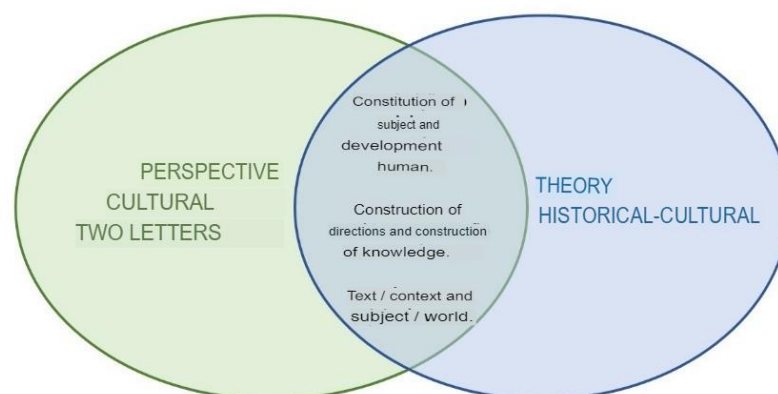
Furthermore, the study developed by Scremin and Isaia (2018) indicates that academic knowledge is constructed in the confrontation of tensions between different theoretical-methodological perspectives and in the search for points of convergence between the interests of the areas in focus in our study. Thus, for the authors, the specificity of university pedagogy

is translated by the possibility of speaking of different theoretical-methodological models, taking into account the epistemological parameters that can be expressed in different theories.

In this sense, based on the searches and the approximation between researches developed in the scope of a Graduate Program in Education, our objective in this longitudinal and theoretical study is to identify approximations between the Historical-Cultural Theory and the studies of literacy, explaining possible contributions that these may bring to theoretical-methodological approaches in the area of education, especially to language studies. Therefore, in the movement of identification and explicitness of the contributions, it is our intention, consequently, to expand the debate around research in Education, regarding methodological and analytical aspects.

We will begin the theoretical and methodological discussion by contextualizing the main concepts of literacy studies, to then situate the basic aspects of Historical-Cultural studies. After the delimitations, we identify approximations between the theoretical perspectives, based on the following regularities<sup>7</sup>: *aspects related to text and context, as well as to the relations between the subject and the world; constitution as subject and human development; construction of meaning and construction of knowledge*, highlighted in Figure 1.

**Figure 1** – Regularities of the theoretical-methodological approaches



Source: Prepared by the authors

It is worth noting that, in addition to the approximations made, we recognize that these theoretical lines have specificities that characterize them as theories. In this sense, these singularities enable the filling of theoretical and methodological gaps in qualitative research in Education, particularly in language studies, as we will present in the next section.

<sup>7</sup> The regularities are highlighted in italics throughout the article.

## The sociocultural perspective of literacies and the cultural-historical theory: theoretical and methodological approaches

Accelerated social change and the diversification of life spheres mean that social researchers are increasingly entering new contexts and encountering different *meanings*. These situations can no longer be met by traditional deductive methodologies, and more inductive research strategies are being used. Instead of starting from theories and testing them, sensitizing concepts are needed to approach the social *contexts* under study, where knowledge and practice are studied as local knowledge and practices (FLICK, 2009).

In line with this perspective, Literacy Studies (STREET, 2003, 2006; BARTON; HAMILTON, 2000), or New Literacy Studies (NEL in the Portuguese acronym), emerged as a proposal to contrast previous studies on reading and writing, both in relation to their theoretical and methodological approach and to literacy policies. What characterizes these studies as new, according to Gee (2000), is the idea that reading, writing, orality, and *meanings* are situated in specific social practices, a perspective that, along with other studies, was characterized as the "social turn" of literacies (VIANNA *et al.*, 2016, p. 30), because of the change of focus of research on written language, which before was centered mainly on the reading and writing skills of individuals. Thus, Street (2014, p. 144, our translation) defines that "if we are to understand the nature and meanings of literacy in our lives, then we need more research focused on literacy in the community".

Literacies, from the sociocultural perspective, therefore, conceive the uses of language, whether oral or written, as varied social practices, associated with different *contexts*, ideological and socio-historically situated, taking into account literacies of other social *contexts*, including institutional discourses and *textual* genres (LEA; STREET, 2014). From this perspective, it is worth highlighting two conceptions that Street (2003) develops, based on ethnographic research conducted with different minority communities: the concept of literacy practices and events.

