

# Written Production in High School: Grounds for working with argumentative text

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## Abstract:

In this exploratory article, we sought to raise reflections on working with the argumentative text in Portuguese language classes in high school. From a theoretical point of view, the argument is understood here as an essentially dialogical language action, which aims to persuade the interlocutors about ideas exposed and defended (GREGOLIN, 1993; BRETON, 2003; PERELMAN; OLBRECHTS-TYTECA, 2005). To carry out the work, we started by surveying some empirical studies (CONCEIÇÃO, 2002; CRUZ, 2008; RIOLFI; IGREJA, 2010; CAMPOS, 2012) whose research objects are directly related to the production of texts written in the school context. This sought to question/problematicize didactic procedures used by teachers in the teaching of argumentation. Then, through the analysis of two essay-argumentative texts produced by students from a public school in the state of Pernambuco, pedagogical guidelines are suggested that can favor the understanding and use of the linguistic-discursive processes and the resources necessary for argumentation. In conclusion, the thesis is reinforced that, for the production of argumentative texts, the student needs to use some specific skills and strategies that, properly worked on teaching, guarantee them the right to say and to be heard.

## Keywords:

Written production. Argumentative. High school.

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## INITIAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this article, we deal with the argumentative text approach written in high school motivated by two central questions, raised from our practices of internship supervisors in undergraduate courses and trainers of Portuguese language teachers, as well as research about this same theme. The first of these issues is the low frequency of systematic work with writing in the classroom and the second is the reduction of the complexity of the argumentative text, which, in this perspective, is now taught to learners as the result of fixed development schemes. For the development of the study, we adopted the concept of text as being a

verbal manifestation, constituted of linguistic elements from different orders, selected and arranged according to the virtualities that each language makes available to the speakers in the course of verbal activity, to provide interactants not only the production of meanings but to ground interaction itself as a socio-cultural practice (KOCH, 2011, p. 31).

Similarly, we conceive argumentation as an essentially dialogical language action, which aims to convince interlocutors about ideas exposed and defended (GREGOLIN, 1993; BRETON, 2003; PERELMAN; OLBRECHTS-TYTECA, 2005).

From these concepts of text and argumentation, we will start presenting some studies that problematize the teaching practices of writing and argumentation. In the sequence, we will try to characterize the argumentative text, at the same time that we pose the challenges that its mode of operation implies for the teaching-learning process. Thirdly, we will bring some fundamentals to the treatment of writing at school, trying to demonstrate its indispensability when it comes to teaching and learning to argue in writing. Finally, we will show two argumentative texts produced by two high school students from a public school in the state school of Pernambuco and indicate didactic procedures that can be adopted from them, in the perspective of the theoretical-methodological foundations previously exposed.

## TEXTUAL PRODUCTION IN THE SCHOOL CONTEXT: PROBLEMATIZING SOME PRACTICES IN HIGH SCHOOL

Cruz (2008) sees the conception of language as a form of interaction between subjects as the basis for a significant teaching-learning of text production. She points out that the interlocutors of an interactive process are social subjects between whom bonds and commitments are built, thus having a close relationship between language, society and culture. The author also says that the production of meanings through language results from a complex process and that the discourse is produced from certain conditions (therefore, it is situated). With it on mind, she analyzed texts written by basic education students and found that they were developed according to a hard scheme, resulting in homogenized and artificial speeches. Given this finding,

she concluded that it is a challenge for the school to lead students to establish, through writing, effective dialogical relations with their interlocutors, in a given context of discursive production.

A second relevant study to our discussion was developed by Riolfi and Igreja (2010), concluded, in their research, that the teaching of the essay text has been neglected. After analyzing a significant set of classes taught in high school, they saw that only 6% of the time in these classes was dedicated to work with such type of texts. They also observed that: (a) the moments of reflection were rare before the students produced the texts; (b) the documented classes followed a basic model, consisting of two moments – the exposure of the content by the teacher and the request for writing; (c) practically, there aren't collective review and rewriting activities.

Regarding the didactic strategies used by teachers for teaching writing of the essay text, the three most frequent ones were, in order: (a) specific didactic sequence for writing the dissertation; (b) isolated writing of an essay text based on a theme; (c) copy in the frame of a note about the structure of the essay text, followed by an oral presentation by the teacher.

