The Teaching of Writing in Brazilian Schools

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Abstract

In this paper we present some contributions of applied studies in linguistics to scientific research on the teaching of writing, as well as some developments of these studies for writing production in mother tongue classes. The critical perspective of transdisciplinary studies in applied linguistics is adopted in the presented investigation. Data analysis shows that relevant transformations in the school approach to writing, in terms of broad social literacy, divert from the exclusivist orientation of linguistic studies, hereby demanding theoretical contributions from different academic courses and creation of complex research objects.

Key terms: text genre; interdisciplinarity; school literacy; educational project.

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"I remember that
at primary school the teacher ordered
that each student wrote a composition
about a shipwreck, an incendiary fire, or the Day of the Tree.
I did it much unwillingly and with difficulty:
back then already I knew but to follow inspiration .
May that be then the composition that when a child they forced me to do".
Clarice Lispector (2004, p. 135)

1. Introduction

The passage from the chronicle entitled *Um reino cheio de mistério* (*A kingdom filled with mystery*) by the Brazilian author Clarice Lispector is extremely important to the subject addressed in this paper: the teaching of writing in mother tongue classes. The readers of texts written by Clarice know the reflections of the author on the practice of writing are inestimable, and those who have not read any of her work are invited to find out. The above quoted epigraph is an example of the previously mentioned reflections. It brings to light the practice of writing school compositions guided by an instruction to write about themes which frequently are predetermined and uninteresting such as "a shipwreck, a fire, or the Day of the Tree", according to the author. As a student in primary school, presently called *ensino fundamental* (lower school) in Brazil, Clarice Lispector responded to the teacher's command "unwillingly and with much difficulty," which also happens with many of our students in lower school.

Having portrayed the situation, we need to question: (i) from the author's childhood till the present, were there meaningful transformations in school approaches to writing? (ii) are the "inspirations" or the knowledge of the more talented students being respected or put to better use, as desired by Clarice Lispector when she was a student? (iii) when only written language is being developed at school, what do teachers and students do? In this paper we attempt to elucidate the questions listed above.

For many years the teaching of writing in mother tongue classes has been regarded as an object of study in different areas of scientific research such as *education*, *linguistics* and *applied linguistics.* These subjects are overlapped here for they share a common interest in

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improving the performance of our students in writing assignments, but we would like to make it clear that these same subjects have specificities in the conception of their research objects. These specificities refer to the mobilization of theoretical references, methodological research strategies and to the elaboration of objects of research.

Our objective is to summarize some of the efforts made in the context of applied linguistics in to contribute to teaching of writing in mother tongue classes. We shall also present some specificities that characterize the investigative practice in the field of applied linguistics. To be more precise we will concentrate on some of the efforts employed to contribute to teaching of writing in mother tongue classes, in the context of the interdisciplinary project entitled "Construção da interdisciplinaridade em contextos de formação" (*Construction of interdisciplinarity in educational contexts*),[1] undertaken in a partnership between the Federal University of Tocantins (UFT) and a municipal school from the city of Araguaína, in the state of Tocantins.

This paper is organized into two main sections. In the first section, entitled *Characterization of the participants in a context of minorities,* we describe the empirical field of the research, as well as its conception during an ethnographical research, guided by a transdisciplinary approach applied to linguistic studies. In the second section, *The practice of writing in schools*, we address the challenges that arise from teaching of the mother tongue guided by texts. The second section is made up of three subsections: (i) *Text types as school genres*; (i) *copies of texts in models of reference genre*; and (iii) *types of reference genres for school.* In these subsections, mainly corroborated by texts and literacy studies, we elaborate on some forms of text production in teaching of writing in mother tongue classes.

2. Characterization of participants

The present paper adopts the critical perspective of applied linguistics, therefore we are interested, as advocated by Pennycook (1998, p. 25), in "both criticizing and transforming" the research objects and the theories of references, involving the researcher in a "moral and political project that permits changes", making him or her "more sensitive to

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social, cultural and political issues". At another moment, Pennycook (2006, p. 68) added that "the critical applied linguistics is much more than the addition of a critical dimension to applied linguistics. On the contrary, it allows that a new set of questions and interests, topics such as identity, sexuality, accessibility, ethics, inequality, desire or reproduction of alterity". For this purpose, we research the teaching of writing not only to recognize or evaluate the way it is performed at school, but rather with the hope of making changes to the educational work at the institution in the present study, which is almost always qualified under negative semantics (absent, uninstructed, lacking, incapable) as described in the passages of the field notes, reproduced below:

a. After a brief silence, one of the school teachers speaks and says the biggest problem faced by all teachers of all subjects was undoubtedly "reading" however, issues such as interpretation were also frequently commented. Math teachers also said similar things regarding these issues.

