Article

Literacy practices and representations in the comic books genre produced by undergraduate students in Rural Education

Práticas e representações de letramento no gênero História em Quadrinhos produzido por alunos da licenciatura em Educação do Campo

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ABSTRACT: In this paper, we analyze literacy practices and representations in the comic books genre produced by undergraduates taking the Rural Education degree. The research is based on literacy theories and is situated in the applied field of language. This is a participatory research, with a qualitative-interpretative approach. The corpus consists of texts from six examples of the comic books genre, and (transcribed) excepts from three interviews conducted with research collaborators. Because this genre has a union of different language systems (verbal and non-verbal), the research revealed traces of literacy that students have in their life experiences. As the research collaborators come from different communities located in rural areas, they present diverse and peculiar literacy practices and representations.

KEYWORDS: Comic books; literacy practices and representations; Rural Education.

RESUMO: Neste artigo, analisam-se as práticas e representações de letramento no gênero História em Quadrinhos produzido por alunos de uma Licenciatura em Educação do Campo. A pesquisa alicerça-se nas teorias do letramento, situando-se no campo aplicado da linguagem. Trata-se de uma pesquisa participante, de abordagem qualitativo-interpretativista. O *corpus* é constituído de textos de seis exemplares do gênero História em Quadrinhos e trechos (transcritos) de três entrevistas realizadas com colaboradores da pesquisa. Por este gênero possuir uma união de sistemas de linguagens diferentes (verbal e não verbal), a pesquisa revelou traços do letramento que os acadêmicos possuem em suas experiências de vida. Sendo os colaboradores da pesquisa oriundos de comunidades distintas situadas no meio rural, eles apresentam práticas e representações de letramento diversas e peculiares.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: História em Quadrinhos; práticas e representações de letramento; Educação do Campo.

1 Introduction

The Rural Education Degree Course: Codes and Languages – Arts and Music, at the Federal University of Tocantins (UFT), in the campus of Tocantinópolis, state of Tocantins, Brazil, integrates the set of the Rural Education Degree aimed at the basic training (from several areas of knowledge) of teachers who will work in middle and high schools in rural areas. Rural Education Degrees are part of the public policies for Rural Education carried out in recent years in Brazil by the Ministry of Education (MEC), an achievement resulting from the struggles of social movements, trade unions, intellectuals, and universities seeking to provide a degree that would include and respect the diversities, particularities, and heterogeneity of rural communities in the formative processes. Therefore, the context of our research is the only Rural Education course with a degree in Arts and Music in Brazil.[1]

In accordance with MEC guidelines, approximately 44 Rural Education Degrees currently operating in Brazil have their curriculum organized in stages or modules equivalent to regular semesters completed in pedagogical alternation between university time (TU) and community time (TC). During the TU, students participate in activities at the university, which include classes in different disciplines of the course as well as practical activities, research etc. TC activities, on the other hand, are carried out where students live with their family, community, and socio-professional environment, with the purpose of making them reflect on the problems, texts and other issues discussed during TU, in addition to conducting research and activities in the community (SANTOS; SILVA, 2020).

The Rural Education Degree where this study was carried out integrates Rural Education and its didactic-pedagogical practices are based on the educational system of the Pedagogy of Alternation.[2] It is a multidisciplinary education model, with methodologies and strategies capable of valuing and respecting the culture and reality of rural people in the training processes. In other words, with the creation of Rural Education Degrees in Brazil, rural people now have access to higher education in a formative perspective in which the social space named countryside is no longer seen as synonym of backwardness, but rather as a space for life, history, culture, memory, and knowledge-producing (SILVA, 2020). In the case of students of this Rural Education Degree at UFT and collaborators in our research, they are here recognized as social actors that produce life and history, holders of culture and memory that deserve to and should be respected (FREIRE, 1978; 1980).

