Verbal-visuality from a Reading Perspective: (De)Construction of the Active and Creative Understanding of the Text / *Verbo-visualidade em perspectiva de leitura: (des)construção da compreensão ativa e criadora do texto*

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ABSTRACT

This article aims at discussing aspects involved in the reading of utterances/texts whose expression plane is verbal-visuality, present in two collections of Portuguese Language textbooks of Elementary Education. It seeks to understand how the treatment given to these utterances, in the textbooks analyzed, can contribute to the *active and creative understanding* of the text and to the development of a critical reader. The analysis was based on the Bakhtin Circle's Dialogic Theory of Language and on Brazilian studies about the verbal-visual dimension of utterances. The result revealed that the activities regarding the utterances in question little contribute to the recognition of its verbal-visual dimension as indissoluble, which hinders the development of special skills for the reading of verbal-visual utterances.

KEYWORDS: Reading; Verbal-visual; Textbook; Elementary education

RESUMO

Este artigo objetiva discutir aspectos envolvidos na leitura de enunciados/textos cujo plano de expressão é o verbo-visual, presentes em duas coleções de livros didáticos de Língua Portuguesa do Ensino Fundamental, buscando compreender como o tratamento dado a esses enunciados, nos livros analisados, podem colaborar para a compreensão ativa e criadora *do texto e para a formação de um leitor crítico. As análises foram fundamentadas na Teoria Dialógica da Linguagem, advindas de Bakhtin e o Círculo, e em estudos brasileiros sobre a dimensão verbo-visual do enunciado. O resultado revelou que as atividades referentes aos enunciados em questão pouco contribuem para o reconhecimento de sua dimensão verbo-visual como indissolúvel, o que inviabiliza o desenvolvimento de capacidades especiais para a leitura de enunciados verbo-visuais.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Leitura; Verbo-visual; Livro didático; Ensino Fundamental

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Introduction

In this article, we present part of the results of our doctoral research, which ended in 2016. In it we sought to understand the place of verbal-visuality in Portuguese Language Textbooks (PLT), especially in the reading activities of two collections, namely, *Para viver juntos*: português [*To Live Together*: Portuguese], Edições SM Publishers (COL1) and *Português:* linguagens [*Portuguese*: Language], Saraiva Publishers (COL2). These collections, indicated by the 2014 PNLD [Textbook National Program (BRASIL, 2013)] for the triennia 2012-2014, were published in 2012 and selected by Portuguese language teachers of 6th to 9th graders from two major public schools in Cuiabá, MT. Our interest in the theme is justified because some works, such as those by Belmiro (2003) and Costa and Paes de Barros (2012), have alerted to a possible lack of criteria in the use of images in the production of textbooks: an excessive use of images in the form of illustration of book pages and activities, the lack of verbal-visual texts in reading activities, or the way this type of utterance is approached in reading activities, with commands that, for the most part, privilege verbal language over visual language.

Regarding the use of images in textbooks, Belmiro (2003) highlights that, since 1970, influenced by the Communication Theory, PLTs started to incorporate images into different reading practices and points out a concern about the possibly overwhelming use of the verbal text by images, warning to a possible lack of criteria in its use during the production of such material. The author criticizes by saying that the way of inserting images in the activities offered in school tends to mask the dialogical and polyphonic nature of images "that so harmoniously interact with the verbal text, for example, in children's literature" (BELMIRO, 2003, p.307).[1]

Costa and Paes de Barros (2012)[2] analyzed how visual and verbal-visual utterances constituted the school PLTs and how their approach could contribute to the reading of utterances which engendered the visual and the verbal-visual in their materiality,

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[1] In the original: "que tão harmoniosamente interagem com o texto verbal, por exemplo, nos livros de literatura infantil".

[2] COSTA, E.; PAES DE BARROS, C. *Multimodal Genres in Textbooks: Are Students Being Schooled for Visual Literacy?* Bakhtiniana. São Paulo, v. 7, n. 2, 2012, pp.38-56. Available at: [https://revistas.pucsp.br/index.php/bakhtiniana/article/view/10605/9324]. Access on: Oct.11, 2017.

collaborating for the development of reading skills of young students at this level of education. The results of this work pointed to the inexpressive presence of visual and verbal-visual texts in reading activities, and its didactic treatment proved to be insufficient for the formation of a reader who masters skills of reading a verbal-visual text.

Based on these results, in this work, we seek to investigate the presence of verbal-visual utterances in elementary school PLT, as we understand that, in this phase of education, reading abilities are in full development. We also aim to understand how verbal-visuality constitutes PLTs and how the didactic treatment given to them can help in the development of critical readers, able not only to recognize the specificities of a specially constructed text, the verbal-visual, but also to understand this materiality as an indissoluble whole. Therefore, we will highlight here specifically the results regarding the treatment of the verbal-visual materiality in reading activities. We clarify that, due to space constraints, we will present a sample of the analysis in order to demonstrate how the verbal-visual utterances constitute the activities and may (or not) impact the way the students construct the effects of meaning in the text and collaborate for the (de)construction of the *active and creative understanding of the text*.

Thus, this text is organized as follows: in the introduction, we place the theme as part of a larger work done during doctoral research, which ended in 2016, as well as its objective and justification for the choice of the theme. Next, we present the theoretical framework on which we base our reflections, the methodological path of the *corpus* selection and the categories mobilized in the analysis presented here, followed by the final considerations and bibliographical references.

