

Literacy: the potential of reading and writing as tools for developing the maximum human capabilities^I

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Abstract

This research approaches reading and writing appropriation as an enhancer of the maximum human capabilities development in children in the literacy process, highlighting the language capacity. Based on historical-cultural theory, this article seeks to understand how literacy and language extend to the child's human formation. The research problem questions: how do reading and writing contribute to maximum human capabilities development in the literacy process? Therefore, the general objective is to understand how the potential of reading and writing affects the maximum human capabilities development in children who are going through literacy process. The methodological procedures follow the qualitative exploratory approach, through literature review. The results state that teacher's practices which promote the active participation of children in the language appropriation foster their maximum capabilities development and more meaningful learning. We conclude that literacy should be seen as a humanizing act and teachers should develop the child's maximum human capabilities, making literacy a move of freedom and position in the world.

Keywords: Human capabilities; human development; literacy; teacher's performance; written language appropriation.

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Alfabetização: a potencialidade da leitura e da escrita como instrumentos de desenvolvimento das máximas capacidades humanas

Resumo

A presente pesquisa aborda a apropriação da leitura e da escrita como potencializadoras do desenvolvimento das máximas capacidades humanas em crianças no processo de alfabetização, destacando a capacidade de linguagem. Embasada na Teoria Histórico-cultural, a pesquisa busca entender como a alfabetização e a linguagem estendem-se à formação humana da criança. O problema de pesquisa questiona: como a leitura e a escrita contribuem para o desenvolvimento das máximas capacidades humanas no processo de alfabetização? Assim, temos por objetivo geral, compreender como a potencialidade da leitura e escrita afeta o desenvolvimento das capacidades máximas humanas na criança que está no processo de alfabetização. Os procedimentos metodológicos seguem a abordagem qualitativa exploratória, por meio de revisão bibliográfica. Os resultados indicam que práticas de alfabetizadores que promovem a participação ativa das crianças na apropriação da linguagem propiciam o desenvolvimento de suas máximas capacidades e uma aprendizagem mais significativa. Concluímos que a alfabetização deve ser vista como um ato humanizador e que o professor deve desenvolver as máximas capacidades humanas na criança, tornando a alfabetização um ato de liberdade e de posicionamento no mundo.

Palavras-chave: Alfabetização; apropriação da linguagem escrita; atuação do professor; capacidades humanas; desenvolvimento humano.



Alfabetización: el potencial de la lectura y la escritura como instrumentos para desarrollar las máximas capacidades humanas

Resumen

Esta investigación aborda la apropiación de la lectura y la escritura como posibilitadoras del desarrollo de las máximas capacidades humanas de los niños en el proceso de alfabetización, destacando la capacidad de lenguaje. Basada en la teoría histórico-cultural, la investigación aspira comprender cómo la alfabetización y el lenguaje se extienden a la formación humana del niño. El problema de investigación cuestiona: ¿cómo la lectura y la escritura contribuyen al desarrollo de las máximas capacidades humanas en el proceso de alfabetización? Por tanto, nuestro objetivo general es comprender cómo el potencial de la lectura y la escritura afecta el desarrollo de las capacidades humanas máximas en los niños que se encuentran en proceso de alfabetización. Los procedimientos metodológicos siguen un enfoque cualitativo exploratorio, utilizando una revisión bibliográfica. Los resultados indican que las prácticas de alfabetización que promueven la participación activa de los niños en la apropiación del lenguaje favorecen el desarrollo de sus capacidades máximas y un aprendizaje más significativo. Por lo tanto, concluimos que la alfabetización debe ser vista como un acto humanizador y que los profesores deben desarrollar las máximas capacidades humanas de los niños, haciendo de la alfabetización un acto de libertad y de posicionamiento en el mundo.

Palabras clave: Alfabetización; actuación del profesor; apropiación del lenguaje escrito; capacidades humanas; desarrollo humano.



Introduction

The origin of the term “maximum human capacities” is present among the assumptions of Cultural-Historical Theory, with Vygotsky as its primary representative. From birth, the subject comes into contact with culture and transforms—more than that, becomes humanized (Miller, 2020a). In this process of man’s cultural development,

[...] there are two channels of development of superior forms of conduct which, although they differ from each other and never merge, constitute, throughout this process, an indissoluble unity, raising the formation of man to increasingly complex levels. On one hand, there are the “processes of mastery of the external means of cultural development and thought: language, calculation, drawing,” and, on the other, “the processes of development of special superior psychic functions, [...] which in traditional psychology are called voluntary attention, logical memory, concept formation, etc.” (Vygotski, 2000, p. 29 as cited in Miller, 2020a, p. 10).

The development of maximum human capacities (which encompasses language, thought, imagination, memory, and the control of conduct) in children in the literacy process is our object of research, as we understand that literacy is an important stage not only in the child’s schooling but also in their personal formation.