b. The school had to face yet another problem, some teachers had not yet been hired a day before classes began, among them the Portuguese teacher. The explanation for this was that the local government was cutting expenses, to make up for expenses which will be spent before the vacations in July.

c. [...] the teacher mentions once again the possible difficulties faced by us considering the fact that the school is located in the suburbs, and because its users (the students) are from a low socioeconomic status, facing many social and even psychological problems.
 (Field note – Educational Meeting, NSR)

d. Gradually I spoke with the little ones and it hurt me to see such a brutal reality so early in the morning, unclean kids, wearing rags, many of them hungry and couldn't read or write. All of it at the same time was very new to me, a brutal impact, but I eventually managed to absorb that impact, ultimately getting closer to them. There was a student that caught my interest not only because he couldn't write his own name but because he didn't even know his last name. He showed a certain indifference towards his condition associated with a complex of inferiority shared by most of those there.
 (Field note – Classroom at First School Grades, NSR)

These field notes' passages show that all difficulties or problems faced by the school community in question are interrelated. There are students with difficulties with school activities such as reading and writing, which could be provoked or aggravated by lack of teachers or by the unfavorable economical situation itself. We don't intend, through this last

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argument, to exempt the school or the perverse educational system from their responsibilities.[2] In the words of Freire & Macedo (1990, p.73), this community "finds itself outside the sphere of political and economic domain," which characterizes it as a group of *minorities*, *i.e.*, "the majority of the people that is not part of the ruling class." The configuration of this situation, therefore, justifies the interest and the political commitment of the applied linguist in researching minorities.

In response to the demand for comprehension and transformation of the educational conditions established in the school where we implemented the interdisciplinary project in question, we adopted the ethnographical research as the methodology for data generation and analysis, since the observation of the daily experiences at school, as well as participation in these activities makes our viewpoints more sensitive to understand the local's dynamics. The generation of different research data in loco, such as interviews, field notes, recordings of classes and meetings, as well as documentary records of school activities, liable to comparison and data crossing, allow the voices of the participants and of the researcher to mix in the analysis, avoiding the overpowering predominance of the latter. It is left to the researcher to understand the situations analyzed, including the perspectives of the participants in the research.

The development of a research methodology sensitive to the demands and cultural specificities of the participants is corroborated by the adoption of a critical attitude regarding the theories used as references, without confirming or strengthening such theories. Such na attitude is exemplified in the following passage by Rajagopalan (2003, p. 114):

> "Specifically, in the case of applied linguistics, [...] there are no more excuses to not take a critical view of the theories from areas such as linguistics, which traditionally provides the solid theories without allowing any critical questioning of the same."

The rupture from widely acclaimed theories is also justified by the creation of complex objects of research (see Silva, 2006), resulting from the approach used by various subjects

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[2] The perversity of this system is quite apparent, for instance, "the teachers lack sufficient time to perform a task that by its own nature requires thought and reflection. And what is more, the social dimension of education is never recognized by a system whose main purpose is to increasingly disqualify the teachers, reducing them to mere technical agents destined to walk unthinkingly through a maze of procedures" (Freire & Macedo, 1990, p. 73).

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which bring different perspectives or research trends. We call it a transdisciplinary approach, for it differs from the disciplinarity comprises a "only one reality, highly restricting the field of possibilities and actions" (Rocha Filho, Basso & Borges, 2007, p. 36), due to the limited scope of specialized knowledge.[3] As Rocha Filho, Basso & Borges (2007, p. 36) assert,

> "trandisciplinarity involves an attitude tied to complexity, which is, tied to ones disposal and capacity to confront different levels of reality. [...] acknowledgment of the necessity to overcome disciplinarity comes from the own hyper specialized discipline which eventually finds itself confined to its own frontiers, like many other disciplines. In this sense, it was the own need for survival that compelled the emergence of alternatives of dialog between themselves."

