

LITERARY CURTAIN: A LITERARY-ARTISTIC PRODUCTION IN HIGH SCHOOL

Denise Stefanoni Combinato ¹; Thais Cristina Silva de Oliveira ²; Waldirene Pinto de Macedo ²

ABSTRACT

In order to articulate the literature and the audiovisual in the teaching-learning process, in addition to improving the expressive activity, in view of the development of imagination and criticality, an elective course was given to students of the High School of a public school in the state of Sao Paulo. In the first part of the elective, literary works were selected, read and discussed. In the second part, the students performed expressive artistic activities on fabrics to express the emotions and feelings triggered by the reading and discussion of the work. As a result, in addition to the materialization of a curtain that was installed in the school auditorium, the development of interpersonal skills, interest in reading, the teacher-student approach and the expansion of sensitive capacity were identified.

Keywords: Art; literature; human development.

Cortina literária: uma produção artístico-literária no Ensino Médio

RESUMO

Com o objetivo de articular a literatura e o audiovisual no processo ensino-aprendizagem, além de aprimorar a atividade expressiva, tendo em vista o desenvolvimento da imaginação e da criticidade, foi ministrada uma disciplina eletiva a alunos do Ensino Médio Integral de uma escola pública do estado de São Paulo. Na primeira parte da eletiva, foram selecionadas, lidas e discutidas obras literárias. Na segunda parte, os alunos realizaram atividades expressivas artísticas em tecidos para exteriorizar as emoções e os sentimentos desencadeados pela leitura e discussão da obra. Como resultado, além da materialização de uma cortina que foi instalada no auditório da escola, identificou-se o desenvolvimento de habilidades interpessoais, o interesse pela leitura, a aproximação professor-aluno e a ampliação da capacidade sensível.

Palavras-chave: Arte; literatura; desenvolvimento humano.

Cortina literaria: una producción artístico-literaria en la Enseñanza Secundaria

RESUMEN

Con el objetivo de articular la literatura y el audiovisual en el proceso enseñanza-aprendizaje, además de perfeccionar la actividad expresiva, teniendo en vista el desarrollo de la imaginación y de la credibilidad, se ministró una asignatura electiva a alumnos de la Enseñanza Secundaria Integral de una escuela pública del estado de São Paulo. En la primera parte de la electiva, se seleccionaron, se leyeron y se discutieron obras literarias. En la segunda parte, los alumnos realizaron actividades expresivas artísticas en tejidos para exteriorizar las emociones y los sentimientos desencadenados por la lectura y discusión de la obra. Como resultado, además de la materialización de una cortina que fue instalada en el auditorio de la escuela, se identificó el desarrollo de habilidades interpersonales, el interés por la lectura, el acercamiento profesor-alumno y la ampliación de la capacidad sensible.

Palabras clave: Arte; literatura; desarrollo humano.

¹ Instituto Tecnológico de Aeronáutica/Departamento de Humanidades – São José dos Campos – SP – Brasil; denisecombinato@hotmail.com

² Secretaria da Educação do Estado de São Paulo – São José dos Campos – SP – Brasil; thais_cristin@yahoo.com.br; waldirenemacedo9@gmail.com



INTRODUCTION

The formation of esthetic expression at school does not necessarily intend to create artists. Rather, it seeks to promote human development by means of an education of the senses (Camargo & Bulgacov, 2008). In order to do so, writer Bartolomeu Campos de Queirós proposes that schools provide, in addition to instruction books for information, literary books for transformation:

Literature always produces the effect of leading people into letting fantasy come out.

Everything real around us was born of someone's reverie... Over a hundred years ago, flying was Santos Dumont's dream. It is no longer... Therefore, it is necessary that education, in addition to instruction books, also provide students with literary works.

Literature is made of fantasy. Literature has no prejudice. Everything that comes to my mind can be put into words... By allowing literary works to be introduced to schools, Education proposes a new world and encourages students to become readers and live their own dreams. That is when real change happens in the world. Schools where the focus is exclusively on information do not make any difference. (Queirós, 2011 in Sperry, 2011, text transcribed from video).

Imagination, or fantasy, is a fundamental characteristic of human nature. It makes us human and changes reality. Camargo and Bulgacov (2008), referring to Vigotski, argue that there is reproduction activity and there is creation activity, and that the learning process is not restricted to reproduction activity: "Creation activity is precisely what makes man a being that is projected onto the future and contributes to the creation and modification of the present time" (p. 473). Thus, schools need to play their vital role, which consists of introducing students to the diversity of art present in text, images, and audiovisual productions while promoting the development of self-expression activities such as art workshops. Besides promoting the development of psychological functions such as imagination, arts also lead to the discovery of multiple ways of perceiving reality (Camargo & Bulgacov, 2008) and promote ethical formation (Zanella et al., 2006).