When we have contact with literacy classrooms, we can glimpse how much this process impacts the child’s life and how literacy teachers are fundamental and significantly influence learning at this stage of schooling. Frequently, however, we identify that the literacy process turns to practices aimed only at decoding and memorization. Consequently, the work of many teachers reduces the learning of reading and writing to mere curricular activities, failing to use this process as a catalyst for the child’s human development.

For this reason, we believe that this theme is essential and necessary, given that, through this research, we could understand the relevance of the literacy teacher’s role and how literacy—especially reading and writing—extends to the child’s human formation, impacting their entire life.



Our theoretical framework is based on the perspective of Vygotsky's Cultural-Historical Theory, in conjunction with the ideas of authors such as Abreu (2023), Aguiar (2015), Arena (2010), Mello (2009), Miller (2020a), and Silva (2021a). The research problem stemmed from the question: how do reading and writing contribute to the development of maximum human capacities in the literacy process? The general objective of the research aims to understand how the appropriation of reading and writing affects the development of maximum human capacities in children during the literacy process. The specific objective was to understand the role of the literacy teacher who seeks to generate needs for reading and writing, strengthening the maximum capacities in the child.

The methodological procedures used follow a qualitative exploratory approach, developed through a bibliographic review aimed at understanding the research problem. Thus, starting from the chosen theme, we identified the appropriate bibliographic sources for the elaboration of this research in databases and conventional libraries. Upon obtaining the materials, readings and analyses were carried out to gather the information and data contained in the materials, establishing relationships between what was obtained and the proposed problem, and analyzing the consistency of the contents presented by the authors. It is worth noting that this article is the result of a Course Completion Assignment (TCC) carried out at a university in northern Paraná.

Methodology

The present research was developed based on a qualitative exploratory approach. According to Richardson (2012, p. 79), “the qualitative method differs, in principle, from the quantitative one insofar as it does not employ statistical instruments as the basis for the process of analyzing a problem. It does not intend to enumerate or measure homogeneous units or categories.” The author further highlights that “qualitative research can be characterized as an attempt at a detailed understanding of the meanings and situational characteristics presented” (Richardson, 2012, p. 90). Regarding its exploratory



nature, it consists of “knowing the characteristics of a phenomenon to search for them later” (Richardson, 2012, p. 326), resulting in explanations of phenomena.

Regarding the theme, we conducted a bibliographic review, which is carried out “based on already developed material, consisting mainly of books and scientific articles” (Gil, 2002, p. 44). Considering the chosen theme, the search for theoretical frameworks was conducted in academic databases, such as SciELO, Google Scholar, and the CAPES Periodicals Portal, as well as physical libraries, using keywords such as: “literacy” (*alfabetização*), “Cultural-Historical Theory,” “Vygotsky,” “human development,” and “maximum human capacities.”

As selection criteria, priority was given to texts in the Portuguese language that articulated with Cultural-Historical Theory, literacy, reading, and writing, and publications released from the year 2000 onwards, with an emphasis on recent publications. After identifying and locating the sources in conventional libraries and databases, the materials were obtained. Following this selection, an analytical reading was performed to obtain theoretical contributions related to the theme and the research problem in question, leading to the selection of the authors and references that compose the analytical corpus of this research.

Humanizing Literacy

The literacy process is of great importance in a child’s life and can be considered a major milestone in their school years, as they desire to read and write. It is a fact that all knowledge to which they have access enables a process that extends beyond the school, contributing to their formation as human beings; after all, as pointed out by Aguiar (2015), man, in contact with culture, modifies himself.

Children begin their contact with the learning of reading and writing in Early Childhood Education, deepening it in the 1st and 2nd years of Elementary School. Beyond the transition from Early Childhood Education to Elementary School, which marks a child’s school life, the beginning of the literacy process



awakens in them a great curiosity about what they will learn, accompanied by the desire to communicate through writing and reading in their daily lives.

We can observe that the majority of children in literacy classrooms have the will and expectations to learn to read and write, showing themselves to be curious and inquisitive throughout the process. Consequently, if a safe space for questioning is presented and constructed by the teacher, the child will feel free to ask. However, the interests and curiosities already brought by the child are not always utilized.

We know the relevance of the literacy process and the social function that reading and writing have in the life of a human being, and this moment cannot be restricted to mere mandatory content. As Abreu (2023) notes, the idea that the primary objective of mastering written language is the efficient performance of activities or as something necessary to advance in the schooling process is commonly propagated in school contexts and pedagogical practices. In this way, teaching distances itself from a conception that views literacy as a catalyst for the development of maximum human capacities.

Many children lose interest in reading and writing in their lives because they are not enlightened regarding the social and cultural function of language and how it will be used in their daily routines. In the literacy process, the child presents the desire to read and write due to the contact they already have with language and the demands they feel to express themselves through reading and writing throughout the experiences lived inside and outside the school environment, such as within the family. This is evidenced through the conception of writing and the clarity of the role of reading as a cultural instrument. As Aguiar (2015) emphasizes, this process became clear throughout history, in which—driven by the need to enter a communicative system that went beyond orality—man created and modified writing according to his needs.