1 Preparing the Lenses

For the analysis of verbal-visual utterances, this article is based on the Dialogic Language Theory developed by Bakhtin and the Circle – specially focusing on the concepts of *dialogic relations*, *concrete utterance* and *active and creative understanding* –, in dialogue with studies on the verbal-visual dimension of the utterance developed by Brait (2009; 2012; 2013, just to name a few).

For Bakhtin (1986a),[3] *dialogism* is a constitutive principle of language, and the limits of the *concrete utterance* constitute the unit of discursive communication. For him, every utterance has an absolute beginning and an absolute end, which only develops in the process of interaction and in the presupposition of previous utterances (texts/discourses previously heard or read), opening ways to the responsive utterances of others. The boundaries of the utterance are perceived in a real dialogue, that is, with the alternation between the enunciations of interlocutors (dialogue partners). In this process, when an "I" produces an utterance, he or she gives way to the response of the "other." These (responses) are linked to each other, establishing *dialogical relationships with each other*.

Bakhtin warns us that *dialogical relationships* cannot be perceived between units of language, between words and sentences, since they presuppose the *other* in relation to the speaker of the verbal communication in the interactions between the subjects, in the construction of meaning, in the formulation of answers and questions, and finally, in the dialogism that is constitutive of language and discourse.

Dialogue, thus conceived, comprises the complex of centripetal and centrifugal forces,[45] which come into play in social interactions, acting in them and conditioning the form and meanings of what is uttered. In other words, *dialogue* is constituted in the process of interaction between speaking subjects and the meaning is constructed in the tension that is established in *dialogical relationships*.

Thus, we can say that the *dialogical relationship is a relationship of meaning* that occurs between utterances produced by subjects in the chain of verbal communication. In it, words and languages are constituted as a means of communication, struggle, tension, and conflict.

In the second part of The Problem of Speech Genres, entitled The Utterance as a Unit of Speech Communion: The Difference between This Unit and the Units of the Language (Words and Sentences), Bakhtin (1986a)[6] gives special attention to the

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[3] BAKHTIN, M. The Problem of Speech Genres. In: BAKHTIN, M. *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays.* Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1986a, pp.60-102.
[4] For Bakhtin (1981), centripetal forces are the processes that unify and center discourse; on the other hand, centrifugal forces disintegrate and decentralize it. Any enunciation of the subject of discourse presupposes the intersection and tension between these two forces.
[5] BAKHTIN, M. Discourse in the Novel. In: BAKHTIN, M. *The Dialogic Imagination:* Four Essays. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1981, pp.259-422.
[6] For full reference, see footnote 3.

"utterance" as a "unit of discursive communication" and touches another important concept of the theoretical construct of the Circle: *active understanding* (BAKHTIN, 1986a, p.67).[7]

For him, any understanding of a living utterance (discourses materialized in speech or writing) is actively responsive in nature. That is to say, in the relationship between two subjects of discourse, the utterance of one person necessarily provokes an answer in the other. Thus, the listener, by understanding the meaning of the discourse of an enunciator (the "other" in the discursive relation), takes an actively responsive position in relation to him/her (the "I" of the discourse). In relation to the understood object, the interlocutor may agree or disagree with it, complete it, apply it and prepare himself/herself to use it. This responsive position of the listener is formed in the course of the whole process of listening/reading and understanding a discourse (whether oral or written).

For Bakhtin (1986a),[8] understanding can also remain as a silent responsive understanding, for the silence of the individual before a discourse, heard or read, is the preparatory phase for the answer that will come. This is what he calls *responsive understanding with a delayed reaction.* Sooner or later, what was heard or read and understood emerges as a response of the interlocutor in subsequent discourses, expressed in verbal or gestural way. Therefore, all understanding is actively responsive, because even silence is the moment in which the speaker/listener/reader prepares for an answer. For him, every speaker, in uttering his/her own discourse, is based on antecedent utterances (his/her and others'), argues with them or simply presupposes they are already known.

Thus, one discourse touches another, generates another, argues with another; finally, one discourse dialogues with another. This is why Bakhtin tells us that the real unit of communication is not words and sentences, but the living and full utterance in the relationship between the subjects of the discourse. We agree with the author's statement that discourse is always fused in the form of an utterance belonging to a particular subject of the discourse and cannot exist outside this form.

This concept is of fundamental importance for our work, since we understand reading from the point of view of an enunciative-discursive perspective, as a process of *an active and creative understanding*, which demands that the reader take a stand in relation to

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[7] For full reference, see footnote 3.
[8] For full reference, see footnote 3.

the discourse (text) of the *other* (author) in order to analyze his/her words, confirm them, adopt them, contradict them or criticize them, in constant value appreciation and answerability, in the dialogical relationship that unfolds during the reading process. About this, Ponzio (2008) highlights that

> In relation to this special object (the text), which is specific of all human sciences that deal with human beings as producers of texts (written or oral, verbal and non-verbal), the Bakhtinian method appears, taking active understanding, dialogical understanding as its main element (PONZIO, 2008, p.188).[9]

In our work, through the dialogical perspective of discourse we conceive of *understanding* as *active and creative*. It is a process that unfolds between individuals in a relationship of co-creation. For Bakhtin (1986c),[10] understanding and evaluation are simultaneous and constitute a single unified act. For him, the subject of the understanding analyzes the text from his/her worldview, his/her positions. These positions determine his/her evaluation, which is changeable, because when focusing on the work, the subject of understanding is viscerally open to the possibility of change and renouncement of his/her pre-established points of view. In this process, a struggle is developed, and its results are mutual change and enrichment.