The transdisciplinary approach, for instance, is necessary to ascertain the success or failure of the instruction given in a classroom because, as Kumaravadivelu asserts (2005, p. 33), such success or failure depends on the "unstated and unstable interaction of multiple factors such as teacher cognition, learner's perception, societal needs, cultural contexts, political demands, economic imperatives, and institutional constraints". Yet, according to the author, "any sensitive research agenda has to deal with a deeper understanding of how these factors interact and interweave with local particularities". We believe that dialog and a narrower interaction between different subjects, such as, anthropology, education, ergonomics, linguistics and sociology could make room for a transdisciplinary perspective to assess the successes or failures of the classroom instruction.

To conclude the analysis of the theoretical-methodological approach in the context of a critical applied linguistics, we add that the germen of transdisciplinarity is cooperative work, exempting the scientist from being "impersonal and neutral, because he commits himself, interacts with, assumes and becomes part of the context" (Rocha Filho, Basso & Borges, 2007, p. 31) of research.

3. Writing activity in the school

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[3] Rocha Filho, Basso & Borges (2007, p. 37) state that the "specialist in general, not that he desire it, but because he is fallible and limited, tends to see the world through the lens of his expertise, and has great difficulty in understand it as an interconnected system. Therefore his actions prioritize certain aspects of the reality in spite of others, causing imbalances that arise as diseases, ecological tragedies and wars. These actions are predictable, understandable and *accurate* from the illusory and fragmented perspective that the disciplinarity creates and sustains (italics by the authors).

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Presently in Brazil, when we open any book or a school syllabus, with proposals or suggestions for teaching mother tongue, what we observe opposes the traditional teaching practice characterized by the "persistence of a teaching practice that, in many aspects, still presents the reductionist perspective of the study of words and of phrases out of a context," according to Antunes (2003, p. 19). This reasoning highlights "the primary mistake concerning the teaching of languages, which is believing that by teaching syntax analysis and grammar terminology we are able to make students competent enough to read and write texts for various social situations" (Antunes, 2003, p. 46).

In an attempt to not loose the literary inspiration that overtook us in the introduction of this paper, we exemplify the misconceptions surrounding the teaching of grammar, referred to by Antunes (2003), and another writing from Clarice Lispector (2004). In the chronicle *Máquina escrevendo (Type-writing machine)*, the author remembers the time she gave private Portuguese language lessons. She states that "with regards to Portuguese, it was with great boredom that I taught grammar rules. Afterwards, fortunately, I came to forget them. One must first learn and then forget. Only then one begins to breathe easily" (Lispector, 2004, p. 158). With this quote, besides the regrettable diagnoses of the teaching of grammar reported in academic researches, such as the one presented by Neves (1999) and by Silva (2006), a few questions remain to be made, such as: for what purpose or why do we insist on teaching grammar content in our schools? A response to such a question is that the knowledge of teachers, who were instructed by the practices of traditional education, continues to guide in a significant way their work when teaching the mother tongue, as will be discussed later (see Silva, 2008b).

However, to avoid diverting from the main topic of the present paper, the teaching of writing in mother tongue classes, for the purpose of this research we leave behind these traditional practices of mother tongue teaching. We are interested in investigating the effort made by teachers to modify the practice of writing in such a way that may "significantly contribute to enhancement of the spoken and written use of the Portuguese language in students", which according to Antunes is the role of the teacher of mother tongue (2003, p. 14).

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Studies on literacy developed in the field of applied linguistics show that for the spoken and written abilities of the mother tongue to be enhanced in students, teachers must act as legitimate *agents of literacy*. This was proposed by Kleimean (2006, p. 87) to define the teachers that mobilize "the capabilities of the members of the group", favoring "the participation of everyone according to their own capabilities." The agent of literacy is a "social actor [that] creates the necessary conditions for the emergence of different actors, with different roles, according to the needs and potentials of the group."

We understand literacy as a set of specific practices of writing used in daily life activities, not only at school or work but also in various areas or interactive situations of life (see Barton, 1994; Kleiman, 1995). From this perspective, it is the role of the teacher as a literacy agent to familiarize or introduce students to the use of writing for the purpose of informing or integrating various areas or interactive situations of daily life. We associate the notion of literacy agent adopted in this paper to the notion of literacy instructor advocated by Freire & Macedo (1990, p. 56), namely: the teacher that exercises an educational activity focused on transforming the lives of students, considering the demands for improvement of these activities at school. Such a teacher therefore takes on the "idea of a broad literacy instruction which is necessarily political."