There is no single way to define literacy, as it depends heavily on the adopted theoretical perspective. Soares (1985), for example, describes that the literacy process can be etymologically explained as the teaching of reading



and writing skills and the codes of the written language: “literacy in its proper, specific sense: the process of acquiring the written code, of reading and writing skills” (Soares, 1985, p. 20). Based on this perspective, the literacy process can be understood through the memorization and decoding of written codes in a mechanical manner.

According to the National Common Curricular Base (BNCC) (Brasil, 2018), in the early years of Elementary School, pedagogical action should be focused on literacy, ensuring opportunities for children to appropriate the system of writing and reading. Thus, the BNCC signals that the focus of pedagogical action in these first years must be literacy (Brasil, 2018). Regarding this definition, Gontijo, Costa, and Perovano (2020) criticize the document’s pretension to reduce what is learned in public schools to a technical apparatus and point out that “the emphasis of literacy in the BNCC is on the teaching of the technique of writing, therefore, on the mechanical aspects of reading and writing,” which distances itself from our understanding of the literacy process.

In contrast, Abreu (2023) designates literacy as a moment of new learning possibilities and, consequently, new developmental processes. For the author, even though it is a challenge, “with the same intensity of its complexity, it is also understood as a potentializer of transformation processes” (Abreu, 2023, p. 54). Therefore, it is a challenge that must be faced with the aim of providing children with a meaningful experience.

From the perspective of Cultural-Historical Theory, man is seen as a subject of history: “Both history and culture are characterized as two fundamental concepts of Cultural-Historical Theory, which was constituted around the studies of man” (Abreu, 2023, p. 32). In light of this, we understand that the literacy process must occur aiming at the humanization of the child, given that “Cultural-Historical Theory sees the human being and their humanity as products of the history created by human beings themselves throughout history” (Mello, 2007, p. 87). Thus, in the literacy process, by learning to read and write, the child humanizes themselves.



Miller (2020a) clarifies that Cultural-Historical Theory views education as a process of humanization, which accompanies the child from birth and extends throughout their entire life. In this way, education directly affects the transformation of subjects, as it is through this process that we become human beings endowed with superior conduct. This process promotes the mutual relationship between the capacity to appropriate cultural goods already produced and accumulated by other generations and the capacity for the objectification of the products of one's own activity, as Miller (2020a) points out.

Humanizing literacy stems from a conception involving a new way of organizing school life, “a new school culture in which writing is not a technique, but a way of learning and communicating what one learns, a way of working with a living language” (Mello, 2024, p. 2). Thus, we consider the need to make literacy a catalyst for the development of maximum human capacities and the humanization of the child, since “we humanize ourselves as we educate ourselves” (Mello, 2024, p. 2). This is a way of breaking away from what is often considered ideal in the literacy process for children—mechanical methods aimed at decoding that end up being limiting.

Furthermore, Mello (2007, p. 101) indicates that “the process of humanization is constituted in the dialectical relationship between appropriation and objectification.” Thus, “we can understand appropriation as the assimilation of human experience” (Mello, 2007, p. 101). For example, at the beginning of their literacy, in contact with elements that compose this process, the child discovers letters, vowels and consonants, syllables, punctuation marks, various writing characters, different discursive genres and their social functions, among others. Through this appropriation, objectification occurs—that is, the expression of what was appropriated by them.

In this context, the child begins to produce texts, write stories, notes, letters, and others, expressing objectifications regarding the knowledge and reflections they perform on the written language. Mello (2007) notes, thinking



about the dynamics of Early Childhood Education, that human development happens through the appropriation of historically and socially accumulated experience; thus, human experience and the production of culture become possible. We understand that it is possible for the aforementioned process to also apply to literacy.

It is necessary to understand that education holds a great responsibility in the child's formation, such as the appropriation of human qualities (Mello, 2007). The conditions to provide the child with the maximum appropriation of human capacities in the literacy process must be organized by the teacher in an intentional and appropriate manner, with the objective of making this process a catalyst for their development.

Moreover, education has the fundamental role of constructing human nature, becoming responsible for the process of humanization. Mello (2009) states that for the learning and appropriation of human capacities, interaction with complex experiences, instruments, and objects already present in our society is necessary.

It is worth emphasizing that these capacities are not considered genetic skills or aptitudes but are found in social relations. For Mello (2009), it is possible to identify that human activities and culture change over time, being perfected by each generation.

Based on this, it becomes possible to prove that “we are born ready to learn” (Mello, 2009, p. 33), ready for the different learning processes present throughout life; however, we depend on human relations and interactions to humanize ourselves. We can develop maximum capacities and human characteristics by engaging with situations and distinct cultural objects, as well as through relationships with other subjects in daily life, such as parents or guardians, family members, neighbors, teachers, and peers.

Certainly, the development of maximum human capacities can be enhanced throughout each child's educational process. When considering literacy, the intertwining of the contents present in this process and the creation



of “needs” by the teacher can provide various experiences and learning for children.