According to Bakhtin (1986b),[11] every text has a subject-author and is addressed to someone, a *second subject* (the listener, the reader, the appraiser); it is born and circulates in a field of activity, reflects and refracts the characteristics of that field. Every text is uttered, and two elements determine it as such: his/her idea (intention) and the fulfillment of this intention. The interrelationships between these elements define its constitution.

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[9] In Portuguese: "Em relação a esse objeto especial (o texto), que é específico de todas as ciências humanas que se ocupam do homem como produtor de textos (escritos e orais, verbais e não verbais), perfila-se o método bakhtiniano, que assume a compreensão ativa, a compreensão dialógica, como seu principal elemento."

[10] BAKHTIN, M. From Notes Made in 1970-71. In: BAKHTIN, M. *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays.* Austin, TC: University of Texas Press, 1986c, pp.132-158.

[11] BAKHTIN, M. The Problem of the Text in Linguistics, Philology, and the Human Sciences: An Experiment in Philosophical Analysis. In: BAKHTIN, M. *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays.* Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1986b, pp.103-131.

For him, the *second subject* is the one who reproduces the text of the other (the first text) for one or another purpose, creating what he calls a *framing text*, through which the *second subject* comments on, evaluates, objects to, etc. the first text.

The concepts of the *second subject* and the *framing text* are important for our analysis, taking into account that we consider the PLT authors the subjects who take a specific genre of their habitual sphere and re-produce it in the PLT, generating "another text" (since it is the re-production of the original). This one is then molded by the commands of the activity (*framing text*) and addressed to a "second subject" (the student-reader) so that the text becomes an object of reading and analysis.

For the *corpus analysis*, it is fundamental to clarify how we understand verbal-visual utterances. We know that there are many forms of analysis of the verbal-visual dimension of utterances, based on different theoretical perspectives, which, in turn, define specific methodologies. We clarify that we do not aim to bring them to the debate, not even to qualify one or the other. We recognize the importance and relevance of the choice of each line of study. However, we understand that the nature of the questions formulated by each researcher is the one that best defines and justifies the theory and the methodology appropriate to the nature of the research undertaken. In this article, we are based especially on Brait's studies (2009; 2012; 2013, among others), for whom, in certain texts, the theoretical propositions, the engendering between verbal and visual elements, are constituted inextricably as interdependent, demanding that the analyst recognize not only this specificity, but also the methodology and theoretical basis compatible with this reality. Thus, Brait (2012) clarifies that

> The term verbal is understood both in its oral, written and visual dimensions; it covers the *staticity* of painting, photograph, print journalism, and the *dynamics* of cinema, audiovisual, television journalism, etc. In this sense, what gains importance is the semiotic-ideological conception of the text, which, surpassing the exclusively verbal dimension, recognizes visual, verbal-visual, graphic design and/or scenic design as participants in the constitution of a concrete utterance. Thus conceived, the text must be analyzed, interpreted, recognized from the dialogical mechanisms that constitute it, from the clashes and tensions that are inherent to it, from the particularities of the nature of its planes of expression, from the spheres in which it circulates, and from the fact that it necessarily carries the signature of an individual or collective subject, constituted by historical, social and cultural discourses, even in the

extreme cases of absence, vagueness, or simulation of authorship (BRAIT, 2012, pp.88-89).[12]

The author calls verbal-visual dimension in an utterance when both verbal and visual languages, in an indissoluble way, play a constitutive role in the production and meaning effects in the text. Thus, the understanding of a verbal-visual utterance requires that the verbal and visual language be considered as a single materiality, the verbal-visual; otherwise, we will be removing a part of its plane of expression and, consequently, the understanding of the forms of meaning production of this utterance.

After reflecting on the theoretical formulations from which our reflections and analyses were built, we briefly present the methodological path taken to achieve the results presented in this study.

First, we selected the PLTs based on the 2014 PNLD's recommendation and selection of school teachers from public schools in Cuiabá-MT. Having the books in our hands, we mapped the verbal-visual utterances in both collections. We observed regularities and delimited the *corpus* of analysis. Thus, our object of analysis was verbal-visual utterances present in the sections that aim at text reading/analysis, whose occurrences could be found in both collections.[13] In the next session, we will present the categories of analysis.

2 A Zoom in the Image: Adjusting the Focus

We seek to understand how the treatment of the verbal-visual materiality, in the selected activities, can contribute to an *active and creative understanding* of a text and to the development of reading skills for the specificities of a verbal-visual utterance.

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[12] In the original: "O termo verbal é compreendido tanto na sua dimensão oral quanto escrita e visual, abrange a *estaticidade* da pintura, da fotografia, do jornalismo impresso, e a *dinamicidade* do cinema, do audiovisual, do jornalismo televisivo etc. Nesse sentido, o que ganha relevo é a concepção semiótico-ideológica do texto que, ultrapassando a dimensão exclusivamente verbal reconhece visual, verbo-visual, projeto gráfico e/ou projeto cênico como participantes da constituição de um enunciado concreto. Assim concebido, o texto deve ser analisado, interpretado, reconhecido a partir dos mecanismos dialógicos que o constituem, dos embates e tensões que lhe são inerentes, das particularidades da natureza de seus planos de expressão, das esferas em que circula e do fato de que ostenta, necessariamente, a assinatura de um sujeito, individual ou coletivo, constituído por discursos históricos, sociais e culturais, mesmo nos casos extremos de ausência, indefinição ou simulação de autoria."
[13] For further details on the occurrence and incidence of verbal-visual discursive genres in both collections, see Costa (2017).