Just as in other language activities at school – reading and linguistic analysis – one of the great challenges faced by teachers, regarding writing in mother tongue classrooms is synthesized in the following words of Kleiman (1995, p. 20):

> "The phenomenon of literacy instruction extrapolates the world of writing as it is conceived by the institutions in charge of formally introducing the individuals into the world of writing. It can be affirmed that schools, the most important of *literacy agencies*, are not concerned with literacy as a social practice, but only with a specific type of literacy, the process of learning how to read and write, the process of learning the alphabet and acquiring the numerical codes; such is generally conceived in terms of an individual's ability necessary for success and promotion at school. But other literacy agencies, such as family, church, the street as a work place, demonstrate very different literacy orientations.

Various studies on teaching of writing developed in theoretical and applied studies on language discover in textual genres an alternative for mediating or guiding oral or written text

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production activities in learning situations. Conceived as the main unit of linguistic analysis in mother tongue classes, texts are a result of interactive activities in daily life, and suffer adjustments or alterations in their linguistic material according to the text genres in which they are created. The different literacy agencies aforementioned are organized according to different textual genres responsible for the particularities or singularities of the dynamics or functioning of the literacy practices. The genres spontaneous conversation, phone talking, letter and notes, for instance, organize the mechanics of interaction in the social space of the family.

In other words, we understand text genres, according to Bazerman (2006, p. 23), as "frames for social action, declarative forms that mold thoughts and communications through which we interact." According to the same author (see Bazerman 2005, p. 31), the genres "rise in social processes where people try to understand one another sufficiently well to coordinate activities and share views to attain their practical purposes". Regarding the human participation in the realm of literacy, at another moment, Bazerman (2007, p. 44) states that the

> "full participation in many of the social domains of the modern world require high levels of literacy skills, as well as extensive knowledge relevant to that environment transmitted through the literacy. The world that we know, think and within which we act is saturated by and structured on the texts that travel from place to place and have a certain durability throughout the years."

The categorization of texts in a specific genre is inevitable, which doesn't imply limitation or restriction of the creativity of its producer or writer. Clarice Lispector for instance, was opposed to following enunciative models, preferring to depart from standardized forms such as the literary canon. Reconsidering the epigraph of this paper, to reflect on the meanings of the practice of writing in and out of school, the author organized her 'mean to say', her enunciative action in a genre that can be named a chronicle, although in the text *Máquina escrevendo (type-writing machine)*, previously mentioned in this paper, the author makes explicit her lack of interest in the classification or categorization of texts into specific textual genres. As we highlighted in a previous study (see Silva, 2008a, p. 74), despite the

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author's rejection of the categorization of her text into a specific genre, the editor of her book insisted on branding it a collection of chronicles. In respect to this the author answered:

> "Let's be frank: this thing here is no chronicle at all. It just is. It doesn't fall into a genre. Genres no longer hold my interest. Mystery is what interests me. Do I need to have a ritual for the mystery? I think so. To connect me to the math of things. However, I am already somehow connected to earth: I'm a daughter of nature; I want to grab, feel, touch, be. And all of that is already part of a whole, of a mystery. I'm just one. Before there was a difference between myself and writing (or wasn't there? I'm not sure). Now, there no longer is. I'm a being. And I allow you to be one. Does that scare you? I believe so. But it is worth the while. Even though it hurts. It hurts only in the beginning". (Lispector, 2004, p. 157)

When we consider text genres as teaching objects, according to the current official guidelines for teaching mother tongue in Brazil, we also risk standardization, and establishment of rigid models, hereby hindering the creative freedom of the writer-learner. In respect to this, Bazerman (2006, p. 30) states that the "genres used in the classroom are more than just a ritualistic repetition of standardized propositions. If they fail to be more than that, it is because it was carried out in such a way that the activity in the classroom became generic productions and nothing more than mere formal drills".

Regarding the excessive *teaching* of writing, Kleiman (2006, p. 84) states that "even when the activity begins with the purpose of teaching a genre - providing the socio- historical matrix which categorizes the individual in the social situation- the activity ends up teaching the text." This assertion is used by the author as an argument to highlight the importance of research on the "aspects of the work of the teacher linked to the mobilization of resources of the community to perform social activities that are peculiar to the activities of a literacy agent" (Kleiman, 2006, p. 84). In the school in focus, the attempt of creating an educational practice more relevant to the school clientele (the students) – which can be characterized as a practice aimed to broaden literacy – is justified by ceaseless efforts to organize educational activities, including practices of written production, guided by the notion of textual genre within bimonthly interdisciplinary thematic projects. Through these projects the educators of this institution, with the help of academic researchers, seek to focus on some of the demands of the community in which the school is inserted.