In view of this, Mello (2009) teaches that the more learning opportunities a person has, the more intelligent and creative they can become. This implies that offering varied possibilities and accessible, intentional environments strengthens the desire and generates new learning needs in the child. Distinct experiences and access to environments full of opportunities influence the child to become more intelligent and creative, expressing their thoughts, ideas, and opinions throughout their childhood and entire life.

We understand, then, that the experiences lived through culture allow the child to live and learn to reproduce for themselves the maximum human capacities, as Mello (2009) highlights. Thus, it is necessary to live together in order to learn.

While we interact with culture—that is, while we learn to use objects, while we coexist with people and solve problems with them, learn habits and customs, discuss, converse, and play—we are forming our aptitudes (Mello, 2009, p. 33).

Thus, we can say that the school’s role is fundamental for the formation of maximum human capacities in children, and the school environment must be conducive to enhancing this development alongside the literacy teacher’s actions. As Mello (2009, p. 35) explains, “our task as teachers and educators is to create the right opportunities so that everyone learns the maximum skills possible.” Thus, teaching action and the school environment become even more essential for the formation of the human being, going beyond the mere transmission of information.

We notice that the school environment has relevance not only in the learning process but also in human development as a whole, because “the school is a space for encounters, humanization, discovery, for elaborating knowledge, for moving from the sphere of empirical knowledge to transforming it into scientific knowledge” (Aguilar, 2015, p. 57). Therefore, the literacy teacher can



foster, through their pedagogical practice and the experiences provided by the school, an approximation to experiences that directly act on the development of maximum human capacities.

Consequently, the work of literacy teachers must break away from misguided educational practices that do not aim to strengthen maximum human capacities by focusing only on the technical aspects of writing:

Many teachers present misguided practices regarding the teaching of written language, as they prioritize letter-training activities and copying, and emphasize technical aspects of writing and grapheme-phoneme relationships in proposed exercises that are mechanical and artificial (Aguar; Giroto, 2015, p. 47).

As we see, the literacy process is often marked by the memorization and decoding of linguistic codes, viewing the role of “reading” as a drill to be performed. Such a view generates a concern in the child being taught to read large texts clearly and “correctly” aloud. The teacher evaluates the student’s reading fluency, limited by continuity and speed of speech, which does not allow for the interpretation of the work.

In many literacy classrooms, the teaching of written language can be characterized by superficiality, where the teacher does not seek to go beyond the activities proposed by the curriculum and the school, but merely presents different discursive genres, such as didactic texts, poems, notes, diaries, and short stories, among others. Consequently, the child learns only the various structures of texts, but not their use in daily life or in the social environment.

Many literacy teachers have a work methodology that does not instruct beyond the mandatory contents present in the school curriculum, promoting a mechanical character in the child’s learning process and distancing itself from clarification regarding the social function of language. In turn, Mello (2009, p. 37) argues that “working with the learning needs and motives of students is another important strategy in the process of providing activities that provoke learning,” making it necessary for the child to become a participating subject in their learning process.



The search for an educational practice aimed at the development of maximum human capacities goes against the actions mentioned above, which are still present in the educational environment. Therefore, we wish to reaffirm the need for the child's contact, throughout the process of appropriating written language, with the culture present in their social environment and with a literacy that is "in life," related to life events.

In this context, it is important for the teacher to consider in their educational practice the cultural environment in which the student is inserted. According to Miller (2020b, p. 2), it is necessary to keep "in view the quantity and quality of material resources and human relations available in the environment in which this education process happens." Thus, the environment in which the child is inserted functions as a source in the humanizing process and in the development of social subjects.

Consequently, the school environment and the teacher are responsible for providing and enhancing—through the literacy process—the promotion of the full development of their human qualities, taking into account the experiences already lived by children in their social environment, valuing their prior knowledge, and generating the need for learning. In this process, the reasons why they should become literate must be pointed out, revealing how reading and writing are present in their lives.

Reading and Writing

As discussed in the previous section, education has as one of its fundamental roles the construction of human nature and the process of humanization, being one of the potentializers of the development of maximum human capacities. In this article, we highlight the role of language in the development of maximum human capacities, especially those related to reading and writing, as an essential instrument that allows for the appropriation of knowledge in children during the literacy process.



Bajard (2012a) defines the term “reading” as the acquisition of knowledge from a graphic text, an individual and silent act of comprehension performed before a graphic text; meanwhile, the term “writing” is described as a code of graphic representation of language through visible material signs. From this perspective, Abreu (2023) clarifies that language refers, in its terminology, to the varied forms of human communication that broadly involve diverse modes of expression, such as gestures, sounds, postures, and other elements produced in different contexts.

In view of this, effective language corresponds to the distinct forms of expression that were constructed in the interactions between subjects within discursive contexts. As noted by Abreu (2023), it was produced in a living, dynamic, and interactive way by subjects, fostering—among the expressive manifestations of language—the development of oral language and the appropriation of written language.