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[1]   In 2012, the MEC continued the actions to support the policy of teacher training in rural schools, as provided in Decree No. 7.352/2010 (BRASIL, 2010), and launched the Edital nº 02/2012 (BRASIL, 2012). Through the public call of Edital nº 02/2012, more than 40 projects of the Rural Education Degrees were selected in the various areas of knowledge of public universities in different Brazilian regions, among them, the Rural Education Degree of UFT focused on this research (SILVA et al., 2017; UFT, 2016). The choice of the area and qualification in Arts and Music for the LEdoC of UFT was justified due to the "[...] need to supply the offer of a degree course in Rural Education with qualification in all areas of knowledge so that the rural schools have peasant educators qualified in the various areas." (SILVA et al., 2017, p. 79). In other words, the specific training in Rural Education in this area occurred due to the need and shortage of qualified teachers for teaching that would meet the demands presented in the field in this Brazilian region, to have teachers qualified in related areas, including Arts and Music.

[2]   As it is not the focus of this paper, see Silva, Andrade, and Moreira (2015) and Silva (2020) on the educational system of Pedagogy of Alternation.

Considering these elements, the purpose of this research[3] is to analyze the literacy practices and representations of students from the Rural Education Degree Course: Codes and Languages – Arts and Music, at the Federal University of Tocantins (UFT), in the campus of Tocantinópolis, drawing from the didactic transposition of the comic books genre. Data was generated in the discipline "comic books", offered in the 6th period of the course studied here. The class participating in the study has the characteristics of the target audience of the course, rural populations, including family farmers, riverside dwellers, settlers, campers of agrarian reform, extractivists, rural employed workers, *Quilombo* residents, and indigenous people, as set forth by Decree Nº. 7.352 (BRAZIL, 2010).

To generate the data, we took the methodological assumptions of participant research (BRANDÃO, 1998), since there was a direct interaction between the researcher and the research collaborators and one of the researchers held an internship in the discipline "comic books" who also had participated in the entire process of creating comic books by the research collaborators. The research had a qualitative-interpretative approach (FLICK, 2009) and data was treated based on the content analysis technique (BARDIN, 2016).

The reason for choosing the comic books genre was its structure that encompasses verbal and non-verbal elements, allowing to take it as a multi-semiotic genre (BARROS, 2009). In this genre, we can find several semiosis such as: colors, figures, shapes etc. As it has this union of languages, comic books can inform, illustrate traits or elements, which indicate or present the literacy that collaborators have developed through their life experiences, and it is possible to identify such elements by analyzing the language used, the colors, the shapes chosen to compose each comic story. And one can also identify literacy practices by observing, for example, the plot that each author chose to develop their story.

Apart from the Introduction, this paper has three sections. In the first section, a bibliographical review about literacy is presented with its (inter)faces and characterization of the comic books genre. The second section outlines the methodological procedures adopted in the research. In the third section, in addition to characterizing the research data, there is the analysis of literacy practices and representations contained in the comic books produced by the students as well as our final comments about the results of the study.

2 Literacy and its (inter)faces: a brief discussion

In this paper, we take the concept of literacy considering that it is plural and that there are multiple literacies (STREET, 1984; 2014). In recent years, the concept of literacy has been given new meaning and, thus, it has presented several (inter)faces resulting in different theoretical and methodological points of view regarding the definition of literacy. In Brazil, the term literacy only appears in the 1980s through studies on Education and Linguistic Sciences. Since then, the different perspectives of investigation of literacy (academic, school, teacher, digital, literary, scientific etc.) have expanded confirming the importance and contributions origi-

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[3] This research was carried out as part of the project "The Comic Books genre as a methodological resource for analysis of literacy practices and representations of rural education students" (UFNT) and contributes to the scientific activities of the Research Group on Education, Language, and Literacy - GEELL/UFNT//CNPq.

nating in the New London Group, based on the New Literacy Studies (GEE, 2000; STREET, 2013) in the Brazilian context (SILVA; GONÇALVES, 2021).