The notion of literacy practices plays an important role in understanding the relationships between reading, writing, and speaking activities with different *texts* and the social structures on which they are based. Literacy practices are general cultural ways of using oral or written language that people use in their lives. In other words, these practices represent what people do with literacies (STREET, 2003) and how they *construct meaning* from them. However, literacy practices are not observable, as they also involve issues such as values, attitudes, feelings, personal relationships, power relations, and so on. Besides the fact that these practices are gradually constituted in an individual process of *subject constitution*, at the same



time, they represent social processes through which these *subjects* connect with each other, and include the sharing of cognitions represented in ideologies and social identities.

Events are observable episodes that arise from and are shaped by practices. The notion of events emphasizes the situated character of literacies, which always orbit a specific *context*. Many literacy events are regular, repeating activities and can therefore be used as a starting point for research on literacies (BARTON; HAMILTON, 2000; STREET, 2003).

According to Fiad (2011), the NEL methodological basis is ethnography, which enables access to different literacies present in different social groups and contexts, allowing the visibility of literacies and legitimization of practices and events. Insofar as ethnography allows the suspension of the researcher's own assumptions, because the most important thing in literacy practices is to observe and listen to what people are doing, reading and writing are extremely associated with power relations, ideologies, cultures, and meanings (STREET; LEA; LILLIS, 2015).

As mentioned, literacy practices are not observable, leading our attention to literacy events, observable episodes involving *texts*, in order to identify patterns related to literacies, trying to associate them with the practices implicit to the research subjects' events, of a cultural and social nature (STREET, 2003). Thus, we affiliate ourselves with the idea of Erickson (2001), when he cites that, in the research process, it is important to free ourselves from assumptions in order to focus on particularities that let slip subtleties, small gestures, interactions, uses of language that may be revealing of what is happening in a specific *context*, around the actions of participants in literacy practices.

In this context, ethnographic research "[...] has a task to perform, by making visible the complexity of local everyday practices of literacy, and challenging the dominant stereotypes and myopia" (STREET, 2003, p. 3, our translation). It requires understanding, above all, the local context in which it is inserted, defragmenting preconceptions about expectations that they will respond according to what is demanded and build, from the local, *meanings* to existing reading and writing practices, considering expanding them in a global dimension.

Street (2003), in his ethnographic research, found that for there to be a quality educational practice, it is necessary for the teacher to expand what the student brings to the school environment, without disregarding his experiences. The teacher is not the holder of knowledge and meaningful learning, which enables the *constitution of subjects*, takes place in the exchange between speaking and listening; in this exchange it is possible to consider the needs and wishes of students, based on existing literacy practices.

For Street (2003), ethnographic research, in the field of literacies, helps to discover and observe the uses and meanings of literacy practices in various *contexts* that may be researched, which allows, for example, to deconstruct stereotypes of some people considered illiterate, because the research brings visibility to local literacy practices, which are, most often, denied. Street (2014, p. 66, emphasis added, our translation) also adds that "ethnography alone is not a magic solution to the 'problem' of investigating literacy: without theoretical clarity, the empirical investigation of literacy will only reproduce our own prejudices [...]".

From this point of view, it is necessary to consider that, in ethnographic research, the researcher is not a mere observer, because he is inserted in the environment that researches "as a participant observer, permanent and reflective, listening, seeing what happens in this environment" (FRITZEN, 2012, p. 59, our translation). The ethnographic perspective, in this context, has the challenge of describing and understanding the social actions of the subjects in the study *contexts*, as well as requires an ongoing reflection of the political, historical, educational implications, among others (FRITZEN, 2012).

Deepening our discussions with ethnographic studies of literacies, we focus in this discussion on ethnography as Deep Theorizing (LILLIS, 2008), a more radical level of ethnographic theorizing. This level considers the ontological and epistemological issues of ethnography in data generation and analysis, linking text analysis with *context* analysis, narrowing the gap that exists in scientific research on academic writing. In ethnography as deep theorizing, the author argues that *linguistic-textual aspects* need to be mediated by *more context-sensitive categories*, such as indexicality and orientation, which assist in *narrowing the gap between text and context* because they enable a socio-historical analysis of the data and act as analytical categories in this journey (LILLIS, 2008). In this debate, besides the theoretical approach of literacies from a sociocultural perspective, we also employ the Historical-Cultural Theory and its theoretical developments that, in our understanding, allied to the studies of literacies, enables the expansion of the perceptions of the educational researcher about his theoretical and methodological decisions, when considering a dialectical and instrumental mediating approach about the processes of *human development*.