Reading and writing are considered maximum human capacities to be developed because we are not born with these skills; rather, we are born with capacities to appropriate them, interiorize them, and later use them to express and communicate thoughts, ideas, opinions, and feelings. According to Abreu (2023), the term “language” (*língua*), whether oral or written, corresponds to a communication system linked to life and the social relations established between subjects. However, reading and writing are frequently defined merely as a skill developed through the decoding of letters, words, syllables, and signs, as crucial elements to be learned throughout the literacy process in a rote and mechanical manner.

In many school contexts and pedagogical practices of literacy teachers, the conception that reading is reduced to the decoding of letters is present, as emphasized by Abreu (2023). This understanding of language directly affects children in the literacy process, as they begin to consider that the primary objective of written language is the efficient performance of activities proposed by school institutions or even advancement in their schooling process.



In research conducted in 2012, children expressed that the acts of reading and writing are considered important only for school activities, such as: being able to copy content from the blackboard, performing activities, reading their notebooks, and being promoted to the following grade (Abreu, 2023). As the author cites, “the act of reading and writing is often seen by students in a very limited way, as a simple condition for performing activities, mostly writing tasks proposed by the school” (Abreu, 2023, p. 49).

Such perception alerts us to look closely at the teacher’s performance, which often limits literacy to decoding, memorization, and the use of the phonic method, directly influencing the conceptions of children who, consequently, cease to associate the use of writing with its social function in daily life inside and outside the classroom. The limitation of reading and writing conceptions by teachers results in the distancing of students from the understanding of the real social function that language serves, hindering the utilization of learning these tools as promoters of the development of maximum human capacities.

Reading and writing, however, must stand out for their relevance to human development; after all, “through language, man is able to reveal his ideas, conceptions, knowledge, values, customs, and feelings, which are expressed in his actions within the relationships he establishes daily with other people” (Abreu, 2023, p. 20). Thus, throughout the human trajectory, language enables an individual process of both individual and collective constitution.

Language is an action inherent to the human being. It is through its use—through the word constituted of meanings present in social relations—that human thought materializes in a singular way (Abreu, 2023). Thus, language is understood as paramount for the formation of the subject in both private and collective ways, such that the actions of language and thought interrelate, significantly contributing to the subject becoming an increasingly unique being positioned in the world.

Regarding written language, Mello (2010, p. 183) explains that it “records our desire and need for communication and expression; the experience of



significant encounters creates needs to express and communicate oneself”—that is, writing represents speech, which represents reality. Furthermore, we can note through the experiences and challenges faced in ordinary life situations (Silva, 2021a) that writing is an instrument that allows people to participate in society, providing access not only to information that facilitates daily life but also to a body of recorded knowledge that will be used for improvements in different aspects of life.

The teaching of writing cannot and should not be treated technically, as pointed out by Mello (2010, p. 184): “writing needs to be presented not as a motor act, but as a complex cultural activity, considering the social use for which it was created.” Therefore, the child needs to understand that writing is much more than learning syllables and sounds; it must be viewed as something alive, as described by Silva (2021a).

Learning to read is necessary for continuous and progressive transformation, aiming at an increasingly abstract and profound way of thinking (Arena, 2010). For this reason, besides writing, “the act of reading would also be the action of constructing meaning” (Arena, 2010, p. 243). Consequently, this transformative function of language compels the didactics of reading to develop different methodological conducts that serve the reader and the rediscovered functions of the act of reading.

In view of this, the formation of readers and authors of texts can be considered one of the school’s great concerns—and a challenge. For Abreu (2023, p. 37), “the proposal of activities in which students are involved and through which they are impelled to advance in their developmental processes is fundamental.” Given this, proposals that go beyond activities aiming at the decoding and memorization of letters and sounds are essential, seeking instead an approximation of the social function of language for the child’s life, making the literacy process something light, pleasurable, and transformative.

Learning to read and write becomes an impactful moment because, as Aguiar and Giroto (2015) point out, when a child is born, they are already



inserted into a literate world, an environment loaded with written language; therefore, they feel the need to learn to use these cultural tools. For this reason, “reading is a way of appropriating human culture” (Silva, 2021a, p. 84) and can be understood as an attitude of comprehension. Furthermore, because it relates to the ways of developing thought, its teaching should not center on mere decoding of graphic signs and vocalization.

In this context, it is possible that this need is understood by the child only through the interest in accessing information or to avoid having to ask someone to read a text from their daily life. However, we can consider whether this need is accompanied by an understanding of the social function that language carries.

The presentation of conceptions about the social function of language and its use must be made by the school and teachers, aiming at the humanization of the child and the enhancement of their maximum capacities. However, some educators understand that good reading and writing learning is summarized as beautiful handwriting and the rapid reading of long texts. We can find these idealizations in the public education network of the state of Paraná, which offers the so-called “Reading Fluency Assessment” to municipal schools, specifically for 2nd-grade classes, as part of the *Educa Juntos* program by the State Secretariat of Education (SEED-PR).