Kleiman (1995, p. 17-18, our translation)[4] states that "literacy means a discursive practice of a certain social group, which is related to the role of writing in making this oral interaction meaningful, but which does not necessarily involve the specific activities of reading and writing". In this sense, literacy has a much larger dimension not limited to reading and writing activities. The author emphasizes that the phenomenon of literacy is not restricted to writing as it also involves knowledge and experience associated with some discursive genres and their social uses (KLEIMAN, 1995). Thus, a literate person is meant to be the one who makes social use of writing and reading and also manages to practice them considering the social practices that they involve.

In this work, we take literacy as the set of social practices that overcome the barriers of reading and writing (KLEIMAN, 1995; STREET, 1984; 2014). From this perspective, we comprehend literacy as having a range of meaning that permeates several areas of knowledge, in addition to having a plural dimension, we emphasize the plural, "literacies", because "[...] the knowledge of different literacy practices of certain groups and communities is fundamental to understand literacy as a plural phenomenon" (SILVA; ARAÚJO, 2012, p. 686, our translation).[5]

As we understand that our society is full of different individuals, with heterogeneous realities and knowledge, we can no longer take literacy in the singular, but in the plural. Literacy is directly linked to the diversity of ways of life, diversity of environments, communities, cultures, socioeconomic profiles, so that one can think of a range of *literacies*. "Seeing literacy as something 'singular' is to forget that social life is permeated by language in multiple forms and destined for different uses. [...] And it is precisely because it makes up something 'plural' that it is worth discussing, examining the various facets that make it up" (OLIVEIRA, 2010, p. 329, our translation).[6] Due to its intricate nature, literacy is considered "a social, complex and heterogeneous phenomenon" (TERRA, 2013, p. 30, our translation).[7] Because it encompasses a range of cultural and social practices of reading and writing recurrent in contemporary society, a new term now appears that encompasses all this complexity, which goes beyond literacy or literacies, that is, multiple literacies.

The world we live in presents a great diversity of cultural and social practices of reading and writing (FREIRE, 1978; 1980; 1982; STREET, 2014), which does not allow us to deny that there is more than one literacy, or as we rather should call it multiple literacies. Rojo (2009, p. 99, our translation)[8] says that

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[4]   The original text in Portuguese reads: "o letramento significa uma prática discursiva de determinado grupo social, que está relacionada ao papel da escrita para tornar significativa essa interação oral, mas que não envolve, necessariamente, as atividades específicas de ler e de escrever".

[5]   The original text in Portuguese reads: "[...] o conhecimento de diferentes práticas de letramento de determinados grupos sociais e comunidades é fundamental para entendermos o letramento enquanto um fenômeno plural".

[6]   The original text in Portuguese reads: "Enxergar o letramento como algo 'singular' é esquecer que a vida social é permeada por linguagem de múltiplas formas e destinada a diferentes usos. [...] E é exatamente porque se constitui como algo 'plural' que vale a pena problematizar, examinando as diversas facetas que o constituem".

[7]   The original text in Portuguese reads: "um fenômeno social, complexo e heterogêneo".

[8]   The original text in Portuguese reads: "O 'significado do letramento' varia através dos tempos e das culturas e dentro de uma mesma cultura. Por isso, práticas tão diferentes, em contextos tão diferenciados, são vistas como letramento, embora diferentemente valorizadas e designando a seus participantes poderes também diversos".

> The "meaning of literacy" varies across times and cultures, and within a single culture. Therefore, such different practices, in such different contexts, are seen as literacy, although differently valued and assigning different powers to their participants.

Multiple literacies can be considered, according to the most varied ways of using reading and writing, both at school and in the social life of individuals, being also present in the different cultures of our country, where individuals are involved. Knowledge of the world is a form of literacy, while knowledge of new Digital Information and Communication Technologies (DICT) is another form of literacy. Therefore, an individual may not have some kind of literacy but may have another, so everyone becomes literate. In this sense, multiple literacies can be defined as the different ways of using reading and writing, both from school and dominant culture, as well as from different local and popular cultures in which there is involvement of students and teachers with the products of mass culture (ROJO, 2009).