Andrade and Smolka (2009) point out that investigations using the cultural-historical approach have great relevance, since the methodological procedures employed recognize, in the interactive processes, "[...] the *construction of knowledge* as a movement of immersion (and appropriation of) social practices, with all the negations, adhesions and transformations that this implies" (ANDRADE; SMOLKA, 2009, p. 266, emphasis added, our translation).



At the basis of Cultural-Historical Theory lies the central tenet of the philosophy and methodology of historical and dialectical materialism. Thus, "as is widely known, Marx and Engels developed the theory of historical and dialectical materialism, employing a materialism that dialectically unites *objective reality, subjects and their modifications*" (PEREIRA; FRANCIOLI; 2011, p. 95, emphasis added, our translation). The authors complete such arguments citing that "historical and dialectical materialism is a method of analysis of *human development*, taking into account that the man develops as he acts and transforms nature and, in this process, he also modifies himself" (PEREIRA; FRANCIOLI, 2011, p. 96, emphasis added, our translation). In this aspect, dialectics is the study of the changes that occur in nature, in the *subject* and in society throughout history, not perceiving the *world* as a fixed object, but as something connected and in constant movement and transformation (PEREIRA; FRANCIOLI, 2011). For Marx, the concept of history comprises the process by which the human being transforms itself, developing in a *process of subjectivation* (FERACINE, 2011).

In the materialist view, it is necessary to know society and all its aspects in order to overcome social inequalities. Therefore, materialism incorporates the notion that society and nature are interconnected, and that human beings act upon nature to produce, through practical activity, their survival. However, we are products of human history and not only of nature. Thus, history is the result, as well as the consequences and changes arising from the actions of humans on nature and on themselves (PEREIRA; FRANCIOLI, 2011). Therefore, while transforming their material needs and their way of thinking and acting, it ends up generating changes in their social being, thus modifying modes of organization of society. For its understanding, it is necessary to know its unity - *the human as the agent that learns and develops*, therefore, are the agent of historical and social transformation (PEREIRA; FRANCIOLI, 2011).

Romanelli (2011, p. 201, our translation) reflects on the influence of historical and dialectical materialism in Vigotski's works: "The Marxist philosophical-methodological conceptions exerted significant influence on the Belarusian psychologist's production, guiding his writings, public presentations and other activities". The author also points out that it is necessary to study the way in which Vigotski "[...] incorporated into the field of psychology the philosophical and methodological legacy of Marx and Engels, and try to understand, in a more detailed way, their contributions to the construction of a possible Marxist psychology" (ROMANELLI, 2011, p. 201, our translation).

Vigotski (2007), based on the dialectical materialist approach to analyzing human history, reflects that human behavior and animal behavior differ qualitatively. For the author, human psychological development comprises a part of the historical development of the species, thus, the need emerged to find a methodology for psychological research that would address *human development*. Regarding the proposition of the method by Vigotski, we emphasize the relevance that the 1927 text "The historical significance of the crisis of psychology" had for psychology in the early twentieth century, especially in Europe. In this text, Vigotski (2004, p. 324, our translation) mentions not only his conception of science, but, mainly, of the method: "[...] scientific study irreversibly demands changes in the object (that is, it demands to elaborate this object in concepts) and in the method". This legacy of Vigotski lays out the foundations of the analytical (explanatory) rather than descriptive method of psychological phenomena. This new proposition of the method has as its guiding aspect the naturalistic and dialectical approaches for the understanding of how the origin of the different historical planes occurs, in the interactive movements of production: the history of the human species (philogenesis), of social groups (sociogenesis), of the subject (ontogenesis) and in *specific contexts of subjectivation* (microgenesis).

Thus, the method implies the recognition and interpretation of historical development processes, which enables reflection on unique historical-cultural *contexts*. From these *contexts*, the goal is to understand the processes of constitution of the higher psychic functions (the *subjective constitution*, such as personality). Its importance lies in the possibility of understanding forms of functional organization of human behavior.