Concerning the students' productions, three major types of problems were found: (a) unfamiliarity of the structural characteristics of the dissertation; (b) unfamiliarity of prerequisites for the logical articulation of the segments and lack of notion of the textual set; (c) precarious resources for the build of the thesis or its support. In this third case in particular, precarious encyclopedic knowledge, difficulty in calculating the effect of the text's meaning, and difficulty in selecting, organizing and hierarchizing arguments that could add argumentative potential to the productions were verified.

Problems in the treatment of writing within the school were also identified by Conceição (2002), who paid more attention to the procedures adopted by the teachers. Beyond the worrying absence of writing in Portuguese classes, this author found an overvaluation of the grade, which, in general, was inconsistently attributed. The correction used to be limited for the checking of mistakes visible on the textual surface, and there was practically no return of the production to the student, in the form of discussion, review, and individual or collective rewriting. In the few times the rewriting occurred, it seemed to be a meaningless activity, since clear and consistent evaluation criteria were not established. Another factor that made difficult to review and rewrite were the teachers' comments, which were empty and imprecise and couldn't be a reference for the students.

Investigating possible relations among the teaching of argumentation and the learning of students, Campos (2012) observed that, in the most classroom situations, only the writing of the argumentative essay was demanded, as defined by Xavier (2010, p. 7):

it is a specific textual genre that circulates in various social institutions, including the school and the university, whose formal and functional characteristics allow its user to demonstrate the mastery of certain linguistic and intellectual skills. Through an argumentative essay, the author seeks to convince their reader to adopt a position (philosophical, political or ideological), to change one's behavior (aesthetic, ethical or moral) or to accept a scientific principle as universal.

Another recurrent practice is the proposal to write the argumentative text based on oral debate on the theme to be addressed in the text. At the end of the debate, students are asked to write the dissertation, assuming that what was explained orally will automatically be presented in writing. In terms of evaluation, Campos (2012) found that, in general, no consideration is given to students' productions and they are not asked to resume/rewrite their essays.

To close this item, we quote a study by Menegassi and Gasparotto (2016) about the importance of revision and rewriting work, in which they affirm that the teacher faces a great challenge: to develop in his students' discursive skills that allow them to produce relevant texts, that not only meet the structure of the

proposed textual genre, but that presents a coherent and meaningful discourse, given the social purpose of this production.

Next, as already announced, we will make considerations about the argumentative text.

## **THE ARGUMENTATIVE TEXT: NATURE, STRUCTURE AND CHALLENGES FOR TEACHING**

Argumentation is a language action that takes place in the early years of our lives. We argue both in more usual situations (when we defend our point of view in family conversations) and in more formal situations (when we participate as candidates in the study, work selections or in the occurrence of regulated debates, for example).

We can affirm that arguing constitutes a discursive activity through which we lead our interlocutor to change opinion or to join our theses (PERELMAN; OLBRECHTS-TYTECA, 2005) and, in this perspective, several language scholars understand the act of arguing as a possibility of social insertion.

This is the case of Leal and Morais (2006, p. 8), who, when justifying the choice of producing opinion texts at school as a research topic, point out the argument as “a socially relevant activity that permeates the lives of individuals in all spheres of society”, insofar as the defense of points of view constitutes a fundamental aspect of the subjects’ autonomy.

Breton (2003), sharing the idea of the essential role that argumentation can play in the lives of individuals, considers it as a practice inherent to human communication and asserts that, as a human identifies themselves with a word, with a point of view of their own about the world in which they are inserted, they practice argumentation.

In Pécora (1999, p. 88), we find the following statement: “the meaning of the term argumentation no longer refers only to a particular type of verbal use, but above all to a fundamental property for the characterization of language as discourse”.

Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (2005), along the same lines, record:

Only the existence of an argument, *which is neither coercive nor arbitrary, gives a meaning to human freedom*, a condition for exercising a rational choice. If freedom were only necessary adherence to a previously given natural order, it would exclude any possibility of choice; if the exercise of freedom was not based on reasons, any choice would be irrational and would be reduced to an arbitrary decision acting in an intellectual vacuum (p. 581, emphasis added).

These same authors also emphasize that the power to deliberate and argue is a hallmark of human language.

So, the argument is “the textual result of a combination between different components, which requires the subject who argues to build an explanation [...] using individual and social experiences, in a spatial and temporal framework of a persuasive situation (KOCH; ELIAS, 2017, p. 24).