Before presenting the analysis, we find it relevant to make some remarks not only in relation to the selected concrete utterance, regarding its constitutive materiality, its inter-relationship and its relation to the framing text, but also in relation to how we understand the transmutation of the discursive genre from its habitual sphere of production and circulation to the PLT.

In relation to the constitution of the utterance, we clarify that we have taken into account all the utterances selected for the *corpus* that are constitutively verbal-visual (advertisements) or constituted by verbal-visual materiality – photographs and painting reproductions. The latter (photographs and painting reproductions) are so named due to the existing relationship between the languages that constitute the text, given that they are accompanied by information notes and/or image credits, titles or, also, preceded by the verbal text with which they are indissolubly interconnected. We have also examined how the relationships established between *framing text* (commands of activities) and the main text become effective in order to provide (or not) the perception of the object in the specificities and characteristics of the verbal-visual text.

It is also necessary to clarify that privileging careful reflection on the *dialogical relationships* established between materialities (verbal and visual) in the constitution of an utterance will alter the possibilities of construction of the meanings of the text since, in our point of view, there is no juxtaposition but language agglutination (verbal with visual), forming a single dimension of the utterance (a verbal-visual). This kind of approach of the concrete utterance is what we seek to find with our analysis.

Regarding the discursive genres that constitute the textbook activities, we want to explain that we consider them a re-production of a certain utterance, since we assume that all genres, when moved from their spheres of production and circulation to another one, the school, have not only their characteristics transmuted – due to their graphic and editorial adaptation for the composition of books – but also their purposes altered.

Therefore, in the books, the re-produced utterances have a didactic purpose, aiming at teaching students a specific content or language phenomenon. In the analysis, we seek to understand if the authors, in the way they approach genres, consider the dimensions of the verbal-visual utterances as a unique materiality, in which relationships between languages

and extraverbal elements (such as implicit historical-social moment, etc.) impact the forms of construction of the meanings of the text.

Thus, we look at the utterances as re-productions of specific genres and we seek to analyze how the authors achieve the didactic treatment given to them in order to fulfill the objectives outlined for the activities in analysis: to teach the students to read the texts. We based our analysis on the dialogical theory of language, which means that we conceive of reading as an act that implies a relationship between individuals, mediated by the text, by the materiality of the utterance, and by the dialogical threads (the implicit ones, the dialogue of the author of the text with his/her chosen interlocutor, the historical-social moment, etc.), which constitutes it.

We seek fidelity to the PLT authors' theoretical-methodological path and present what is found in the books that were analyzed. Both collections adopt the theoretical presuppositions of Bakhtin and the Circle, as the analysis of the teachers' manuals and the references consulted by the authors reveal. Thus, we hope to find activities that consider the verbal-visual utterance as a specially constructed text and that demand other skills beyond those required to read a verbal text. This means that our investigation follows specific categories for the dialogical analysis of the verbal-visual utterances, as follows:

Table 1: Parameters of the *Corpus* Analysis

Analysis Category	What do We Seek?
Concrete utterance	To observe if the form of approach between the *framing text* and main text provides the understanding of the concrete utterance, considering its indissoluble elements (*compositional structure, thematic content, and style)*; if the text is conceived as an indissoluble whole, giving special attention to its verbal-visual materiality as unique and inseparable.
Dialogical relationships	To verify if the relationships involved in the verbal-visual materiality of the utterance are considered in the commands of the activity, problematizing the dialogical threads (implicit historical, social moments, a dialogue of the author of the text with his/her elected interlocutor, etc.) that constitute the text, and the kind(s) of dialogic relation(s) that is (are) established between the main text and the *framing text* in order to direct the reader to the understanding of possible effects of meaning and not to the abstraction of what is given on the surface of the text.
Active and Creative understanding	To observe if the set of commands provides the reader with the construction of the meaning of the text in order to reach an *active and creative understanding*, which, in the case of a verbal-visual utterance, means the development of reading skills that are beyond those required

| | in the reading of a verbal text, the student being compelled to see the utterance, to consider it in its specificities, relating them to the dialogical threads, to understand it and be compelled to take a position, responding actively and creatively to the discourse read. |

<div align="center">**Source: Prepared by the author.**</div>

Based on the categories expressed in the former chart, we analyzed the *corpus*, comprised of 10 samples of verbal-visual texts found in six activities, thus organized: six examples of didactic treatment given to the utterance "advertisement"; two examples of the utterance "photography" and two examples of the utterance "painting reproduction." Due to space constraints, we will discuss aspects linked to one of the examples related to the utterance "photography."

3 The Photograph: Between Construction and Deconstruction of Active and Creative Understanding of the Text

The activity analyzed[14] refers to an opening text of the chapter presented in COL 1, volume 8, main section Reading 1, entitled *Carta ao leitor e debate* [Letter to the Reader and Debate). It occupies a double page of the textbook. On the left, there is the reproduction of a photograph that, according to the authors' information, reproduces the image of a group of people gathered in a square for the 9th World Social Forum, held in Belém in 2009. There is also a group of people who, looking up, try to balance a big ball, which suggests, in the illustration, it is symbolically the terrestrial globe. People are in the street, and around them there are images of buses, trees, and passers-by. They look happy and surprised by the unexpected appearance of the big ball. The image of the trees also overlay the page on the right, and beside it there is a block of four commands of activities related to the image. In the upper corner of the page it is possible to visualize the objective of the activity:

> What you are going to learn:
> ✓ Main characteristics of the reader's letter and debate
> ✓ The counter-argument
> ✓ Syndetic and asyndethic sentences

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[14] We will not present the image of the analyzed activity because we could not obtain copyright permission from the book's publisher.