The assessment consists—as described on the SEED-PR website (Paraná, 2023)—of the teacher’s observation of the reading performed by the child from words and texts with different degrees of complexity, seeking to identify if there is fluency, pauses, or difficulties between words. The reading is also recorded via the CAEd platform (from the Center for Public Policy and Education Assessment of the Federal University of Juiz de Fora). The recorded audios are examined by a team that analyzes the child’s fluidity and reading rhythm, seeking to categorize the reader’s profile from the so-called “pre-syllabic” to fluent: “a student who can read up to 65 words per minute is considered fluent” (Paraná, 2023).



SEED-PR argues that “from this analysis, schools will have a diagnosis of their students’ literacy levels” (Paraná, 2023). The Secretariat reinforces that the results obtained will assist support actions for teaching and learning in the early years of Elementary School, aiming at the development of pedagogical strategies that can help the needs of children within the literacy process.

Starting from this reality, we reflect on how evaluation practices like this distance the humanization of the child throughout their literacy, consequently hindering the enhancement of maximum capacities. Abreu (2023, p. 50) signals that “excessive concern with the technical part of writing often leads to work with written language detached from its meanings and devoid of its true functions and different possibilities of use.” These concerns and practices reaffirm the perspective present in the school environment that the teaching and learning process of reading and writing is only successful if it achieves a standard of fluency.

In this way, only phonetics and the utterance of the text are overvalued, without aiming for appropriation, comprehension, and interpretation of what is read; nor is the search generated in the child to identify in their life the use of writing to express and communicate oneself. Thus, the need for reading and writing is not provoked, but rather a mechanical act and a teaching system that does not consider the possible specificities of each child throughout their literacy are reinforced.

Abreu (2023, p. 39) emphasizes that “students produce meaning in the act of learning, but each will implicate themselves in this process in a unique way, and this will provoke differentiated development.” With this in mind, it is up to the school and the literacy teacher to take into account the difficulties and challenges faced by each child, providing an environment favorable to their development as a whole, without focusing only on performing curricular activities. Thus,

[...] the teaching of written language, beyond the simple mastery of a system, must be seen and organized so that students are allowed active participation in this process, so that through it—not only at the beginning of their schooling but



throughout their process—they appropriate this language, having the conditions to use it as an instrument for their human formation (Abreu, 2023, p. 56).

Consequently, language is characterized as the means used by the subject in their constant relationship with culture, which will materialize through human relations. Furthermore, “the school can be understood as an important context for learning; however, it is not the only one. And, in terms of language, children use it markedly long before being inserted into this context” (Abreu, 2023, p. 39). Therefore, the culture and social environment in which the student is inserted have a great influence on this learning.

Abreu (2023) notes that through relationships, the experiences that will constitute the subject and their actions are established, both in the realm of language and thought. Thus, the processes of human development—among them, thought and language—occur alongside the influence of the context in which the subject is inserted.

Moreover, literacy teachers and their practices have significant influence on human development and child learning processes, being the primary mediators in this process (Silva, 2021a). However, many teachers do not pay attention to the different contexts and environments in which their students live, given that access to cultural goods is not the same for everyone. As Aguiar and Giroto (2015, p. 43) emphasize, “the starting point is not the same for all children”; therefore, children inserted in distinct environments and contexts arrive at the literacy stage with distinct knowledge and conceptions, which must be considered for the beginning of the reading and writing learning process.

The Role of the Literacy Teacher

Understanding that literacy, as it is currently instituted, does not present reading and writing to the child as an act of constructing meaning, expressing oneself, and comprehending—distancing itself from showing the social function of language.

[...] it is of paramount importance that the teacher responsible for the literacy process envisions possibilities that contribute to the



advancement of the student's reading and writing competencies, providing them with an autonomous and efficient use of written language in their daily lives (Abreu, 2023, p. 47).

For literacy to become humanizing, the teacher must understand in their practice that teaching the linguistic system is not the same as teaching how to read, but rather “teaching to read is teaching the social and cultural practices themselves that require mastery of that system” (Arena, 2010, p. 242). Therefore, when considering the teacher's role, Silva (2021a) states that one of the greatest challenges faced lies in the modes of teaching the acts of reading and writing.

As described by Silva (2021a), the ways in which reading and writing are taught end up being based on the identification and tracing of letters and the understanding of grammatical, orthographic, and syntactic rules, not being linked to the need for expression of the learning subjects. This teaching occurs “in a simulated and technical manner, which restricts the possibilities and use by the child” (Silva, 2021a, p. 78), failing to present the social function of language or generating the need to learn reading and writing to communicate and express oneself in life inside and outside school.

Silva (2021a, p. 78) further mentions that “the teacher would be the main mediator” of this process, which leads us to understand the importance of this professional in the child's life and how their presence, methodology, and practices directly affect learning and human formation, potentially impacting them positively or negatively. In considering the relevance of the literacy teacher, we can reflect on how their training reflects their preparedness and affects their pedagogical practice.