Rojo (2009, p. 105, our translation) makes an important remark when she argues that "we can say that, because of globalization, the world has changed a lot in the last two decades. In terms of demands for new literacies, it is especially important to highlight the changes related to the means of communication and the circulation of information".[9] That is, with the change of society through globalization, new ways of communication and thus new literacy practices arise, that is, multiple literacies. Thus, we cannot disregard these multiple literacies, as they are part of our daily life and universe.

Considering that Brazilian society is heterogeneous, the social practices of reading and writing will also be heterogeneous. In this sense, we have multiple literacies because just as there are the most varied forms of culture and ways of life, there are several reading and writing practices circulating in the current society. And these practices can be present in either schooled or non-schooled environments, in local or global contexts, valued or not, so that it is necessary to understand that the multiple kinds of literacy monopolize a multitude of social practices that encompass reading and writing (SOARES, 2019).

The New Literacy Studies present literacy practices as a study tool and as a basic unit of the literacy process. Literacy practices in the society we live in are present in all spaces and not only in the school: they can be seen in the family, in a conversation with friends on the street, at work as well as in other social spaces. Such practices focus on social productions, which makes it possible to understand how a group of individuals make use of written or oral language and thus showing their perceptions, values, ideas, and beliefs about writing. According to Street (2014),

> The concept of "literacy practices" is placed at a higher level of abstraction and also refers to behavior and social and cultural conceptualizations that give meaning to the uses of reading and/or writing. Literacy practices incorporate not only the "events of literacy", as empirical occasions to which literacy is essential, but also popular models of these events and the ideological preconceptions that underpin them. (STREET, 2014, p. 18, our translation).[10]

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[9] The original text in Portuguese reads: "podemos dizer que, por efeito da globalização, o mundo mudou muito nas duas últimas décadas. Em termos de exigências de novos letramentos, é especialmente importante destacar as mudanças relativas aos meios de comunicação e à circulação da informação".

[10] The original text in Portuguese reads: "O conceito de 'práticas de letramento' se coloca num nível mais alto de abstração e se refere igualmente ao comportamento e às conceitualizações sociais e culturais que conferem sentido aos usos da leitura e/ou da escrita. As práticas de letramento incorporam não só os 'eventos de letramento', como ocasiões empíricas às quais o letramento é essencial, mas também modelos populares desses eventos e as preconcepções ideológicas que os sustentam."

Thus, literacy practices and events are not the same element, even though they go hand in hand. Depending on the social sphere of language use, different literacy practices and events will be undertaken. In other words, literacy practices are "an attempt to deal with events and patterns of literacy activities, but to link them to something [...] of a cultural and social nature" (STREET, 2012, p. 75, our translation).[11] In turn, a literacy event "involves reading and/or writing" (STREET, 2012, p. 75), for example, academic literacy (LEA; STREET, 1998).

Moreover, Barton and Hamilton ([1998]2012, p. 7) point out that literacy events "[...] are observable episodes which arise from practices and are shaped by them". Since events are activities in which literacy performs a certain function, they are episodes that emerge from practices and are situated in different social domains. Therefore, they can encompass a set of routines/activities characterized by more formal (workplace, school, church, etc.) and less formal (family or home environment and everyday life) interactions (BARTON; HAMILTON, [1998]2012).

Although there are similarities between events and practices in the literacy process, in an educational action, social actors establish a real situation of interaction, and it is in this established relationship that a literacy event takes place. Considering that literacy practices are incorporated into events, they stem and develop from the sociocultural and ideological conception of those who promote literacy (STREET, 2012).