In line with this thought, Vigotski (2004, p. 149, our translation) reflects on the goal of dialectical psychology of Marxist origin, which is to realize the significant connections between the parts and the whole, as well as to understand "the psychic process in organic connection within the limits of a more complex integral process". According to the author, dialectics is closely related to nature, thought, and history, understanding science in all its breadth. Supporting this reflection, Davidov (1986) emphasizes that dialectical and historical materialism stems from the unitary methodological basis of Soviet scientific psychology, supported by Marxist philosophy and using specific elements of psychology as the object of study. For the author, the construction of this base enables researchers to identify the problems of the social-historical nature of human activity.

Thus, the "instrumental" method is the historical-genetic method (VIGOTSKI, 2004), which enables the study of human behavior from the historical and dialectical perspective. For

the author, with this method, it is possible to study the development process of the subject's higher psychological functions, that is, the *construction of knowledge*, and the influence, for example, that teaching has on the restructuring of psychological functioning on a specific historical plane of development: the microgenesis.

Investigating the characteristics and structure of the child's behavior requires uncovering his instrumental acts and taking into account the restructuring of the natural functions that compose it. The instrumental method is one that investigates behavior and its development **by uncovering the psychological instruments involved and establishing the structure of instrumental acts** (VIGOTSKI, 2004, p. 100, emphasis added, our translation).

Our emphasis is related to the instrumental mediating approach proposed by Vygotsky, which consists in understanding knowledge as a mediating instrument in interactions and its *interpsychic (social) nature*, shared psychological functioning, originated in the activity, later converted into *intrapsychic nature (individual)*. Therefore, Vygotsky (2004) infers that, in the Marxist-inspired methodology, it is of utmost importance to investigate deeply, to exhaust all possibilities, in order to understand the events in all their connections. The author emphasizes that knowing the singular enables the understanding of *social psychology, the subject conceived as a microcosm that reflects a social consciousness: "To study something historically means to study it in the process of change; this is the basic requirement of the dialectical method"* (VIGOTSKI, 2017, p. 104, emphasis added, our translation).

We can apprehend, then, that the program advocates that the higher psychic functions have their genesis in social relations and the *processes of subjectivation* are semiotically mediated, a determinant that encompasses evolutions and revolutions. In this way, it is a perspective that deepens, via psychological investigation, a critical study of the theory of thought and language, as well as a theoretical analysis concerning the development of thought and language in the *construction of knowledge*.

For Wertsch (1998), sociocultural research, terminology that covers the studies of the Cultural-Historical Theory, taking into account contemporary discussions in the human sciences, aims to understand the human mind and its relationship with the *context*, the mediated relationship between the *individual and society*. In this sense, Wertsch, Del Rio, and Alvarez (1998, p. 28, our translation) argue that sociocultural studies, anchored in the Vygotskian perspective, "[...] provide the link or bridge between concrete actions conducted by individuals and groups on the one hand, and cultural, institutional, and historical contexts on the other". For the authors, the focus of sociocultural research is human action, in dialectically interactive moments, understood as external or internal and individual or collective. In this way, action

organizes a context, in which subject and *world, mind and culture* are understood as interrelated moments (WERTSCH, 1998).

According to Tomio, Schroeder e Adriano (2017), the microgenetic analysis has ethnographic, genetic and historical-cultural aspects, thus justifying the approximation with the ethnographic research, linked to the sociocultural perspective of literacy studies. In this sense, according to Schroeder (2008, p. 93, our translation), in the microgenetic analysis, "the historical perspective is present in the analysis of the processes that are continuously transformed". For the Schroeder (2008), Vigotski, in his methodological approaches, prioritized thorough analyses, seeking to characterize the social and mediated origins, as well as the transformations in the process.

According to Góes (2000), in investigations that understand the constitution of subjects, microgenetic analysis is often used. Such analysis is based on the historical-cultural matrix, aiming to *understand the subjects and their intersubjective relations mediated by language*, in specific contexts, resulting in a detailed understanding of events, from a historical perspective. Góes (2000) also argues that the denomination "micro" is linked to the details of actions, interactions, and sociocultural contexts, establishing relations between microevents and macro-social conditions. Therefore, the concept of "genetics" is in line with Vigotski's reflections on human development, prioritizing social transformations and genesis.