This language action needs, however, some basic conditions for its occurrence: a) existence of a subject that can be debated (LEAL; MORAIS, 2006) or controversial but admissible social situations (SOUZA, 2003); b) existence of an idea to be defended (proposition, statement, thesis); c) propositions that justify or refute the statement (through evidence, justifications, counter-arguments) (LEAL; MORAIS); d) an antagonist/opponent, which can be real or virtual (LEAL; MORAIS).

These are the same conditions that attribute to the argumentative text the following characterization: it is a text that comprises the presentation of a thesis to be defended by means of arguments, the objective being to validate what is being proposed by the speaker/author of the text aiming to reach a conclusion/answer. Through these strategies, the text producer seeks to make their text consistent, to get their audience.

The argumentative text, therefore, has its content revealed by a process that implies successive regulations, making the ideas defended on it to be built, reconstructed, analyzed and organized, according to the demand for interaction, to obtain the consent of the interlocutor (CITELLI, 1994)

From the point of view of writing, argumentation is a text that is formed by the combination of data articulated, generally, through connectives, conjunctions and diversified forms used to support, refute or negotiate the points of view or theses presented.

For Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (2005), “an effective argument is one that manages to increase this intensity of adhesion so that the intended action is triggered in the listeners (positive action or abstention) or, at least, a disposition is created in them for action, which will manifest itself in due time” (p. 50).<sup>1</sup>

In these terms, these authors defend that every argument presupposes the existence of intellectual contact and presents the notion of the audience as the set of those the speaker wants to influence with his/her argument. Still, according to them, the idea of an auditorium is “immediately evoked as soon as a speech is thought” (p. 7). Thus, changing the auditorium, the argument changes its aspect. About the notion of the auditorium, Breton (2003) adds that the auditorium the speaker wants to convince to adhere the proposed opinion can constitute a person, an audience, a group of audiences or, in a more extreme case, the speaker, when it aims to self-conquer.

Riolfi and Igreja (2010) share these statements and consider that, to those who propose to write an essay text, there is a need to know the audience to which they are addressed so that they can rely on arguments that do not necessarily correspond to their own convictions. The argument, therefore, requires that the individual uses some linguistic-discursive strategies that have the role of developing a debate in an orderly and coherent way, aiming at changing the opinion of the interlocutor. In this sense, it is necessary to go beyond personality through a path in which, to a large extent, formal education has a fundamental role. In other words: according to Riolfi and Igreja (2010), the skills required for the production of the written argumentative text aren't innate; otherwise, they must be taught by the Portuguese language teacher in an explicit and deliberate way.

So, if we assume the idea that the argument isn't made in any way and that “it takes some quality to take the floor and be heard” (PERELMAN; OLBRECHTS-TYTECA, 2005, p. 21), we understand that the pedagogical practices or didactic guidelines adopted by the mother tongue teacher can contribute to the construction of argumentative texts written by the students since we consider the teacher as a “mediator between the object of studies (in this case, the text) and the learning that will take place. concretizing in classroom activities” (GERALDI, 2003, p. 112). It is the challenge and role of the school, therefore, to lead the student to establish a dialogical relationship with their interlocutor in a given context of production.

From a social point of view and based on the statements already presented, we can say that argumentation is a frequent activity in our daily relationships, but alone, doesn't guarantee that we can develop it well in any communicative situation. There are discursive and linguistic strategies necessary for the development of an argumentative text that needs to be taught. Therefore, we understand the school and the Portuguese language class as a privileged space and time for the study/teaching of the argumentative text.

Seeking to build a counterpoint to the problems related to the treatment of argumentative writing at school and based on the characterization we made of the argumentative text, we will bring, in the next item, some principles that we consider relevant for the teaching-learning of writing in general and of the argumentative in private text.

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<sup>1</sup> The arguments, according to Savioli and Fiorin (2001), are not necessarily proof of truth. Rather, it is a linguistic and discursive resource designed to lead the interlocutor to accept the views of the speaker and are constructed from the previous knowledge and socio-historical-cultural experiences of the text producers.

## THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES FOR DIRECTING WRITTEN PRODUCTION AT SCHOOL

In a study entitled *The development of linguistic-discursive knowledge: what do you learn when you learn to write?*, Costa Val (2009) argues that there is a specific linguistic-discursive knowledge to develop when you learn to write, even given that writing takes place within certain conditions of production. Thus, the Portuguese teacher would have the role of leading his students to systematically reflect on the most common compositional and expressive resources in the various written text genres.