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Without lingering longer on the literary revision on writing production at schools, in the following subsections we try to answer the questions that were made at the beginning of this article. It is necessary for these questions to be reformulated into one single question, since when speaking about the practice of writing in teaching of the mother tongue, it is inevitable to address the use of the textual genres in classroom. The question presented is: *how do textual genres update or (re)formulate the text productions written at school?* Considering the field of research of the project in which this study is embedded, we identified three forms of text production in the teaching of the mother tongue: (i) Texts as school genres; (i) copies of texts in the reference genre model; and (iii) types of reference genres for school. All the texts presented as examples in the following subsections were produced by students of the 4th and 5th grades – presently 5th and 6th grades – of the school in question, proposed within the bimonthly thematic projects. In these projects the teachers tried to work in an interdisciplinary manner, always making connections between the contents worked in the disciplines and with a theme chosen for the two-month period.

3.1 Text types as school genres

Among the numerous activities that characterize school literacy practices, the production of texts such as compositions, narratives and descriptions constitute the so-called school practices of written production. They are texts produced only at school with the exclusive purpose of evaluating the orthographical and grammatical knowledge of the students, as if such linguistic knowledge were enough [to fully] exercise text writing production. These texts can also have other purposes in the school environment, such as the production of compositions on any topic chosen by the student for the purpose of filling up class time, which could be better planned by teachers who unfortunately, in the Brazilian context, are subjected to exhaustive working periods involving, for instance, excessive hourly load, insufficient level of instruction, unruly students, inadequate infrastructure and low wages.

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These text productions- that function as text genres only inside the school – are defined in linguistic studies as text types or text sequences, that is, linguistic constructions characterized by "lexical and syntactical aspects, logical relations, and verbal tenses" (Marcuschi, 2002, p. 23). They do not have an empirical existence but constitute the so-called text genres which, in turn, are innumerable, with very precise purposes in different interactive daily life situations.

The practice of written production in school continues to ignore the many dynamic elements "that contribute to the *conditions of production* of a written text: *who* writes, *what* one writes, *to whom* one writes, *what one* write, *when* and *where* one writes, that is, in what cultural, social, temporal and spatial circumstances"(Bagno, 2002, p. 56; with italics by the author). As we stated in the previous paragraph, the goals of these school genres are very precise. The following text reproduced, was elaborated by a 5th grade student and it exemplifies such writing for school purposes. It is a description of an advertisement against smoking (At the time of this activity, the theme of the bimester was "Human being and health.") requested by a couple of trainee teachers.[4]

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[4] According to Vilela and Koch (2001:548) "to describe is to present the properties, qualities, and characteristics of objects, environments, actions or states. [...]The description is presented, normally, in a sequence without time, and is established above all in the representative power of the lexicon.

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Exemplo 1
Advertisement against smoking

text
the gasso is serving the *crientes* and the crients are very happy I imagine that this rest'rants is very good and I believe this juice is very delicious and there on the wall is written don't smoke and it's forbidden, to smok and it's very cool ther and the table is very pretty and they sitt on the chair the table is much pretty.
congratulations very nice

PRETTY RESTRANT

The reproduced description is useful only to fulfill a school activity and is completely disconnected to the real usage of writing in daily life, after all, as Vilela and Koch (2001:544) state, "it is difficult to find 'pure' texts within the same text, we normally are faced with argumentation, description, explanation and narrative". In *Example 2*, almost all verbal modes

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inflected in the texts are state verbs (the verbs *ser; estar* which in Portuguese are equivalents of the verb *to be* in English). If we want to talk about innovation or some differential in this activity, for we recognize an effort was made in that sense, we can highlight the choice of advertisement, which allowed students to work with a theme closer to their reality and probably motivated them. According to the report of reflection produced by the trainee teachers the choice of drugs as a theme was motivated by the problem of drug consumption by some of the school's students. In the words of one of these teachers, the objective was to "draw the attention of the students to the risks and harms that drugs cause to someone's life."