✓ Use of the hyphen (PENTEADO *et al*., 2012, p.237).[15]

All the texts in the opening chapters of the sections Reading 1 and Reading 2 are visual or verbal-visual and represent the first reading activity of the chapter as a kind of warm-up for the activities that are going to unfold on the subsequent pages, always starting from a specific genre. In the present case, the utterance proposed for reading is a "photograph." It aims to prepare the student to read images as well as anticipate characteristics of the genres "reader's letter" and "debate," as it is informed in the authors' gudelines to teachers.

> Teacher, with these activities it is possible to hypothesize, verify previous knowledge, anticipate characteristics about the genre to be studied in the chapter and prepare the students to read images, while promoting the integration of classmates. Ask them to write down everything they consider important in this discussion so that, during the study of the chapter, they will be able to evaluate what they already knew, what they did not know and which topics they will have to strive to know better (PENTEADO *et al*., 2012, p.237).[16]

In a box in the upper left corner, we see a small note about the scene depicted, which reads as follows: "The walk on the streets of Belém (PA) marks the opening of the 2009 World Social Forum."[17]

The information contained there clarifies the situational context of the photograph, such as the event of which it is part, the city where it happened, and the date. Just below the box, in smaller font, on the white background of the image, are the credits of the photograph. The combination of the visual elements of the photograph added to verbal information, located in the upper corner of the image, and its credits, on the upper left corner of the image, allows us to state that it is a genre constituted by verbal-visual materiality.

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[15]In the original: "O que você vai aprender: características principais da carta do leitor e do debate; a contra-argumentação; orações coordenadas assindéticas e sindéticas; emprego do hífen."

[16] In the original: "Professor, com estas atividades é possível levantar hipóteses, verificar conhecimentos prévios, antecipar características sobre o gênero a ser estudado no capítulo e instrumentalizar os alunos para a leitura de imagens, ao mesmo tempo em que se promove a integração dos colegas. Peça a eles que anotem no caderno tudo o que julgarem importante nessa discussão, pois assim, durante o estudo do capítulo, poderão avaliar o que já sabiam, o que não sabiam e em quais assuntos terão de se empenhar para conhecer melhor."

[17] In the original: "Caminhada marca a abertura do Fórum Social Mundial pelas ruas de Belém (PA), 2009."

Next to the photograph are the commands of the opening activity. This is command 1:

> 1. This photograph shows a crowd gathered for the 9th World Social Forum (WSF), held in Belém in 2009. The WSF has been held annually since 2001 and consists of a series of events and debates, organized by groups that do not have ties with parties, governments, or religions, to discuss social issues.
> a) Describe what you see in this photograph.
> b) What can be the purpose of such an event? (PENTEADO *et al.*, 2012, p.237).[18]

The utterance of the above excerpt offers, firstly, a small context of the event that originated the photo, its location, date, periodicity, and the objective of the World Social Forum (WSF). In the following commands, 1a and 1b, the student is asked to describe the photograph and make hypotheses about the objective of the meeting. The approach to this first statement offers information, such as the historical moment, the situational context, and then requests the description of the scene.

Command 1a gives the reader a first contact with the image, bearing in mind that, to describe it, as asked by the question, the student will have to observe its details. This is a command that favors the perception of the parts and the whole of the photograph; however, a single command is not enough for the reader to actually consider the engendering of the verbal-visual materiality.

In our opinion, it is necessary not only to observe the image, but to consider it. This means that there is a lack of commands that can guide the reader's eye, pointing to what is fundamental to be considered in the photograph, especially because the next command (1b) asks the student to make hypotheses about the purpose of that meeting. If the command were more direct about what to observe (such as "observe the street, the people, its surroundings, the ball, read the box next to the image, consider the context given at the beginning of the activity and make hypotheses about the purpose of the event. What could be the purpose of the visual elements? What could be the purpose of such a meeting?"), it

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[18] In the original: "1. A fotografia ao lado mostra uma multidão reunida para o IX Fórum Social Mundial (FSM), ocorrido em Belém, em 2009. O FSM tem sido realizado anualmente desde 2001 e consiste em uma série de eventos e debates, organizados por grupos que não possuem vínculo com partidos, governos ou religiões, para discutir questões sociais. a) Descreva o que se vê nessa fotografia. b) Qual pode ser o objetivo de um encontro como esse?"

would facilitate the development of strategies necessary for the observation of the visual elements. However, the command does not do it, and, in our opinion, it deals with the strategy of *observation* in a generic way, indicating that the authors consider it as already assimilated and understood by the students, a fact that does not seem true to us. In our school life, since the first years we have been trained to read verbal written texts.

We know that the texts that are composed of mixed or hybrid materialities[19] are present in the everyday life of the student who accesses social networks, who is accustomed to living with advertising in different media, and who, through them, constructs his/her knowledge. However, in school, when this student has access to these kinds of utterances, often through textbooks, and in an abstract way, he/she is not taught how to read it. He/She does not know the reading strategies for this kind of text. Besides, the most common strategy that is asked of him/her is the "observation" of an image so that he/she can make hypotheses, global inferences, etc. The reading of specially constructed utterances, such as the visual or verbal-visual, requires readers whose eyes are able to see images, verbal elements and associate them to extraverbal elements, such as dialogues that traverse these texts, the implicit ones, etc.; only then are they able to infer and understand what they read. This means that they need to develop not only observation skills, but other skills that enable them to read critically and respond actively to the discourse actually understood. Observe the next command.

