

# **Ideology, Culture and Identity: an integrated team experience with genre, literacy and the production of materials.**

**Rosana Silva do Espírito Santo**

*Professora Adjunto III da Pontifícia Universidade Católica de Minas Gerais*

## **Resumo**

O presente trabalho tem como objetivo descrever uma experiência desenvolvida com alunos da PUC Minas. Decidiu-se trabalhar com o gênero *letras de músicas* e uma proposta de produção de artigos individuais co-participados foi feita. Ao fim da produção, os monitores mostraram um desempenho bastante diferente em relação ao início do trabalho.

Palavras-chave: discurso, gêneros, ensino de inglês.

## **Abstract**

The present work aims at describing an experience with a group of students from PUC Minas. We decided to work with *lyrics* and I proposed a production of individual articles which might be co-participated. By the end of the production, the monitors showed quite different performance in relation to the beginning of the activity.

Key-words: discourse, genre, English teaching

## **Introdução**

According to recent studies, literacy

“refers to reading and writing at a level adequate for communication, or at a level that enables one to successfully comprehend and communicate in print society, thus the term plays a role in providing access to power”. (Wikipedia: see references below)

UNESCO defines the term as

“the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning to enable an individual to achieve his or her goals, to develop his or her knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in the wider society”.  
(Wikipedia: see references below)

To Soares (2006:47) *literacy* refers to that “state or condition of those who not only know how to read and write, but cultivates and exerts the social practices that use reading and writing.”

It seems that researchers agree that

“literacy is not autonomous or a set of discrete technical and objective skills such as reading and writing that can be applied across context. Instead what counts as literacy is determined by the cultural, political and historical contexts of the community in which it is used”. (Wikipedia: see references below)

Bronckart (1999, *apud* Baltar, 2004: 19) says he sees no worth in working with the text by itself. What really matter is the text used in social and discursive interaction.

Foucambert (1994, *opus cit*:20) says that the contact with authentic texts that are in our society could create individuals who would not be just consumers but citizens. I would say that when students are given the chance to create something and use their production in a real circumstance of teaching there would be a matching of discursive competence plus the exercise of citizenship seen as “ the active participation of the individual in the social texture”.

(Machado, 1997, *opus cite*: 21)

Thus thinking, and bearing in mind that I should introduce my students from the LETRAS Course of PUC Minas (Pontifícia Universidade Católica de Minas Gerais) to the world of Academic research, I proposed to the group that we were coordinating (from now on MF group), and that was teaching to other students from the same university (from now on US students), a team work whose thematic guidelines would be *Ideology, Culture and Identity*. The idea was that all the students would work with lyrics under the chosen thematic guidelines.

When I proposed this activity, I had the aim of letting the MF group work and reflect on both their own formation as teachers and the US students they were teaching.

## **Methodology**

### 1. Informative meetings:

The project started by inviting all the students who were working as monitors under my coordination (the MF group) to integrate the project. I explained I had chosen the genre (lyrics) because it would fit the university students' (the US students) expectations in terms of being real material that could be selected according to the US' preferences.

### 2. Proposals

Then I asked the MF group to think of a theoretical *corpus* they would like to work with and associate it to a range of lyrics which would supply both the *corpus* and the US students' expectations.

### 3. The MF group's decisions

After some discussion the students started making their decisions. Clara decided to work with lyrics to teach phonetic features to young adults and she said nursery rhymes would be the first *corpus* to be used. Mariana Coutinho thought lyrics could be used to show cultural background. Rafael was decided to use songs to teach grammar in a contextualized way. Diógenes chose to work with lyrics viewing the cultural plurality. He believed that if he collected lyrics from singers who have lived and sung in the United States, but who were not born there, the material would show some sort of differences in terms of the kind of language produced and sung by each one of them. Ericka's aim was to present teaching strategies gathering methods/techniques and songs in a way so as to promote a social-interactive relationship between teachers and students, and among students. Luciana thought young adults and children would learn more effectively if learning would happen while playing. Mariana thought songs have influenced lots of generations, but apart from learning vocabulary and structures students could learn History through lyrics.

#### 4. Proposals presentation

After deciding what to work with, an initial meeting was organized so as all the monitors could show their proposals to the group.

#### 5. Group intervention and contribution

I also organized a series of meetings (every fortnight) in which all the MF brought their material and read to the group. In each meeting they not only gave suggestions but received a lot of innovative ideas to the socialized project as well.

#### 6. Proposals re-making

After each meeting, the students were invited to reflect on the suggestions given by the group and modify the ones they thought could contribute positively to the execution of the project with the US students.

Along with the group contribution I, and the other the coordinator, had individual meetings with the MF and gave our point of view and suggestions to enrich the projects.

#### 7. The real use

The last part of the project was the real use of the produced material. The MF observed each other's classes and made comments for later discussion. The coordinators observed all classes.

#### 8. Final evaluation

When all the MF finished their presentations we had a meeting to talk about the project as a whole. Every MF had time to change whatever he/she wanted as well as share experience with anyone they wanted.

The final version of each one's project will constitute material for a virtual magazine in our university.

### **Conclusion**

After all the process, all of us spent, the conclusion we might reach is that we had an illiterate group at the beginning. The process revealed a contextual change in which the MF group assumed a different social and cultural stance.

### **References**

SOARES, M. *Letramento: um tema em três gêneros*. Belo Horizonte: Autêntica, 2006

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Literacy#Recent\\_studies](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Literacy#Recent_studies) (Research done on 4<sup>th</sup> February, 2007)

BALTAR, M. *Competência discursiva: uma experiência com o jornal de sala de aula*. Rio Grande do Sul: EDUCS, 2004.