Only to illustrate an example of living language, we will later reproduce a passage from the chronicle that served as the epigraph of the present article. The reproduced passage portrays the moment where the linguistic structure is essentially characterized by descriptive grammar marks such as comparisons (*is as though),* use of state verbs (*to be; to have*) and the use of adjectives (*slow*; *new*; *free*; *green*; *wet*; *translucent*; *very soft*; *unrecognizable*). Next, the passage from the chronicle with some linguistic marks characteristic of descriptive and argumentative typologies, which have been underlined to emphasize.

> "The rythm of the plants is slow: it is with patience and love that the plant grows. Entering into the Botanical Garden is as though we were transported to a new kingdom. That agglomeration of free beings. The very air we breath is green. It is humid. It is the plant sap that inebriates us a little: thousands of plants filled with vital sap. In the wind, the translucent voices of the leaves of the plants surround us in a very soft entanglement of unrecognizable sounds. Sitting there on a bench we don't do anything: we just sit there and let the world be. The vegetal kingdom has no intelligence and has only one instinct, that of living. Maybe it is that lack of intelligence and of instincts that allows us to stay seated for so long inside the vegetal kingdom". (Lispector, 2004, 136)

We note a flow of inspiration in which the author describes the experience of entering into the Botanical Garden. This descriptive passage seems to serve as evidence to prove that such a flow, alongside other argumentative and narrative sequences, for example, could be more productive than school compositions, proposed by the teacher of the author. As we pointed out in the introduction of this paper, Clarice Lispector was sharply opposed to such school compositions.

Still in regard to the inexistence of typological purity in text genres, the last sentence (*Maybe it is that lack of intelligence and of instincts that allows us to stay seated for so long*

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inside the vegetal kingdom) in the passage reproduced above, shows grammatical marks that characterize argumentative typology, as in the use of a discourse element of uncertainty *maybe*, to indicate doubt, uncertainty. This use causes the inflection of the verb from a state verb into a subjunctive mode (the inflection of the verb *ser* (to be, in English) into a subjunctive mode of this verb: *seja)*, which corroborates to mark the argumentation. Providing the students with greater creative freedom to produce written texts, as Clarice Lispector advocates, will probably contribute to the production of genres where different typologies or text sequences will intermingle, bringing the school production closer to the countless genres that circulate outside this educational space contributing therefore to a broader literacy.

3.2 Copies of texts in models of reference genre

The copy of texts deprived of reflection on the usage or workings of the linguistic mechanisms is a highly contended issue in literacy at schools. When the student simply copies he or she is not given, *e.g.*, the opportunity to exercise planning which is [normally] linked to text production and publicization, as well as testing of hypothesis of graphical representations of the language. Since concentration or enclosure of contextual demands – necessary for social interaction through language – are part of text genres; it creates great expectation to eliminate text copying in the classroom.

Perhaps work guided by text genres could benefit school activities like written text production in such a way, provided the genres appeared only on demand and structured within a sequence of planned activities or as part of a very well founded educational project.[5] Many times, at schools, although the teacher believes that his educational work is guided by the notion of text genres, in reality he works with the text, for the written production of the student has no readers nor is it characterized as a link in an enunciative chain made up of countless other genres responsible for social interaction.

We subsequently reproduce a folder that is representative of the texts produced by 5th grade students of the school in question. The text illustrates the end product of school

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[5] As we stated in another work (see Silva, 2008b, p. 56) we believe that educational projects are "spaces for establishing and motivating the needs of reading, writing and grammar (linguistic analysis), considering research as the essential activity for production of new discussions or enunciative forms of social action by lower school students.