According to Costa Val,

Learning to write involves learning to build an adequate image of the intended reader and the conditions under which reading is expected – the support, the immediate situation, the historical, social, political, and ideological context –, and to be guided by these representations in controlling the articulation, distribution and explicitness of information (among other things), during the text production process (p. 93-94).

Also according to the author, deliberate work of textual composition is one of the things that students need to learn to effectively learn how to write, and involves, among other aspects, the construction of the superstructure and the semantic macrostructure, besides the syntactic structuring of the statements. For this reason, the author of a written text needs to make decisions of various orders and must, therefore, have a wide repertoire of possibilities for textual build.

Costa Val highlights the fact that, for the learners of writing it is difficult to build an adequate image of the reader and of the reading conditions of the text they write, since it requires a great effort of decentralization and abstraction, of displacing the immediate concrete present. Furthermore, learners may be unaware of many textual genres written in circulation that can serve as a reference when producing their own texts, it is up to the school works, systematically and consistently, these types of knowledge and skills.

Menegassi and Gasparotto (2016) also maintain that the learning of writing depends on systematic and organized actions among which the work of revision and rewriting occupies a privileged place. For them, textual revision guided by the teacher is an important step in the process of developing writing skills by students, representing a rich moment of exchange, negotiation and reflection. In this perspective, the quality of the rewriting is intrinsically linked to the effectiveness of the review.

In a similar way, Gonçalves (2010) proposes to expand the concept of text correction, traditionally seen as an isolated activity in which the teacher only marks the mistakes made by the students on their texts. Considering the mediating nature of the other in the construction of meanings, the author suggests that, in the teaching-learning-assessment process of writing, a network of organized and systematized activities must be created, in which different instruments are used at different moments in the chain of textual production.

Gonçalves says that rereading, reviewing and rewriting – integral parts of writing – are strong moments in the learning of the production of a text and are activities also learned. So, the importance of the teacher making appropriate mediations, constructing pertinent and precise dialogical comments, which can bring a great contribution to the process of producing meanings. Therefore, it is possible to create what the author calls a checklist or findings, which students would take as a reference in the work of review and textual rewriting. This checklist favors the recapture of the key concepts developed and creates a kind of common language about the textual genre that is being an object of the production process.

An example cited by Gonçalves concerns the production of an academic summary, for the assessment of which four major types of questions were outlined:

- (1) issues related to the context of production;
- (2) issues regarding the general organization of the text;
- (3) issues related to textualization;
- (4) issues related to textual microstructure.

Each major type of question unfolds on its own detail. Thus, in the case of textualization, the student would have to evaluate whether his text meets specific criteria of the textual genre, such as:

- a) were eloquent verbs used to refer to someone else's speech?
- b) was the author's voice different from the summary producer's voice?
- c) were appropriate logical-discursive organizers used?
- d) repetitive and unnecessary expressions were avoided?

This process of resuming the text through interactive interventions, according to the author, allows a greater development of the heterogeneity of the discourse, at the same time that it favors the built, by the students, of adequate and necessary knowledge for the practice of writing.

For Conceição (2002), it is necessary to encourage students to assume an attitude of attention to their texts, arousing them an interest in producing deliberate effects of meaning on the interlocutors. Thus, the discursive of writing would be ensured, which it is essential to promote interactions between students, teachers and texts. The author maintains that writing is based on five principles:

- (1) the text is subject to publication (to become public);
- (2) every text is a response to another text, a proposal for dialogue;
- (3) the constitution of the text must consider, first, to whom and why to write;
- (4) writing is a process, and one must write as many times as necessary;
- (5) every text must have discursive qualities that determine the quality of the dialogue.

In this sense, the student should be less concerned with the canonized models of school writing and seek the discursive qualities of the text. In the case of argumentation, the subject of this study, it's important to invest in convincing and/or persuading the interlocutor, effectively articulating the particular meanings proposed by the author with the particular meanings brought by the reader.

Another important study for our discussion is about Schneider and Sella (2013). For these authors,

conceiving language teaching as linked to social practices and its use as an effective instrument of interaction between individuals requires lead the student to understand that there are resources available in the system of a language that serves the writer and the reader, in the constitution of the meanings of the enunciated, whether written or oral (p. 5).

Thus, when it comes to textual production, so that the students can position themselves in writing as the subject/author of their text, it's necessary to subsidize them with knowledge about these linguistic resources, making them aware of their specific role in conducting the argument.