> 2. The WSF motto is "Another world is possible."
> a) In your opinion, is there anything that needs to be changed in the world? If yes, what is it?
> b) Look again at the photo of the meeting. What changes do you think these people wish there were in the world?
> c) By definition, a forum is a meeting of people to discuss ideas. What are the possible topics discussed at this meeting?
> d) How can the ideas discussed in the forum be disseminated among people? (PENTEADO *et al*., 2012, p.237).[20]

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[19] We call texts with mixed or hybrid materialities those comprised of different languages and/or semiosis. See further details in Costa (2016).

[20] In the original: "2. O lema do FSM é: "Um outro mundo é possível". a) Na sua opinião, há algo que precisa ser mudado no mundo? Se sim, o quê? b) Observe novamente a fotografia do encontro. Quais mudanças você supõe que essas pessoas desejariam que houvesse no mundo? c) Por definição, um fórum é uma reunião, um encontro de pessoas para o debate de ideias. Quais seriam os possíveis temas discutidos nesse encontro? d) De que forma as ideias discutidas no fórum podem ser divulgadas entre as pessoas?"

From the forum motto "Another world is possible," the student is asked to give his/her opinion about what changes are needed in the world. All the items of command 2 (2, 2a, 2b, 2c and 2d) suggest that the student responds the questions from his/her knowledge of the world. In our vision, the commands could suggest internet research about the forum, about the topics commonly discussed, which would culminate in the opportunity to discuss with the classmates so they can infer situations and be able to respond to what is being asked. The only command that is related to the image is 2b; however, it alone does not offer elements for the requested response to be given.

As we can see, the following commands also request answers for which the observation of the chosen image is not fundamental. At least it is what we can imply from the way the commands are given, always requesting the opinion of the student in relation to the theme questioned in the activity:

> 3. In addition to showing that there are necessary changes, the people portrayed in the photograph are expressing their wish to make these changes. What is their intention in doing this publicly?
> 4. In what situations, in everyday life, do you have the opportunity to express your points of view and defend them? (PENTEADO *et al.*, 2012, p.237).[21]

From the way the image is approached by the abovementioned commands, we note that some of the authors' guidelines are not effective, especially those linked to genre and the preparation of the students for their reading. Let us consider this one.

> Teacher, with these activities *it is possible to make hypotheses, verify previous knowledge, anticipate characteristics about the genre to be studied in the chapter and prepare students to read images,* while promoting the integration of classmates" (PENTEADO *et al.*, 2012, p.237, emphasis added).[22]

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[21] In the original: "3. Além de mostrar que existem mudanças necessárias, as pessoas retratadas na fotografia estão manifestando o desejo de realizar essas mudanças. Qual é a intenção deles ao fazer isso publicamente? 4. Em que situações, no dia a dia, você tem a oportunidade de expressar seus pontos de vista e de defendê-los?"

[22] In the original: "Professor, com estas atividades *é possível levantar hipóteses, verificar conhecimentos prévios, antecipar características sobre o gênero a ser estudado no capítulo e instrumentalizar os alunos para a leitura de imagens*, ao mesmo tempo que se promove a integração dos colegas".

In relation to the skills needed to "make hypothesis," "verify previous knowledge" about the theme conveyed in the photograph, we observe, from commands 1, 2 and their subsequent items, that the students are led to observe and describe the image in order to make hypotheses about the objectives of the forum portrayed in the photograph. Therefore, we can say that such abilities were fulfilled satisfactorily. However, in relation to the anticipation of the characteristics of the genre to be studied, "letter to the reader" and "debate," we did not observe any command that dealt with such problematization. At no point in this activity was the student led to question what this photograph and the discussion concerning this event had to do with what is announced in the objectives for the chapter.

In our opinion, if the students were asked to carry out research, debates in the classroom about the subject portrayed in the photograph, about the World Social Forum, their topics and events, he/she would be better prepared to learn the genre intended by the authors.

As to the "instrumentalization of image reading" (PENTEADO *et al*., 2012, p.237), we notice that the commands related to the photograph are 1, 1a, 2b, and 3a. In these commands, the student is asked to observe and describe the photograph; otherwise, the authors highlight an element of the image and ask a question based on it. This is the case we highlight in command 3.

> 3. In addition to showing that there are necessary changes, *the people portrayed in the photographs manifest their desire to make these changes*. What is their intention to do it publicly? (PENTEADO *et al*., 2012, p.237, emphasis added).[23]

Commands similar to "observe the" and "describe the" are important initial strategies for the perception of the visual material, but insufficient for us to affirm that the students will be prepared to read images. It is necessary to go beyond these strategies to achieve this goal.

As to the approach of the *concrete utterance*, we can say that it was not effective, neither in relation to the photograph (the utterance proposed for the analysis), nor in relation to the characteristics of the genre "letter to the reader" and "debate." The *compositional*

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[23] In the original: "3. Além de mostrar que existem mudanças necessárias, *as pessoas retratadas na fotografia estão manifestando o desejo de realizar essas mudanças. Qual é a intenção delas ao fazer isso publicamente?*"

structure and *style* were not explored. Students were not questioned what a photograph is, in which situations of the discourse we can find it, in which spaces and supports it circulates, with what possible purposes, etc. Its context of production, circulation/reception was not questioned either, nor was its authorship mentioned. The *thematic content* was not addressed because the focus was on the topic, on the thematic unit.