In turn, the development of social literate practices, in the ideological model of literacies (STREET, 2014), which understands the *construction of meanings by subjects*, enables an approach of ethnographic analysis as deep theorizing (LILLIS, 2008), reducing the *gap between text and context*, and also performs the analysis of reports, thoroughly, in detail, of the whole social *context* in which the practices make sense (STREET, 2014). Lillis (2008), in ethnography as deep theorizing, reflects on how the analysis of language, in spoken or written form, directs toward identifying aspects of the subjects' social *context*. For the author, in line with what the Historical - Cultural theory proposes, the goal of the analysis is that the researcher has the ability to look beyond what is explicit in the text or speech of the subject. Thus, based on the researcher's interpretation, the observed indications may help in the understanding of the empirical, the *context*.

Pasquotte-Vieira (2014, 2016), Fiad (2016), and Miranda (2016), Brazilian researchers, corroborate Lillis' (2008) reflections regarding ethnography as deep theorizing. For the authors, the history of the *text*, which consists of the dialogue in its surroundings, is a fundamental concept in Lillis' inferences, thus valuing the interactions between the research subjects and the

*texts*. The authors also highlight the possibility of combining ethnography and dialogicity for the analysis of literacy events, because ethnography as an in-depth theorization allows a broadening of view on the material, analyzing both the texts and the elements that permeate the sociocultural practices around the texts, the *context*.

In this sense, Pasquotte-Vieira (2016, p. 177, our emphasis) points out that ethnography as a deep theory allows the search for the "*context* around the *text* to also compose the analysis, such as the *subjects' literacy histories, their perspectives and meanings about language, literacy practices, written genres, writing goals*, among others". For the author, all these aspects are directly related to literacy practices, based on the meanings and uses of language, linked to local and global *contexts*.

Therefore, ethnography with a linguistic focus comprises field observation and data generation by the researcher, in which language and its forms of use guide the analysis, characterizing a theoretical-analytical perspective that considers language as a social practice in investigations of contexts of literacy practices (PETERMANN, 2020). In these practices, emerge the *construction of meanings*, socially situated identities, the development of power and authority relations (FISCHER; PELANDRÉ, 2010).

Thus, language is the way to access complex social tools, since ethnographic investigations seek to understand social and cultural phenomena in different *contexts*, in addition to the processes of social interaction permeated by language. Thus, studies that focus on ethnography as a deep theorization go through the concept of reflexivity, which comprises the socio-historical positioning of the researcher (PASQUOTTE-VIEIRA, 2014).

In this sense, ethnography allows the understanding of *how the subject is constituted by culture*. Its appropriation, via literacy practices, forms a "new" subject, a human being who will have a new relationship with the *world*. In ethnography, the gaze is directed to what happened and how it happened, as in microgenetic analysis, observing the literacy practices in each context, the historical processes and human subjectivation, in the *construction of knowledge*.

Therefore, we understand that, in research in Education, the possible theoretical-methodological approximations of the contributions to which we are referring need to take into consideration four conditions that we consider intrinsic to our attempt at approximation:

1. We determine that an imperative concern of teaching is to create conditions for independent and creative thinking of students, that is, to create the appropriate conditions for study in literacy practices, from the unit "*meaning-making/learning, leading to human development*" as a process of *subjectivation*. Thus, the uses of

language in literacy practices allow this human access to culture, as well as its transformation and that of culture itself.

2. Considering the psychological-dialectical perspective of *human development*, the proposition of methods that are consistent with the investigation that addresses the constitution of *psychological systems* in teaching contexts, focusing on the *constitution of thought* and the use of language as its expression, in interactive processes. This is due to the mediated character of the higher psychic functions. In the same way, in literacy practices, it advocates processes of subjectivation, via cultural mediation.
3. We define a shared knowledge system, in the form of theoretical concepts, derived from the sociocultural perspective of literacies and from Historical-Cultural Theory. We are referring to the communication actions, related both to the principles and theoretical concepts, and to the methodological-procedural perspective.
4. To observe, carefully, the dynamic and causal relations of the process, an explanatory analysis and not only a descriptive analysis of the phenomena. Both ethnography as deep theorizing and microgenetic analysis seek the *understanding of the processes of constitution of subjects* on distinct historical planes: phylogenesis, sociogenesis, ontogenesis, and microgenesis. Thus, the determination of consciousness by semiotically mediated social existence, in addition to the historical and dialectical nature of the origin of the human psychism, since to study something historically means to study its process of changes.