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copying, even with planning, where the teachers made an effort to develop an activity guided by the notions of text genre. After a sequence of educational activities with smoking as a theme, involving reading and production of some texts, as noted in the previous examples, the students were instructed to produce a folder i.e this genre was chosen as the final product of the intervention made by the trainee teachers.
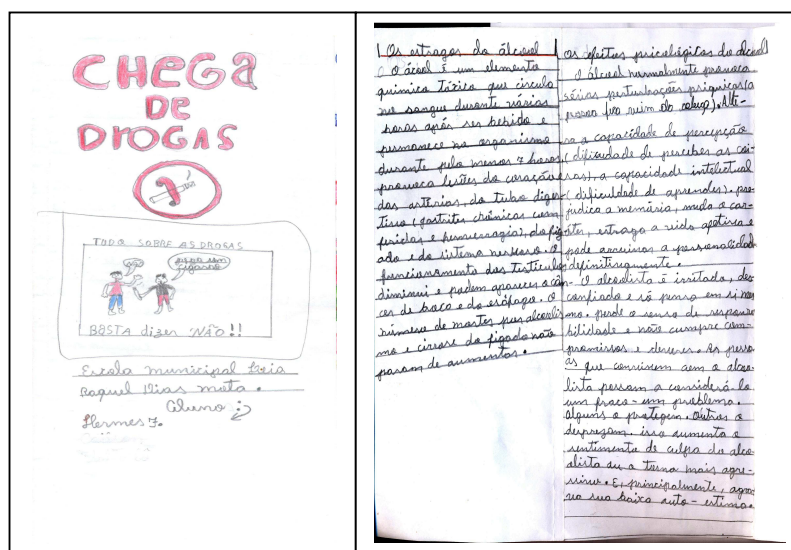
The dangers of alcohol
(...)
The alcoholic person is annoyed, distrustful and only thinks of himself. He looses the sense of responsibility and doesn't perform his duties. The people that live with an alcoholic person begin to consider him weak – a problem. Some protect him. Others despise him. that increases the sense of guilt of the alcoholic person or make him more aggressive. And, above all, his low self-esteem is aggravated.

Example 3
Folder

In the reproduced folder both verbal and non verbal languages are mobilized. The creativity of the students becomes more evident in the work with the non-verbal language when some visual resources of the comic strips are used in the front page of the folder in the form of balloons containing the dialog between the characters, representing a situation to avoid tobacco consumption. A mixture of genres is often used in the advertising field, serving as an

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argumentative strategy, just like the text being analyzed, with the difference of the latter being conceived to avoid consumption. Other linguistic conventions are also being used in the folder, such as the symbol of prohibited in red, taken from traffic signs and frequently overlapping the image of drugs that should not be consumed. The first section of the folder is possibly the result of greater text planning perhaps facilitated by the image culture so familiar to the students.

The production of texts suffers significant "scholarization" when the informative text inside the folder is copied wholly by the students from other texts worked in class, used as a reference to guide them on the topic to be studied during the bimester.[6] Other marks of scholarization are the identification of the school and of the student, as well as the characteristic tracing with pencils, which are not used in the folder genre we know as traditional transmitters of countless educational campaigns.

3.3 Types of reference genres for school

We believe that the example reproduced in the previous subsection gave some evidence on how genres can suffer from the process of scholarization[7], understood as the transformations made to text genres when they acquire characteristics of a school space where they will be produced, distancing them from the production and circulation conditions taken as a reference. The absence of readers interested in the texts produced by students – which lack meaningful interactive functions, as they are restricted to accomplishing school activities – is another aspect that characterizes this scholarization.

We later reproduce an example of the pamphlet genre, produced by a 4th grade student. The pamphlet was proposed by a couple of teachers during their period of training, as a final

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[6] We restate here that the theme for the bimester in the school was the same for the previous examples: 'Human being and health."

[7] Scholarization here is not to be confused with methodological transposition. According to Almeida (2007) the latter is understood as the result of a planned work aimed to build teaching instruments suited to the educational context especially taking into account the actors integrating the educational process – teachers and students. Also according to Almeida (2007:54), "if the methodological transposition needs a force to sustain it, support it and provide it with the foundations for its construction, this is the role of planning. The planning is directly related to the functions of the teacher and is therefore directly related to the results that he or she may obtain in the classroom and other educational environments. It is necessary to understand the purpose of the school. With the purpose in mind it becomes very clear to the teacher what kind of skills and what abilities will be useful for him or her to act upon to achieve the best results".

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product of a sequence of activities focused on the theme, consumerism. On one hand, this writing activity is innovative for it proposes the creation of a text from a widely-read reference genre and seldom used in classrooms. On the other hand the activity is limited to fulfilling the text production task proposed by the teachers. In a school activity truly guided by educational projects, the production of these pamphlets could be rethought, it would come, *e.g.*, from the need to sell products commercialized in the school, such as the sale of clothes in a bazaar organized by the community.
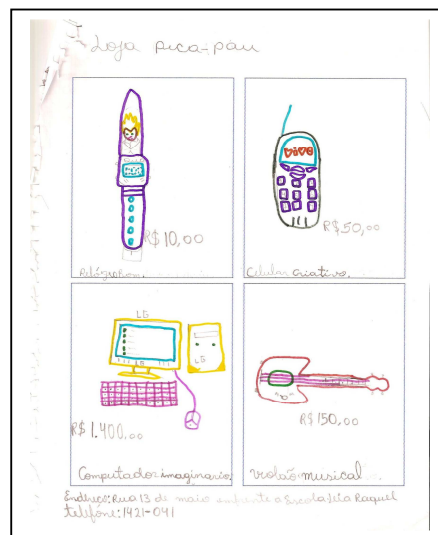
Example 4
Folder