The approach to the *framing text* and the main text did not affect its perception as a concrete utterance due to the absences already mentioned in the previous paragraph, as it hardly refers to the photograph, and when it does, it does not explore it satisfactorily.

The relationship between *the framing text* and the main text was a come-and-go movement (from the questions to the text) and an out-of-the-text movement, because it sought the world knowledge of the student. There was an attempt to systematize this knowledge in order to become scholarly knowledge; however, such systematization was never effected in relation to the main text, for the student was not to observe the materiality of the utterance and understand it as the voice of someone, an author – a photographer – who shapes the scene from their perspective.

There were probably several moments that portrayed the event, and each perspective chosen by the photographer opens up a possibility of dialogue with the viewer, the observer and interlocutor of photograph. The PLT author, in turn, was motivated to choose a specific perspective, represented in the activity on screen, because he wants to dialogue with his interlocutor-student/the *second subject*, with a specific objective, announced in the activity.

The approach to the *framing text* with the first text (the photograph) does not provide the student with a *relation between subjects* (BAKHTIN, 1986c),[24] because it does not allow the dialogue between the subject-student and the subject-author (of the photograph). The commands seek the student's previous knowledge about the event that generated the photograph, not the contact between subjects (author and reader).

For Bakhtin (1986c),[25] true understanding happens between subjects (author and interlocutor) and can only be powerful when it is completed by another consciousness, the interlocutor's consciousness.

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[24] For full reference, see footnote 10.
[25] For full reference, see footnote 10.

Thus, we can say that the author (of the first text) and the reader are co-creators of the meanings of the text. Such relationship was not propitiated in the activity, making it impossible for the *powerful, active and creative understanding* (BAKHTIN, 1986c)[26] to become fully effective. The student was not motivated to dialogue with the author of the photograph, which was used for a brainstorm about the event that generated it. In the activity, the emphasis is on the event and not on the utterance that the event generated in its constitutive *dialogical relationships* that, in turn, as they intertwine, grasp a meaning and reveal a *want-to-say* from person (author) to person (reader) and not from object/thing (text) to person (reader).

The absence of questions that prompted research, debate in the classroom, discussion, image analysis caused established relationships to take place in a form of "submission / abstraction," because it is up to the student to just check the information offered by the commands, see, describe the image, and answer the questions.

As the commands prevented the observation of the photograph in its materiality, context, historical moments, relating it to the dialogical threads that constitute it, we infer that the activity does not enable the reader to produce meaning in order to achieve an *active and creative understanding*. The gaps already pointed out in the activity show that the proposal presented does not contribute to the study and understanding of a verbal-visual concrete utterance. This is due to the absence of questions that problematize the image, the relationship between the verbal and visual languages so as to offer elements for a dialogue between subjects.

In a general analysis of the *corpus*, we can say that, regarding the didactic approach given to the verbal-visual utterances, none of the six examples analyzed considered the genre in its inseparable elements: thematic content, compositional structure, and style. The commands of activities sought to problematize sometimes the *thematic content*, sometimes the *compositional structure,* sometimes the *style,* but never the three elements in an inseparable way.

For Bakhtin (1986a),[27] the use of language in life occurs through concrete utterances, uttered by the members of a specific field of human activity (sphere), reflecting the specific conditions and purposes of this sphere through their thematic content, style

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[26] For full reference, see footnote 10.
[27] For full reference, see footnote 3.

(linguistic, lexical resources, etc.) and compositional structure. These three elements are inseparably linked to the whole of the utterance. Based on him, we believe that it is not possible to think about a specific work from a given genre without considering how it is actually realized in life.

In this respect, the six examples showed a profound gap, as they relegate one or another element of the genre to a secondary position and propose activities for the study of their characteristics. Thus, out of the six examples analyzed, three of them (in COL 1) approached activities that seek a closer analysis of the utterance from a purely textual perspective. The other three (in COL 2) were closer to a proposition of a more enunciative-discursive analysis of the text. These data point to a difference in the approach to the verbal-visual utterances in both collections and reveals an attempt by the authors of COL 2 to present a didactic-pedagogical proposal in line with the guidelines of the official document that parameterize the teaching of Portuguese in Brazilian education, namely, the PCN [National Curriculum Parameters (BRASIL, 1998)], and with the Bakhtinian theoretical presuppositions that support it.

In relation to this, we can say that, although the authors of both collections have stated, in their teachers' manuals, that they adopt the Bakhtinian perspective in the pedagogical proposals of their books, which can also be observed in the bibliographic references of their respective manuals, they do not apply them satisfactorily

In relation to the kinds of *dialogical relations* observed in the activities, from the six examples analyzed, four of them presented relations that we called the "submission/assimilation" or "submission/abstraction" of the word of others, which limited the possibilities of developing latent skills to understand the text. The other two examples revealed relations of "assimilation/understanding," which made possible the expansion of the possibilities of developing latent skills to understand the text.

It is necessary to clarify that we named them "submission/assimilation" or "submission/abstraction" because we understand that the approach of the commands in relation to the studied text is done in the form of information followed by a question to be answered. In this approach, the students only receive information, a banking model of education, in which the holder of knowledge (in this case, the voice of the author) transfers

knowledge to a passive subject (in this case, the student) who receives it and assimilates the authoritative word of the other, as if this process in fact guaranteed learning.