Thus, the analysis of the theoretical data collected, through the bias of the Historical-Cultural Theory and the sociocultural perspective of the studies of literacies, enables the understanding of the process of constitution of the subjects, with a careful look at the *development of human thought*, in the *construction of knowledge* in literacy practices. In this discussion, we chose to reflect on microgenetic analysis (VIGOTSKI, 2004) as a methodological approach to analysis, which establishes approximations with ethnography as a deep theorization (LILLIS, 2008).

From such formulations, it is important to highlight, again, that literacy practices are not observable, and can be understood only from the observation of literacy events (their processes), in order to identify patterns, to associate them with practices (STREET, 2003, 2015). Street (2003, 2015) cites that we bring to a literacy event concepts, social models related to the nature that the event may have, that make it function and that give it meaning. It is impossible to get at these models simply by sitting on a wall with a video camera, watching



whatever is happening, since what may be giving meaning to that event may be something that is not present in the first instance of thinking, in terms of literacy. In this sense, we consider that microgenetic analysis can contribute to the understanding of literacy practices, because it allows a more detailed theoretical and methodological look at the literacy events, considering, above all, psychological functions and contributing to the formulation of patterns related to the uses of language in the *constitution of subjects in different contexts*.

In summary, the microgenetic analysis allows the researcher, according to Schroeder (2008), the observation of the development of interactive regulations that are constituted between the subjects, with attention focused on aspects related to affectivity and language. Moreover, the observation of how the processes of task accomplishment evolve, coordinate and condition each other and, finally, the *manifestation of meanings and senses related to knowledge*.

We can present, therefore, comprehensive indicators of analysis that can guide analytical procedures in research in Education, specifically in language studies, from emerging regularities, which enables a deeper look by researchers *on processes of subjectivation*:

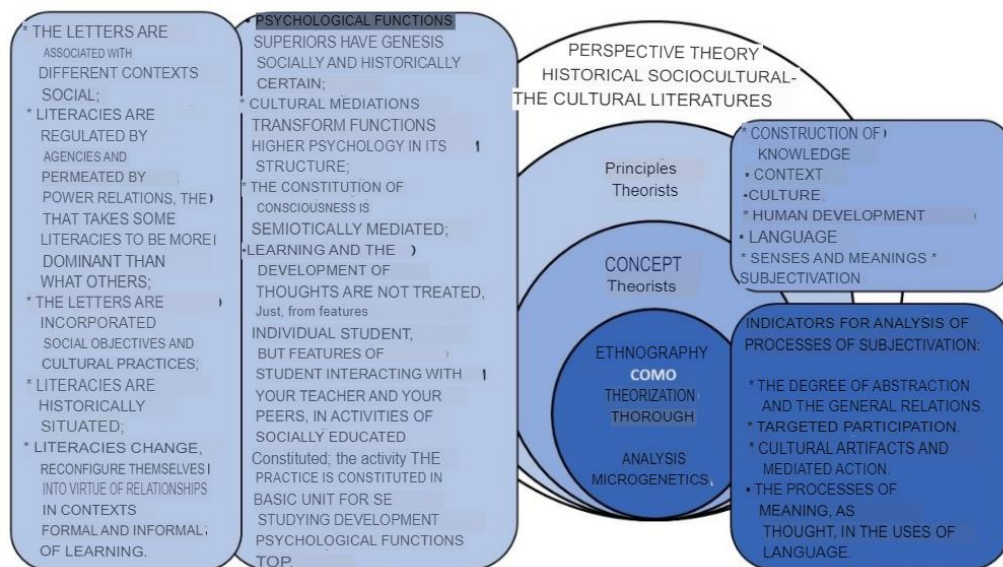
- a) **The degree of abstraction and generality relations:** this is an indicator of analysis that considers concepts as guiding instruments for the actions of *subjects in their interactions with themselves*, with others, and with the world, through literacy practices. Therefore, concepts are elaborated in the *relation subject ↔ object* in a cultural context that gives them meanings. The relations of generality refer to the construction of a system of knowledge with its diversified conceptual relations, constituted in the activity, a psychological aspect that implies an intense mental activity on the part of the students. With this indicator, we observe how the *subjects know, organize, and deal with more complex knowledge systems*.
- b) **Guided participation:** in this indicator of analysis we observe the interactive processes between teacher and students and among students among themselves, who communicate and coordinate efforts of cultural nature. In literacy practices, the teacher also organizes the processes that require the approach between the *text and the student*, therefore, it is an indicator of the intersubjectivities generated, which are complex and growing.
- c) **Cultural artifacts and mediated action:** here, our attention is placed on resources such as books, videos, texts, images, among others, in mediated contexts. With this indicator we pay attention to the possible material *connections between teacher and students*, on the one hand, and the *historical-cultural contexts*, on the other, which are determined by the