This article presents an account of special activities coordinated by Art and History teachers in an elective course named "O fio das missangas", or "Thread of Beads". The general objective of this course was to articulate literature and audiovisual productions in the learning-teaching process and to enhance self-expression activities in order to develop imagination and critical thinking. The specific objective was to develop content by means of contrast, distinction, and difference in order to stimulate multiple ways to perceive reality

and lead to the recognition of diversity, whether cultural, artistic, social, economic, or belonging to different historical contexts.

The "Thread of Beads" course is connected to a research-action developed in a public full-time high school in which the objective was to investigate the impacts of articulating literature with audiovisual works in the learning-teaching process during high school.

METHOD

The "O fio das missangas"¹ elective course was offered in the second semester of 2017 and gathered 37 students from the three years of high school. 18 students were from the first year, 14 were from the second year, and 5 were from the third year. It is important to emphasize that most of the students participating in the research-action developed at the school from 2017 to 2019 were still in the first year of high school.

In the first part of the course, the students suggested literary works for reading and discussing. After brief introductions to all suggested works, students selected the ones that interested them most. Then, students with interests in common got together into small groups. There were three sessions for reading and discussing plus one more session for annotations concerning what they read. The selected works were: "Vidas Secas", by Graciliano Ramos, published in 1938; "The Handmaid's Tale", by Margareth Atwood, written in 1985; "Meu pé de Laranja Lima", a coming-of-age novel by José Mauro de Vasconcelos, published in 1968; and "O cortiço", by Aluísio de Azevedo, published in 1890.

In the second part of the elective course, the students realized artistic expression activities on pieces of raw cotton fabric, measuring 60 cm x 50 cm, on which students were supposed to display their interpretations, excerpts as well as representations of the feelings and ideas provoked by the reading and discussion of the literary works. The following techniques were employed: Painting, collage and embroidery on fabric. The students picked these techniques after the teachers produced a list of possibilities of artistic expressions in which they could exhibit images and videos by authors that work with a diversity of languages. Besides that, in order to promote inspiration for the production of compositions, there were exhibitions of video-poetry by Mia Couto and Cora Coralina.

In the end, the productions of each student were

¹ The title of the discipline is a reference to the work of writer Mia Couto, which was presented and partially read during meetings of the research team of teachers at the school: "In a necklace, the beads are the only thing we see. We hardly ever see the thread that keeps them together. That is an interesting metaphor for the poet's voice." (Couto, 2009, p. 5).

put together into a single visual composition named "Literary Curtain", which was the means by which the whole class could collaborate. The pieces were sewed together by the Art teacher. The curtain was put up in the school auditorium in order to be displayed on conclusion day, on which all students were expected to present the work realized during the elective courses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the activities proposed by this elective course it was possible to notice both a possibility for esthetic formation and a possibility for students' creation and expression by means of art. The esthetic formation concerns an education of the senses, that is, the development of a capacity for sensibility, which aggregates the beautiful, the multiple, the different and is molded by knowledge and sensorial experiences. The expressive dimension is characterized by an individual's necessity to express thoughts and feelings. That can be done by means of artistic activities, such as drawing, painting, and sculpting, which are not necessarily employed in the arts all the time (Camargó & Bulgacov, 2008).

Promoting the selection and the reading of classic or modern literature causes qualitative transformations in all areas of one's life, especially in the functions of perception and awareness of oneself and the world. These classic and modern worlds lead to the appropriation, in terms of knowledge and experience, of a determined reality and establish a mediation with the human by means of a cultural product (Barroco & Superti, 2014, p.31).

That happens because, according to Vigotski (1999), the experience of art leads to a cathartic effect that is precisely the transformation of emotions into feelings: "the opposition we find between the structure of artistic form and content is the foundation of the cathartic effect of esthetic reaction" (pp. 271-272). The cathartic effect that promotes the transformation of emotions into feelings can be noticed in most of the students participating in the elective course. By externalizing their impressions of the readings, many of them mentioned feelings of anguish while reading the situations presented in the stories.