For Bakhtin (1981),[28] the assimilation of the word of the other seeks the bases of our ideological attitude towards the world, and the other's discourse performs as authoritative discourse and internally persuasive discourse. He clarifies that despite the profound difference between these two categories, they can be united in a single word, being simultaneously authoritative and internally persuasive. However, such unification is rarely a given, for it is characterized by an abrupt opposition between them. The authoritative discourse (religious, from parents, from teachers, etc.) needs inner persuasion, while the internally persuasive discourse requires authority and does not submit to any authority. The conflict and the interrelationship between the two often determine the history of the individual ideological consciousness.

According to him, an authoritative discourse demands recognition and assimilation from us. It is imposed regardless of the degree of its inner persuasion and is presented to us with authority. The internally persuasive discourse is the one that needs authority; in this case, a different kind of approach to the text is expected. It is expected that the student be convinced of what this authoritative voice states; to do so, it would be fundamental to lead him/her, by means of activity commands, to build knowledge from the text presented.

The kinds of relationships observed between the *framing text* and the main text – in four out of the six examples analyzed – allow us to state that most examples revealed activities that sought to produce the possible effects of meaning in a text-to-text relation (relationship) (from the *framing text* to the main text), leaving the threads of *extraverbal* dialogues that constitute them to a secondary position. In this case, the existence of an author-subject who materializes, through the text, a project of saying addressed to the reader-subject was considered unsatisfactory. Therefore, movements outside the text were necessary, which would facilitate the construction of relations between the subjects (author and reader) and not between subject and object (reader and text)

We observed attempts of displacement in the relationship between the *framing text* and the main text, seeking to highlight discourse, dialogues with life, etc. However, given the gaps observed in the examples analyzed, such attempts did not always succeed.

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[28] For full reference, see footnote 5.

Regarding the relationships that are established between the constitutive languages of the texts (verbal and visual), we observed that the visual material, constitutive of the verbal-visual materiality of the analyzed utterances, was emphasized in the questions, but not in relation with the verbal material, forming, thus, a single materiality. This implies conceiving that the verbal elements are articulated to the visual elements as an indissoluble whole. Disregarding such a conception means to relegate to secondary position one or another element of a text whose meaning can only be produced from the understanding of this articulation.

Out of the six examples, only two revealed attempts to recognize the verbal and visual dimensions of the utterance as a unique and inseparable materiality, the verbal-visual. Although these attempts were not effectively consolidated, the activity commands of these examples always sought the observation of the visual elements and the reading of the verbal elements as fundamental parts for the perception of the effects of meaning in the text.

And, finally, regarding the *active and creative understanding* category, the result of the analyses allows us to infer that only two of the six examples analyzed present activities that contribute to the development of the skills of observation and consideration of the utterance as constituted by a special and indissoluble materiality, revealing the possibilities for the reader to produce meanings, perceiving meaningful effects that are relevant for the culmination of possible *themes*. Such a result does not allow us to state that the activities of the books analyzed contribute to the construction of the *active and creative understanding* of the text and that they contribute, therefore, to the development of special skills for the analysis of verbal-visual texts, which would imply the need for activities that would allow the students not only to recognize the parts of the text (verbal and visual), but to consider them an indissoluble whole, whose engenderment of verbal and visual elements is independent and participates simultaneously in the production of the possible meanings of the text.

The other examples (four out of the total) pointed to the kinds of approach that partially considered the specificities of a verbal-visual utterance. They prioritize commands of the "observe-the-text" kind as if observation was enough to understand it. This finding allows us to infer that the latent skills to read a verbal-visual text are, therefore, dependent on academic formation and teachers' literacies. We understand that the teacher should be

the author of his/her own activities. What we criticize is the fact that the collections do not satisfactorily fulfill the objective, through their activities, of promoting the development of the reading skills for the specificities of the texts that they inserted in their reading proposals.

Final Considerations

We are sure that the use of the PLT will not be the only factor to interfere in the development of students' reading skills. There is a mosaic of reasons interfering with this main objective. Among them, we can mention the initial and continued training of teachers, their literacies, their privileged practices, etc.

We consider the textbook immersed in a social-historical-political context; for this reason, it is not possible to distance it from ideologies that impregnate its constitution in a specific space-time of its production, nor to separate it from its product aspect, a result of a set of coercions envisaged in norms, political and cultural dispositions, and market determinations. We raised this discussion also according to the graphic design of the book, whose formatting implies cuts or reductions of images so that they conform to its pages. This range of restrictions functions as *centripetal* forces that limit the predicted movement in the process of creation of pedagogical proposals, establishing borders to the power of creation of the author and publisher.

On the other hand, we considered the desire of the authors and editors to meet the educational demands of the students, the determinations of the official documents of standardization of Portuguese teaching, the linguistic theories in force, their own academic development in the tense struggle with all other determinations already mentioned, working as *centrifugal forces* that struggle to establish themselves.

In this complex play of *centripetal and centrifugal forces*, it is natural for an PLT to be materialized with gaps, such as the ways to approach verbal-visual utterances and attempts, which do not always materialize, to create activities that provide the instrumentalization of the students to read verbal-visual utterances.

This means that we recognize the forces and coercions that determine the constitution of textbooks and their reading activities. On the other hand, we also recognize the intellectual, didactic and economic investments for the production of these books, aiming to achieve better

results in the performance of public school students. For the same reason, we defend the need to revise the criteria of evaluation of PLTs, mainly in relation to the use of verbal-visual texts for the development of a critical reader that, capable of recognizing the verbal-visual materiality of an utterance as inseparable and to perceive the effects of meaning produced by it, can respond to the discourse in an *active and creative* way.

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