In the copies of the comic books genre collected by our research, we sought to identify the perceptions, values, ideas, and beliefs held by the students who produced them. To this end, we analyzed both the verbal and the non-verbal language, in an attempt to identify the social practices of the research collaborators looking at the construction of comic books, their reading and writing. Lêdo (2013, p. 71) prepared a synthesis of the characteristics of literacy practices, as shown in Table 1:

Table 1 – Characteristics of literacy practices

Literacy practices
They are more general and abstract
They are associated with specific domains of life
They are culturally recognizable
They are tied to the social structure
They are historical, local
They are dynamic
They are multimodal

Source: Lêdo (2013, p. 71).

Based on Bakhtin (2006), one can say that literacy practices happen according to the sphere they are located in, resulting in some other forms of literacy, such as: academic, digital, religious, or family literacy. Literacy practices do not exclude one another, they rather complement each other, since "it is through

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[11] The original text in Portuguese reads: "envolve a leitura e/ou a escrita" and "uma tentativa de lidar com os eventos e com os padrões de atividades de letramento, mas para ligá-los a alguma coisa [...] de natureza cultural e social".

literacy practices that subjects learn, build new knowledge" (DIONISIO, 2007, p. 214, our translation).[12] Social actors end up becoming knowledgeable about a range of literate practices as they participate in and are part of social relationships arising from different spheres, in which there are several forms of interaction between subjects.

As outlined so far, there is not just one literacy, that is, literacy is not unique because there are multiple literacies. Literacies are plural and such plurality is directly linked to the spheres of activities in which the literacies are located. Thus, in this work, we examine the different literacy practices of the individuals who produced the comic books. Collaborators are part of the academic sphere, and the comic books were also produced in this sphere and outside it in the community time.

Particularly, our research collaborators are people who have direct contact with the changes brought about by globalization: they have different and diverse reading and writing practices. Therefore, it appears that they have multiple literacies, stemming from their communities (located in rural areas) and from the dominant community (urban area). They develop such *literacies* through the culture of their people and the need to be always up to date in relation to social practices imposed by the dominant culture, especially through Digital Information and Communication Technologies (DICT). Considering all these issues, as well as the multiple situations in the writing process, it is necessary to mobilize/develop different types of literacy in training processes. Next, we characterize the genre that integrates this research, namely, comic books.

3 The comic books genre

The art of narrating a story through pictures/strips is known as comic books, in which drawings and writing are created through a sequence. This genre is enjoyed by children, young people, and adults. The concept of comic books, although there are acceptable definitions, is not clear whether it is art, science is... who knows? Even so, research on this genre has been increasing (VERGUEIRO; RAMOS; CHINEN, 2013). There is an expansion of the concept of comic books, which is perfectly possible, as McCloud (1995, p. 23, our translation)[13] puts it "[...] the attempt to define comic books is an ongoing process that will not end soon. Another generation, undoubtedly, will reject what they have already decided to accept and will try to reinvent comics." Eisner (1989), McCloud (1995) and Ramos (2009) are the most prominent names when it comes to comic books.

Eisner (1989) is the first to define comic books based on the work "Comics and Sequential Art", conceiving it as a sequential art. His work has the presence of texts organized through a narrative sequence, namely newspaper strips and adventure comic books, superheroes. "Observing comics as a sequential art is

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[12]   The original text in Portuguese reads: "é por meio das práticas de letramento que os sujeitos aprendem, constroem novos conhecimentos".

[13]   The original text in Portuguese reads: "[...] a tentativa de definir os quadrinhos é um processo contínuo que não terminará logo. Uma outra geração, sem dúvida, vai rejeitar o que já se decidiu aceitar e tentará reinventar os quadrinhos".

to understand that in this process the emphasis is on the narrative text (its content) and its components (its form), as they help tell the characters' stories." (SIMÕES, 2020, p. 106, our translation).[14]

The definition of comic books by McCloud (1995) is grounded on their composition structure, on what is or is not shown within the frame of the story, and on what is or is not written, so his concept is in line with Eisner's postulation. That is, the author builds his definition broadly, going beyond the comic object, thinking of the comic as pictorial images superimposed in a sequence assuming movement. Thus, even if McCloud (1995) agrees with Eisner's (1989) analytical categories, his definition of comic books pushes forward to include unconventional comic text, such as cave paintings and Egyptian hieroglyphs. Eisner (1989), in his concept of comic books, joins form and content, highlighting content; on the other hand, McCloud (1995) dissociates form from content, highlighting form and structure of the comic books.