topic under study. The mediated action evidences forms of students' access to culture, which is not direct, but symbolically mediated.

**d) The processes of meaning:** our attention, with this indicator, falls on forms of organization of thought, with the use of languages (materialized in the intellectual-affective production of the students). *In transformative literacy practices, the subject undergoes changes in the meaning processes, which involve new relations with the world, with others, and with him/herself, and which are expressed in the form of mental models* (the authorial texts, images representations, among others).

We have synthesized, so far, approximations that we consider to have innovative character between the theoretical and methodological approaches, with emphasis on data analysis in ethnographic research as a deep theorization, which understands the relations between text and context, as well as psychological research linked to the Historical-Cultural Theory, which considers the semiotically mediated relationship between subject and world. For didactic purposes, in Figure 2, we indicate three sharing planes referring to the possible theoretical-methodological approaches.

**Figure 2** – Three plans of sharing regarding the possible theoretical-methodological approaches



Source: Prepared by the authors

The approaches have as their predominant focus the construction of meaning and the important understanding of investigations in the area of education by these aspects, especially in the *constitution of subjects in literacy practices*.

## **Final remarks**

Unlike what occurs in research in areas that are based on quantitative methodologies, in Education, qualitative research is more recurrent, with the main characteristic of self-construction throughout the process. Such self-construction indicates that there is not a fully defined methodology when entering the field of qualitative research and, therefore, the approximation of theories may enable the researcher to have greater theoretical and methodological rigor in generating and analyzing data.

From the objective of discussing approximations between Cultural-Historical studies and literacy studies, with the purpose of contributing with theoretical and methodological approaches to language studies, we highlight the relevance and innovative character of relating elements from different theories for the deepening of qualitative analysis in the area under focus. Thus, based on the discussions throughout the text, we recognize the differences between the theories. However, it is the particularities between each theory that allow us to fill gaps in the propositional relationship between one perspective and another.

Such particularities allowed us to identify theoretical and methodological regularities discussed during the research, such as constitution as subject and human development, construction of meaning and construction of knowledge, relations between text-context and/or between individual-society, which contribute to the understanding of the subject with the world, emphasizing singularities such as the use of language in a local context in which he is inserted, in addition to the relations with a global context. These contexts directly influence the ways of being, acting, and understanding the world, the integral human formation of the subject. In this way, the characteristics of the human being are built through the dialectical interaction of the human being and his culture, in which he transforms the environment and transforms himself in the process, constructing meanings.

The reflections related to theoretical-methodological approaches in research in Education make it possible to: a) think and guide about methodological and analytical aspects that guide the investigations in the area; b) enhance looks at the processes of subjectivation in literacy practices more thoroughly; c) promote, increasingly, dialogicity in the classroom, in order to foster the construction of meanings by the subjects integrating a given literacy practice; d) understand, in literacy practices, permeated by culture, how the subject organizes thought in the processes of knowledge construction, which involve cultural and affective productions in the form of texts related to the context.

Moreover, the discussion of the approaches gives indications of possibilities of improvement to research from the sociocultural perspective of literacies, considering that characteristic elements of psychological research linked to the Cultural-Historical Theory serve as guidelines for research in the area of literacies, since, in literate practices, the subject, mediated by language, appropriates culture by internalizing it and, consequently, transforms both himself and the context in which he is inserted, in processes of human development.

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