Currently, teacher training is being discussed for many reasons, one of which is generalist training, which ends up leaving gaps in specific areas of activity. In the Pedagogy course at the State University of Londrina (UEL), for example, the curriculum is composed of many subjects whose contents are divided and repeated several times throughout the training. However, when



analyzing the curriculum matrix, it is notable that the subjects focused on didactics and literacy are few and have a smaller hourly load—an element that may jeopardize the training and future performance of the student as a literacy teacher.

Visibly, even with the efforts of professors toward quality teaching in these subjects, time is short to understand the dimension of the literacy process and how it directly affects the child.

This data regarding the hourly load can be verified in the Political-Pedagogical Project of the Pedagogy Course, Curriculum 2019/01 - “Literacy Didactics for the Early Years of Elementary School - 60h” (UEL, 2018), as well as in the subject “Portuguese Language Didactics for the Early Years of Elementary School - 60h,” which contribute to literacy but total only 120 hours of academic activities, making up the 3,275 total hours of the Pedagogy course. There is also little time to understand the influence that the teacher and their practice exert on the teaching and learning process and on human development.

Furthermore, we can reflect on the limited practical and observation experiences throughout teacher training focused on classroom life, which occur only during mandatory internships. Internships are of great importance, as they bring the student closer to the reality of the teacher’s practice, intertwining theory and practice; after all, “theory without practice becomes sterile” (Miller, 2009, p. 50). However, internships—even being the primary moment of contact with classroom experiences—cannot, within their hourly load, reveal the full reality of the school and literacy classrooms.

When analyzing teaching practice, Miller (2009) mentions that for any teacher training process, a foundation in theoretical knowledge is necessary:

[...] any training process must be grounded in solid theoretical knowledge that can lead to an understanding of how a consistent pedagogical practice should take place—one that, in fact, contributes to the student’s learning process, the development of their consciousness, and the maximum development of their human qualities (Miller, 2009, p. 49).



Thus, it becomes even more indispensable to have robust training for the teacher who will become a literacy educator, encompassing the knowledge that will ground their practice so as to always seek, beyond the learning of content, to develop the maximum human capacities in their students.

According to Abreu (2023, p. 53), “literacy is an auspicious period for participation in experiences that will encourage the child to want to learn more and more.” Thus, the literacy process provides access to culture more broadly, configuring itself as paramount for effecting changes in child development.

To this end, Abreu (2023, p. 47) highlights that “it is of paramount importance that the teacher responsible for the literacy process envisions possibilities that contribute to the advancement of the student’s reading and writing competencies,” that is, by using language in their daily lives. Furthermore, Silva (2021a) also asserts that understanding the initial process of children’s appropriation of reading and writing requires planning situations that will put them in direct contact with texts and with moments of reading and writing, such that the texts read and written always have a real destination: the other. Thus, according to Silva (2021a), it is possible to consider this an intentional and planned pedagogical work.

Given the above, we can consider the need for continuing education for the teacher and their participation in projects aimed at improving and assisting their performance in the classroom. Libâneo (2004, p. 137) addresses the “need for reflection on practice based on the appropriation of theories as a framework for improvements in teaching practices,” since “becoming a teacher is a learning activity and, for this, specific capacities and skills are required.” In addition, participation in study projects can lead to reflection on one’s performance and the desire to improve one’s way of acting as new instruments of action are internalized, the author adds.

In the municipality of Londrina-PR, literacy teachers have the opportunity to participate in a research project developed by professors from UEL, such as the project “Teaching practices of the act of reading and the act of writing by



teachers of the 1st and 2nd years of Elementary School in the municipal public education network of Londrina-PR,” coordinated by Prof. Dr. Greice Ferreira da Silva. This project aims to understand how teaching practices of the act of reading and writing are constituted and organized by teachers in the initial process of appropriation and objectification of reading and writing by children in the early years of Elementary School in the city’s municipal school system (Silva, 2021b).

The project seeks to identify concepts and conceptions that sustain literacy practices and how the organization of the mode of teaching reading and writing is characterized. We can, therefore, understand that continuing education and participation in research projects enrich the teacher’s performance, grounding their practice and planning.

For effective planning, it is necessary to understand that “the teaching and learning process is a dialogue established between the child and culture” (Silva, 2021a, p. 79). Thus, the literacy educator must keep in mind that the learning of reading and writing does not happen only because they wish it so or through the organization of repetitive tasks for writing letters, but the child appropriates language when it begins to make sense to them, when they begin to coexist with the acts of reading and writing in a dialogic and dynamic way, responding to a created need, as the author states.

Arena (2010) emphasizes that teaching how to read is not the same as teaching the linguistic system; that is, it is not because the child learns the tracing of letters, sounds, and syllables that they have truly learned to read. On the contrary, reading only gains meaning and existence when the reader creates a relationship between who they are, what they know, and what the text presented to them—created by the other—is offering them.

Silva (2021a) explains that, by understanding written language as a complex cultural instrument, the search for presenting language to children in an appropriate manner is reinforced, rather than merely as a motor act, with its teaching being intentionally planned. In this way, “only then shall we be sure



that writing will develop in the child not as a habit of hands and fingers, but as a truly new and complex type of language” (Vygotski, 1995, p. 201 as cited in Silva, 2021a). Consequently, language must begin to have meaning, becoming something vital for the child.