Some more didactic actions can be adopted to develop in the students adequate skills for writing the argumentative text, such as, for example, those mentioned by Riolfi and Igreja (2010, p. 322):

Comparison of different argumentative texts, to understand which are the variable and invariable parts of this genre; reflection on the existence of coherence between each thesis and its respective argument; the setting up of 'encyclopedias' in common use to create argumentative texts; the introduction of arguments, in the form of quotations, in the most appropriate places of texts previously prepared by the teacher, etc.

One last article that we find relevant to mention on this item is about Suassuna (2017), who talked specifically with the evaluation criteria. The author understands that the criteria are the basis for an authentic formative assessment and would have the role of helping learners to develop critical skills on the face of their own knowledge of writing. Besides, at the same time, “they help the teacher to select relevant aspects and phenomena for the forwarding of the textual analysis, to plan the didactic mediation to be made and to define/hierarchize the problems to be treated” (p. 279) and “assist the student in the analysis and regulation of the writing task, as well as in verifying their own performance in the discursive project they intended to carry out” (p. 279).

In general, we defend the situations of text production are significant for students; that originate from themes and interactive contexts in which they are immersed; that makes it possible for them to constitute themselves as subject authors of their own speeches. All of this requires procedural work, which involves interactions, polyphonic contexts of production, resumed writings and planned actions.

## METHODOLOGICAL ELEMENTS

This descriptive research (GIL, 2008)<sup>2</sup> and exploratory (OLIVEIRA, 2016)<sup>3</sup> aimed to present some theoretical and methodological aspects involved in teaching written production of argumentative texts, based on empirical studies that discuss this issue and the analysis of productions written by high school students.

The *corpus* consists of essay-argumentative texts produced by two students from the 3rd grade of high school at a public school in the state of Pernambuco. These texts are part of data set of a master's dissertation entitled “The written production of argumentative texts: reflections on teaching practice and student learning” (see CAMPOS, 2012), developed by the Graduate Program in Education at Federal University of Pernambuco.

In this investigation, the focus was on teaching practice and the teaching of argumentation, observing how the guidelines given by Portuguese-speaking teachers for the production of argumentative text in high school were indicated in the students' texts. This work was made after the researcher and collaborators signed a Free and Informed Consent Term (ICT), which contained information about the specificities of the research (object of study, objectives, methods of data collection and treatment, and expected results), as well as about the possible risks that could be offered to the participants, the idea that the subjects could withdraw from the study at any time and the guarantee of their anonymity in any situation.

Two Portuguese language teachers from the public schools of Pernambuco participated in this investigation and were selected through criteria defined in the research. As methods of data collection, the observation of Portuguese language classes of 3rd grade of high school was adopted, with area diary records, semi-structured interviews and the collection of texts (documents) produced by students in the observed period.

In the area diary, the occurrences of text production activities were documented/followed up, and aspects that would be relevant to the research were recorded (ways of conducting the teacher, guidance given to students, materials used in classes, use of prior planning for the classes). The forms of assessment adopted by the teachers regarding the texts produced were not of primary interest in this investigation, nor the sequences of activities carried out after the actual writing.

For this article, the chart corresponds to the analysis of the linguistic and discursive strategies present in two of the elaborated texts, through which some possibilities for the teaching of argumentation will be indicated. We describe below the classroom situation in which these texts emerged.

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<sup>2</sup> For Gil (2008), descriptive research aims to analyze the characteristics of a phenomenon, trying to identify the variables related to it.

<sup>3</sup> According to Oliveira (2016), exploratory research involves studies that provide an overview of the studied fact or phenomenon.