Ramos (2009, p. 20, our translation)[15] considers comic books a hyper-genre, contending in his research that comics can be considered "[...] a great label, a hyper-genre, which would aggregate different other genres, each with its own peculiarities." Thus, taking a huge step forward in conceptualizing comic books, the author maintains the idea of comic books as an autonomous language. The concept formulated by Ramos (2009) is more closely adapted to the investigation of the language of comics in multimodal textual genres.

Comic books include in their frame narrative, plot, characters, time, place, and outcome. This genre is known for having both verbal and non-verbal language. The verbal language present in comic books seems "[...] mainly to express the characters' speech or thought, the voice of the narrator and the sounds involved in the narratives presented, but it will also be present in graphic elements, such as posters, letters, shop windows etc." (VERGUEIRO, 2014, p. 55, our translation).[16] The stories can be humorous, political, social, and regardless of the theme/subject covered, they convey some information. Artists who develop this genre make use of various graphic resources.

Comic books are a "discursive genre that has facts, characters, time in its structure, has a clear and direct language, thus seeking clarity in its understanding" (SANTOS; SILVA, 2019, p. 102, our translation).[17] In this study, we take discursive genres as "[...] 'relatively stable types of utterances" (BAKHTIN, 2006, p. 262, our translation).[18] It is noteworthy that. In the dialogical perspective of language, genres are 'relatively stable' because "[...] they meet the specifics of communication in each sphere when language is used" and it is through "[...] social processes or of verbal interaction that the genres originate" (SILVA; ANDRADE; MOREIRA, 2015, p. 360, our translation).[19]

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[14] The original text in Portuguese reads: "Observar os quadrinhos como uma arte sequencial é entender que nesse processo há ênfase para o texto narrativo (seu conteúdo) e seus componentes (sua forma), pois são eles que ajudam a contar as histórias dos personagens".

[15] The original text in Portuguese reads: "[...] um grande rótulo, um hiper-gênero, que agregaria diferentes outros gêneros, cada um com suas peculiaridades."

[16] The original text in Portuguese reads: "[...] principalmente para expressar a fala ou pensamento dos personagens, a voz do narrador e os sons envolvidos nas narrativas apresentadas, mas também estará presente em elementos gráficos, como cartazes, cartas, vitrines etc."

[17] The original text in Portuguese reads: "gênero discursivo que tem em sua estrutura fatos, personagens, tempo, possui uma linguagem clara e direta, buscando desta maneira uma clareza em sua compreensão".

[18] The original text in Portuguese reads: "[...] 'tipos relativamente estáveis de' enunciados".

[19] The original text in Portuguese reads: "[...] atendem as especificidades de comunicação de cada esfera quando se faz uso da linguagem" / "[...] dos processos sociais ou de interação verbal que os gêneros são originados".

Discursive genres are understood as a socio-semiotic construct full of social memory, made up by and making up this memory. Comic books are also a discursive genre having in its peculiar language the ability to permeate the social voices of the individuals who devise them, which are covered by images, words, and other signs and symbols of semiosis. By thus understanding comic books, we accept them as "a discursive and cultural manifestation of contemporary society that emerged in specific conditions of production and as an instrument - dialogically composed by diverse social voices – forming the social memory of the 20th century." (COSTA, 2009, p. 1, our translation).[20]

The comic books contained in this research were produced in the discipline called "comic books", offered as an optional course in the 6th period of the Rural Education Degree: Codes and Languages – Arts and Music, at the Federal University of Tocantins (UFT), campus of Tocantinópolis. In the syllabus, the main objective is established "to provide students with the development of reading and writing based on the reading and production of comic books" (UFT, 2016, p. 83, our translation).[21] The activities provided in the course plan were divided into two units:

Unit I (15h)

• Comic books theoretical-methodological fundamentals

• The history of comics in Brazil and in the world;

• Technical terms for creating comic books;

• Text production.