A noteworthy example was a student that, in the beginning of the course, announced that she did not like to read. She also had difficulty to get along with other students, and insufficient communication skills. She hardly ever spoke during class unless when the teacher called the roll it was time to say "present". At the end of the course, she provided us with the following testimonial:

... my work is based on the novel "The Handmaid's Tale". By means of sentences and drawings I should make people think about the novel and imagine what the story is like. My drawing portrays the

main character as a developing fetus. Mother and child are linked through their hearts, which is not in strict accordance with scientific facts but depicts the emotional separation of cutting the umbilical cord at childbirth. (Student's testimonial)



Picture 1. Student's production on the Literary Curtain

By means of art, the student learned how to express herself. The activities on the cotton fabric helped her express the feelings brought out by the reading of the book. The whole project also helped her get closer to people and start interacting more with teachers and classmates.

Even after the semester was over, the course kept producing effects. The student who did not use to enjoy books changed her mind and started looking for her teachers' advice on books. She also asked the history teacher to work on George Orwell's "Animal Farm", published in 1945. It was the student's way of asking teachers to keep up their new interaction, made possible by the elective.

It is clear that art and literature promoted the student's personal and interpersonal development. In addition to not liking books, she was always too shy and kept to herself, unable to even make eye contact with teachers during the classes.

Promoting the sharing of perceptions, experiences, feelings and emotions by means of art activities favors the development of psychological functional processes such as imagination and the affection, functional

process: “with art activities, individuals promote a re-signification and a re-organization of their emotions. In other words, by feeling emotions over and over again, individuals confer new meanings to these feelings” (Camargo & Bulgacov, 2008, p. 471).

In addition, the elective course activity, especially during the second stage of the art activity, led to closer interaction between teachers and students. Doing things together, students had the opportunity to realize that teachers are also learners, which led to an exchange of knowledge and emotional bonding among participants. The whole experience also helped demystify teachers’ know-it-all status.

Finally, the making of a curtain for the school auditorium was a way to better display the efforts of the group, which embraced multiplicity and difference while emphasizing beauty and otherness in collective spaces²



Picture 2. Literary curtain produced during the “Thread of Beads” elective course.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The proposal for an elective course caused some initial resistance by the students, especially concerning the reading part. In order to mitigate such resistance, students were allowed to pick the novels and get together in accordance with common tastes and affinity with the selected genre. In the beginning of the second part of the elective, there was a new assessment

² On the day before the exhibition, a student of the school got hit by a car and lost her life. The students participating in the elective course decided to pay homage to their deceased classmate as a gesture of affection condolence. One more picture was added to the curtain.

made by the students regarding the validity of the first part. The students themselves felt the need to go over the novels again in order to better display their comprehensions, sensations, perceptions, and feelings provoked by the content.

Besides the esthetic formation and the possibility of expression in art, the activity proposed at the second moment led students and teachers to get closer. The Literary Curtain helped produce a feeling of equality in the learning process.

It is possible to notice the impact of esthetic formation in the education of the senses. In other words, there was the development of a sensitive capacity when teachers and students got closer and when a student with little social and communication skills changed her mindset, especially a student who confessed never having read a book in her whole life.

Thus, it is possible to notice that the course allowed students to develop sensitive capacities, interpersonal skills, a taste for books and closer relations between teachers and students, in addition to the production of the Literary Curtain.

REFERENCES

- Barroco, S. M. S.; Superti, T. (2014). Vigotski e o estudo da psicologia da arte: contribuições para o desenvolvimento humano. *Psicologia & Sociedade*, 26(1), 22-31.
- Candido, A. (1995). O direito à literatura. In *Vários escritos* (3ª ed., pp.235-263). São Paulo: Duas cidades.
- Camargo, D.; Bulgacov, Y. L. M. (2008). A perspectiva estética e expressiva na escola: articulando conceitos da psicologia sócio-histórica. *Psicologia em estudo*, 13(3), 467-475.
- Couto, M. (2009). *O fio das missangas*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras.
- Sperry, D. (Director). (2018). *A palavra conta*. São Paulo: Java 2G, Instituto C&A. Recuperado em 19 jan. 2017, de <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TIOwKhIma5s>.
- Vigotski, L. S. (1999). *Psicologia da Arte*. São Paulo: Martins Fontes.
- Zanella, A. V.; Cabral, M. G.; Maheirie, K.; Da Ros, S. Z.; Urnau, L. C.; Titon, A. P.; Werner, F. W.; Sander, L. (2006). Relações estéticas, atividade criadora e constituição do sujeito: algumas reflexões sobre a formação de professores(as). *Cadernos de psicopedagogia*, 6(10), 1-17.

Financial support of Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo - FAPESP (Process n. 2014/50841-4)

This paper was translated from Portuguese by Régis Lima

Received: December 04, 2018

Approved: August 09, 2019