**Chart 1** – Description of the argumentative text production class

1. The teacher enters the room and asks students to divide into groups of 4 or 5 members.
2. She gives students newspapers to read news from the previous Sunday.
3. Students must choose a text and, after reading it, socialize their impressions about each one.
4. Four teams make a presentation about the text genres read: (a) poetry; (b) chronic; (c) opinion text on the decriminalization of marijuana; (d) informative text on the legalization of marijuana.
5. In mediation, the teacher asks questions to the teams, such as: what is the relevance of each theme to society? What is the theme of each text? What kind of text did you read? What kind of language was prevalent in each text? What did each of you think of the text?
6. Verifying that the topic of marijuana legalization “yielded” a good discussion, the teacher asks their opinion on the topic in question.
7. The teacher draws the students’ attention to the arguments used by the organizers of the last events regarding the legalization of marijuana.
8. Students begin to expose and defend their ideas.
9. Some students agree with legalization and, to justify it, present some arguments such as (a) everyone has the right to freedom of choice; (b) the possibility of reducing trafficking; (c) fights between gangs vying for power over drugs would exist anymore.
10. On the other hand, there are students who disagree, under the arguments: (a) society will suffer the consequences, as there will be more dependent children; (b) if marijuana is released, other types of drugs will be released; (c) trafficking won’t stop, because drug addicts will not always have money to buy marijuana and will look for more potent drugs; (d) improper occupation of public space by marijuana smokers, encouraging the use of this drug; (e) people are not thinking about the consequences that marijuana brings to the organism of dependents on it; (f) they forgot to think about the families that suffer from marijuana users.
11. One of the students expresses himself by alerting the class that the problem is not marijuana, but the flowers and leaves of this herb, which has the scientific name of *Cannabis sativa*. He says that marijuana can be smoked or ingested as a drink and, in most cases, it is used to cause a feeling of relief. The student believes that anyone who uses marijuana does it to escape reality. He says, however, that the repeated use of the herb can cause chemical dependence and lead to death. He says that one of the characteristics of the marijuana user is the unwillingness to take care of themselves and to take care of their hygiene. He notes that, according to the United Nations (UN), between 2006 and 2007, there was an increase of 8 million users (adult population) of marijuana.
12. Colleagues applaud this student and say that he “on fire”. He smiles and says he read this information in a magazine on the subject.
13. At this moment, the teacher takes a position, saying that she is also against the legalization of marijuana, reminding the difficulty of people in Brazil following rules.
14. She comments, then, she will propose the production of an essay-argumentative text on the last topic that was discussed.
15. On the blackboard, she records the following stretch: “All of humanity’s rights were won by the struggle ...” (VON IHERING).
16. She explains that the stretch is to reflect a little more on the topic they just discussed.
17. It reminds students of the structure of the essay text (introduction, development and conclusion), as well as the distribution of paragraphs in each part.
18. Students ask about the number of lines.
19. The teacher informs that the text must be about 20 and 25 lines and must be delivered to her at the end of the class.
20. Students start to produce their texts.
21. The class ends, the students detach the sheets with their productions and give them to the teacher.

**Source:** Campos, 2012, p. 107-108.

## **ANALYSIS OF THE ARGUMENTATIVE TEXTS PRODUCED**

As it was said, from the class described above, two texts were produced that will serve the discussion proposed on this article, which will focus on the writing operations performed by students, associated with some methodological proposals.

### Chart 2 – Argumentative text 1

*“All human rights were conquered by the struggle”  
Von Hering*

→ Marijuana legalization march

#### **Awareness is everything**

Marijuana, like any other drug, has its moments that pleasure the user. But is that enough to legalize its use?

With the approval of the law in favor of the use of the drug, people who aren't part of this environment may be harmed, because when they smoke in public places, the drug addict harms the others.

Other countries had already approved the law, but the conditions are different in those countries, especially the conditions related to safety and law enforcement that controls marijuana use.

Other countries have already approved the law, but the conditions are different in developed countries, mainly the issue of security and fidelity to the law, thus controlling the disorderly use of marijuana.

Awareness is important for people to understand that a more 'light' drug like this can open the door to heavier ones, that is, with more dangerous and harmful effects on health.

So, everyone with their ideas should rethink the subject, but this time put themselves in the background, and look more at who is next and can be harmed.

**Source:** Campos, 2012, p. 129.

We found that the student built a text within the proposed theme and, somehow, can be characterized as argumentative. Following the instructions given by the teacher, she made an effort to build arguments in defense of her thesis, using a rhetorical question for it. It appears, from some clues, that the argument was developed according to the following general scheme:

**THESIS:** Marijuana should not be legalized.

**ARGUMENT:** Marijuana users harm others.

**COUNTER-ARGUMENT TO BE REFUTED:** Marijuana pleases the user.

**CONCLUSION:** The right of those who don't use marijuana is above the user's pleasure.

However, the student was unable to develop his argument in a qualified and convincing manner, for several reasons, which we enumerate.