In many schools, the conception of a literacy that is humanizing is clearly distant. As Lugle and Mello (2015) indicate, classrooms reveal a process of language appropriation in which, to learn written language, it is essential to master the technique of writing, prioritizing the mastery of the technique before explaining the reason to the child. The authors further emphasize that “the process of teaching to read is making known the reason for the act of reading, it is creating the need to read the world around them and not training words, pronunciations, or reading rhythm” (Lugle; Mello, 2015, p. 195). Thus, the teaching and learning of language need to break with notions that emphasize reading and writing as something mechanical.

Many teachers have their practices and planning focused only on providing time for children to draw letters in search of perfect tracing. However, “by opting for this teaching methodology, the act of reading and writing becomes something very distant from the child, with the use of the language also being very abstract in their daily lives” (Aguiar, 2015, p. 60). Thinking about the proximity to the child’s daily life, Bajard (2012b, p. 54) maintains that “it is important that the first step within writing be an act of language linked to personal life.” Thus, the teacher must be conscious of their role, seeking to bring the act of reading and writing closer to the child.

We believe it is possible to present language in all its complexity to the child and that “in classrooms, the work developed can be carried out with real texts from the child’s daily life, with stories that catch their attention, with books and written material everywhere in the room” (Aguiar, 2015, p. 60). Therefore, it is necessary for the teacher to seek to present reading and writing to the child in a way that they understand its importance and its use for life.



We understand that the teaching of language should occur in the planning of situations that go beyond the teaching of the alphabetic writing system, as advocated by Girotto and Balça (2019). For the authors, “the teaching of reading, when organized to lead the child to construct a meaning for reading, allows for the learning of language as a system of signs, as a complex cultural instrument used in mediation with the world” (Girotto; Balça, 2019, p. 37). Consequently, reading in school becomes indispensable for the child, no longer being reduced to a school object with an end in itself, but constituting a cultural object.

Furthermore, Aguiar (2015, p. 61) stresses that “the possibility of being the one who helps, who assumes the role of support for the child in the learning process, is one of the most striking characteristics of teachers.” Thus, the responsibility and influence of the teacher on human formation are once again reinforced, propelling it and making it advance toward new knowledge: education is a right for all, which enables growing as a human being.

Moreover, the teacher who teaches reading and writing has the opportunity to contribute to the formation of children who are readers and producers of texts. However, the classroom environment in which this learning happens and the way teaching is organized can determine whether the objective can be achieved or not. Girotto and Balça (2019) highlight that insisting on teaching reading as a mechanized system of decoding contributes to further increasing the number of people who, even having attended school, did not appropriate reading as a cultural practice and therefore are not capable of objectifying it in their social relations.

Finally, Girotto and Balça (2019, p. 34) evidence the relevance of dedicating oneself to the teaching of reading by considering how it is actually presented and objectified in human culture; this only becomes possible “when the school becomes a mediator between children and the world of objectified human activity, when it teaches reading beyond its walls.”

This fact corroborates the responsibility and the need for schools and literacy teachers to transform their teaching practices, making the learning of



reading and writing a potentializer of the development of maximum human capacities, considering that the child appropriates these capacities according to the quality of their interaction with the more experienced other (Giroto; Balça, 2019). Therefore, the opportunity to make literacy a catalyst for human development is directly related to the role of the teacher, who is the mediator in this process.

Final Considerations

In light of the findings presented in this research, we understand that literacy is a stage of great importance in a child's life, the relevance of which extends into adulthood. Through literacy, the child begins to communicate and express themselves, to integrate with what surrounds them, and to draw even closer to the culture of the context in which they live. This occurs if the process is mediated by the teacher, who engages the child and generates "needs," ensuring that their learning is not reduced to merely good writing or reading according to established standards, but is instead close to their reality, transformative, and meaningful.

As discussed at the beginning of this article, the objective of understanding how the appropriation of written language affects the development of maximum human capacities in children undergoing the literacy process has been achieved. Through language, the child develops as a human being, revealing their ideas, conceptions, thoughts, and imagination, while appropriating culture. Learning to read and write is an impactful moment that brings freedom to the child and makes them an active and creative participant in their own learning.

The specific objective, which aimed to understand the role of the literacy teacher who seeks to develop maximum human capacities in the child and who generates the need for reading and writing, was also achieved. It was evidenced that it is the responsibility of the literacy teacher to improve themselves through continuing education and participation in projects. Their practice must be



permeated by reflections, always centering on the child, so that the student remains active in their participation in the learning process.

In this way, it is essential that literacy be understood as a humanizing and transformative act, moving away from misguided actions that reduce language learning to mere technique, decoding, and memorization, which render reading and writing abstract. On the contrary, this process must empower the child to express and communicate themselves. The teacher must aim to develop maximum human capacities in the child, making literacy an act of freedom and of positioning oneself in the world.

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