Other indications of scholarization found in *Example 4* are the names given to the store (*Loja pica-pau*, "Woodpecker Store") and to the products (*Good Watch, Creative Cell-phone, imaginary Computer, Musical guitar)*, all of them fictitious and child-like, a product of school culture. The address and the phone numbers, shown at the bottom of the pamphlet also reveal the lack of authenticity in a reference genre. In relation to the address, the street name given does not exist in the location stated (*13 de maio street in front of the Leia Raquel School).* Regarding the telephone number, ignoring the lack of the city code, we emphasize the absence of a digit to authenticate the phone number (*1421-041).*

According to data from the project in question, (see Silva, 2009) the inefficiency of the educational work with text genres is not restricted to a problem to be studied exclusively in

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linguistic studies.[8] The configuration of this situation justifies the adoption of a transdisciplinary approach used in applied language studies. The notion of *educational* or *literacy environment* proposed in the context of methodology, for instance, can help minimize scholarization of writing in a situation of effective educational practice. As Almeida (2007:29) states, in educational or literacy environments,

> "it all comes down to learning to read and write. In these environments writing has to be in service of the concerned community. One writes and reads for certain purposes. A sign, a letter, a poster warning not to step on the grass, a sign announcing a concert, all of this leads to the creation of a literacy environment. As the child comes to realize, little by little, that these objects present information and that they can access it when they possess the keys, which are reading and writing."

The educational or literacy environments are a possible solution to the great challenge attributed to the school in light of the unsatisfactory results of literacy school practices, namely: "offer conditions for kids to grow be well-rounded and have rights to be able to critically participate in the society of written culture" (Britto, 2005, p. 20). In this perspective, probably, the term literacy environment is much more adequate than the ones used by Almeida (2007).

4. Conclusions

The research data revealed that the adoption of notions of text genre by the teacher, to guide the educational writing activities, is not enough to transform literacy school practices into more meaningful activities in the face of the social demands of writing in non-school situations. These results lead us to agree with Fabrício (2006, p. 58) when he emphasizes it is up to the applied linguist to use theoretical models of reference, always "skeptical of formation of coherent explanatory systems, destabilizing crystallized concepts and detaching from tranquilizing consensus".

As we have shown in a previous research, there are countless agents (see Silva, 2006) acting in the complex space of the classroom, which means that for us to understand the

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[8] In linguistic studies the challenge of building text genres as teaching objects can be noted in the following words of Matencion (2006, p. 96): "If today one can easily speak of language variability and of text genres, of the multitude of discourses, one cannot forget that there is not yet a systematic and consistent reflection on how to transform study objects produced in the field of language studies in teaching objects (sic).

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transformations that occur in text genres when they are transported to school writing practices, we need consider a great number of constituting elements in this space, such as methodology material, educational projects and planning, just to mention a few. Therefore, we are fully aware that linguistic studies alone, either theoretical or applied, are insufficient to produce the best results for teaching of writing in the mother tongue.

We stress here that we still see a very promising path for school language practices in the educational project, including that of writing. However we restate, as Almeida (2007, p. 53) emphasizes, that "if the project only exists for the record, which unfortunately is the case for most educational institutions, teachers, parents, the school's employees and directory who end up following a course that, separately seem accurate and pertinent; yet as a group, the interaction does not happen".

Finally, we returned to the chronicle *Um reino cheio de mistério* (*A kingdom filled with mistery*) mentioned in the epigraph at the beginning of this paper and restate that the research is an ongoing practice. Perhaps the scientific research will not give us the expected answers but we believe it provides us with much material for thought. That is probably the magic of the scientific research. Therefore, dear readers, let us ponder the meaning of the *yawn*, and of the *lush and fruitful tree* that Clarice Lispector talks about in the last passage of the text that I share here with you.

> *"on the 21st of September the Day of the Tree was celebrated,*
> *which must have caused a lot of work for the primary school boy,*
> *whom certainly was requested to write a composition on the theme:*
> *with their yawning souls , the boys might have said*
> *that the tree gives shadow, fruits, etc."*
> Clarice Lispector (2004, p. 135)

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