- (1) The relationship between title and text hasn't been well established; in fact, the author opened the text with an epigraph (phrase suggested by the teacher), referred to the march for the legalization of marijuana (which was the theme of the news read before) and then inserted the phrase Consciousness is everything (probably anticipating the final argument).
- (2) The arguments used are partially relevant and sufficient for the defense of the thesis.
- (3) In terms of lexical selection/coherence, through the use of the drug/drug addict, the student produced a generic speech, not being successful in resuming certain terms.
- (4) The argument made in the third paragraph – the fact some countries have already legalized the use of marijuana cannot be considered here in Brazil, as we are not a developed nation – was not consistently presented, which weakened the refutation of a possible counterargument.
- (5) In the fourth paragraph, the author introduces the element of awareness to refer to the risk that the use of marijuana, considered lighter, may lead to heavier drugs with more dangerous effects;

note that, as in the third paragraph, the issue of third harm doesn't arise, and awareness seems to have been raised only to warn the growing risks of marijuana use.

- (6) The end of the text corresponds to a simplistic solution and, at the same time, contradictory – the author admits that everyone can have their own ideas, recommends rethinking the subject and determines that marijuana users put themselves in the background and look more for those who are next and can be harmed.
- (7) The epigraph contradicts the text, insofar as it affirms that all the rights of mankind were won through struggle. If we consider that the fight for the legalization of marijuana aims to achieve the right to free (therefore, not criminalized) use of marijuana, maintaining illegality is not a right, and those who condemn the use of it, don't have reason to fight.
- (8) The text revealed problems in the use of connectors and other resources of textual cohesion, which hinder the continuity and progression of ideas, besides some flaws in the handling of the cultured variety of the language.

About this text, our task, as responsible teachers for the teaching of writing, would be, independently of personal positions taken on the subject, to collaborate so that the student would be more successful in the purpose of exposing their thesis and convincing his interlocutors not to stand in defense of marijuana legalization.

What has been put so far on teaching, learning and evaluation of written production at school, in particular of argumentative text, various didactic content and procedures could compose the lessons after the production of the analyzed text. We suggest, for example:

- (1) identify the presumed reader, as well as the central purpose of the text;
- (2) identify the thesis – the pleasure arising from the use of the drug shouldn't be taken as a basis for its legalization – and to reaffirm or not its choice;
- (3) identify the arguments brought to the text – prejudice people/adoption of the measure of legalization by other countries/risk of marijuana being the door for the use of heavier drugs – and evaluate them in terms of relevance and sufficiency;
- (4) review the title's attribution to the text, evaluating the meaning effects of the epigraph;
- (5) discuss the occurrences of reported speech and authority argument;
- (6) observe the use of orational connectors and other discursive operators;
- (7) pay attention to modalities;
- (8) to be together with the review of the arguments, to balance the progression and thematic continuity;
- (9) to raise and evaluate possible counter-arguments, to refute them appropriately and convincingly;
- (10) evaluate the degree of informativeness and novelty of the text;
- (11) survey some argumentative strategies used, checking their effects on the argument (quotes, rhetorical question);
- (12) read other argumentative texts, whose authors oppose the legalization of marijuana, paying attention to the constructed arguments; then, try to select some of these arguments and try to incorporate them into the original text, evaluating the results of the choices.

### Chart 3 – Argumentative text 2

#### Legalize or not legalize marijuana?

Talking about this subject is complicated, as it is not something that involves only one side. If marijuana is legalized, it will cause many problems to follow, such as discrimination, disrespect, and many others.

You can't talk about legalization without planning. Planning of "laws" and "norms" for users and sellers. These "laws" and "norms" should describe who could sell and how it would be done.

For the buyer, to establish where to consume, so as not to harm those who do not use this kind of substance.

These are just arguments because for this legalization to take place there would have to be a lot of planning.

"Thing that doesn't exist in Brazil".

Source: Campos, 2012, p. 131.

Student 2, participating in the same class event, follows the compositional structure suggested in class (introduction, development and conclusion), following the guidance on the number of defined paragraphs as the ideal for the argumentative essay. Somehow, we could summarize the structure of your text like the following:

**THESIS:** Marijuana should not be legalized.

**ARGUMENT:** There must be planning to avoid problems for users, sellers and non-users of marijuana

**COUNTER-ARGUMENT TO BE REFUTED:** In Brazil, there isn't adequate planning to regulate social life.

**CONCLUSION:** First, for legalization to materialize, there must be consistent planning.

In a more detailed analysis, some aspects deserve attention:

- (1) The student produces an argumentative text, although he shows limitations in presenting a repertoire of consistent ideas for the defense of his point of view. According to data from the original research (cf. CAMPOS, 2012), the producer of this text was highlighted, in the researcher's notes, for being responsible for episode 11 (see class description in Chart 1 of this article). In other words, the student, in the oral debate proposed and mediated by the teacher, produced several speeches on the topic of marijuana, revealing the polyphonic character of the argument, but was unable to transpose his arguments to the written text.
- (2) The title of the text, which is a question on the topic, announces certain insecurity of the student to address the issue, an aspect that is demonstrated right at the beginning of the first paragraph: Talking about this subject is complicated, because it isn't something that involves only one side.
- (3) In the second sentence of the first paragraph, the student sets out his point of view: If marijuana is legalized it will solve many of the following problems such as discrimination, disrespect and many others. Here, we can see problems of linguistic inadequacy, which partially compromise the meaning of the paragraph.
- (4) Subsequently, the student doesn't seem to be able to extrapolate the argument he uses to justify his point of view (One can't speak of legalization without planning, planning of "laws" and "norms" for users and sellers), even though, in the other paragraphs, he tries to make this argument clearly.

- (5) It is possible to observe that the author of the text has an idea of a presumed interlocutor (or auditorium), because, when mentioning the importance of creating specific legislation for the use of marijuana, he addresses the user/buyer, the seller and non-users of this drug (he uses referencing through the expression of this material).
- (6) Despite of being a text that doesn't hug the theme, the student tries to develop a sequencing, using grammatical and lexical connectors as the use of *this, because, already, thing ...*
- (7) In his conclusion, the author reaffirms his position (for this legalization to take place, there would have a lot of planning), but introduces a counter-argument not expected by the reader (something that there isn't in Brazil). This break of expectation, materialized in the written text, makes us assume that the student has difficulties to deal with the strategies of saying, to link arguments and counter-arguments in his text.

In these terms, as we did with text 1, some didactic procedures can be adopted before and after production. So, in the previous step writing the text, it is important to:

- (1) enabling the student to assume the role of the announcer of his text, noticing possible interlocutors;
- (2) developing strategies so that the student has something to say, knows how to do it and has reasons for doing it;
- (3) at the time of the oral debate, recording, on the board, the different positions and information of the students, leveraging the position, argumentation and refutation of arguments;
- (4) from reading and understanding other argumentative texts, exploring the specificities of textualization processes/mechanisms in oral and written discourse.

In the moments after the textual production, we would recommend:

- (1) getting students to recognize and analyze basic strategies present in the produced argumentative texts;
- (2) calling attention for the ways of using linguistic resources and discourse organization by different authors who deal with the same theme as the argumentative dissertation, analyzing approaches and distances from the strategies used by students.
- (3) exploring the discursive mechanisms used with a view to the adhesion of interlocutors in the argumentative texts;
- (4) reading and rereading students' texts, encouraging reviewing and rewriting productions.

These are just a few ideas among many other possibilities of didactic guidance to be adopted in the cases studied here. Our intention, when proposing them, was to highlight the importance of mediations for the learning of students, who have a lot to say and, in this perspective, must have insured their right to say and the knowledge involved in saying.

## CONCLUSION

This study aimed to raise some questions about the writing of the argumentative text in high school, problematizing its teaching based on research and studies that deal with this theme and that point to the low frequency of systematic writing, in Portuguese language classes, as well as the superficiality of production contexts at school.

In that direction, several phenomena of the teaching-learning process of the argumentative text described here are worth mentioning. One of them is that the students, even though they have raised good

arguments in oral discussions on controversial topics that commonly precede the moment of the dissertation, aren't able to transpose them into their written productions. Already in the final stage of basic education, they still demonstrate several problems in dealing with the argumentative text, such as lack of mastery of the specificities of written language; difficulty in adapting to the theme; the dimness of information; semantic inconsistency; low level of information; undue generalizations; flaws in the structure and logical chain of ideas; difficulty in taking positions and supporting movements and refuting arguments, among others.

It is a fact that many teachers have appropriated the idea that it is important to work with the various skills that can lead students to produce argumentative texts and even conceive argumentation as a form of persuasion, of action on others; however, there are still some obstacles for teaching this textual genre that needs to be questioned in search of differentiated teaching action.

In this sense, the actions proposed here aim to contribute to the debate on the teaching of argumentation, assuming that, through consistent and constant didactic guidelines, argumentation in school spaces can be an action of language that is part of the teaching-learning process of Portuguese language.

Then, we think that effective action by the Portuguese language teacher that subsidizes the student with knowledge about the linguistic resources at his disposal and that helps him to become aware of his role in conducting an effective argument is fundamental for them to position themselves in writing as the subject-author of their text.

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