Unit II (45h)

• Artistic production;

• Creation of comic books drawing from the texts of the stories produced;

• Presentation of works and artistic exhibition.

Source: research data (2019).

One can see based on how the professor organized the course, as shown in the two units, that conditions are provided for the research collaborators to get to know in depth the comic books genre before implementing the production. In order for individuals to perform their literacy practices and representations in comic books, they need to master the characteristics and importance of this genre. By dividing the discipline into two units, theoretical and practical knowledge is systematized to provide students with conditions to get to know/understand the theoretical grounds, the compositional structure, the content,

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[20] The original text in Portuguese reads: "uma manifestação discursiva e cultural da sociedade contemporânea surgida em condições de produção específicas e como um instrumento – composto dialogicamente por diversas vozes sociais – constituidor de memória social do século XX."

[21] The original in Portuguese reads: "proporcionar aos estudantes desenvolverem a leitura e a escrita a partir da leitura e produção de histórias em quadrinhos."

and linguistic style of the genre. Subsequently, the graphic and written part are put in place which enables students to acquire significant language within the comic books genre.

The production of the comic books took place from a didactic-formative experiment, known as a didactic methodology/intervention. Considering that the Rural Education Degree of UFT assumes the Pedagogy of Alternation, the development of Units 1 and 2 of the discipline "Comic Books" took place during the university time (TU), and community time (TC). The TU classes were held at the Visual Arts Laboratory of UFT, Babaçu Campus, in Tocantinópolis-TO. In this laboratory, in addition to studying the comic books theoretical-methodological fundamentals, the students had access to the materials necessary for the elaboration of the visual part of their comic books. In these classes, the students made a first sketch of the visual production of the comics before returning to the TC.

Thus, according to the teacher's guidelines, during the TC the students produced the entire visual part of the story, made the drawings, but were left to go around them and paint them when they were at the TU. The teacher suggested that the stories should be at least five pages long. When they returned to the TU, the drawings and texts of the comic books were finalized. As for the writing of the lines, the teacher left it up to the students to write or print the lines. A small part of the students chose to print. To close the course activities, the teacher and the students organized an exhibition/presentation of the comic books to the academic public and the community, as shown in the images below:

Image 1. Exhibition of the comic books to the public at UFT

Source: research data (2019).

By doing so, the teacher managed to develop skills and competencies involving reading and textual and artistic production associated with the comic books genre. And the collaborators at the time of textual production (written) and artistic production managed to develop the proposal autonomously, in addition to mobilizing/indicating in their stories (comics) literacy practices and representations that surround them, as will be seen in data analysis.

4 Methodological procedures

The research is based on literacy theories and on the field of Applied Linguistics, which is a social science of interdisciplinary language studies (MOITA LOPES, 2006). The study is taken in this field because the social actors come from peasant communities and because the target genre of the production is characterized as multi-semiotic, since it intertwines verbal and non-verbal language, making it possible for collaborators to go beyond the writing limit. For this work, six productions (comics) were used with excerpts from three interviews with academic collaborators in the research who attended the optional course "comic books" in the Rural Education Degree: Codes and Languages – Arts and Music, at the Federal University of Tocantins (UFT), at the campus of Tocantinópolis. This class was chosen because one of the researchers held an internship for that class, which allowed them to participate in the entire process of creating comic books together with the research collaborators.

To generate the data, we took the methodological assumptions of participant research (BRANDÃO, 1998) due to the direct interaction between the researcher and the collaborators. Also, one of the researchers attended the classes and carried out all the course activities together with the collabora-

tors. Participatory research is defined by Brandão (1998, p. 43, our translation)[22] as "the methodology that seeks to encourage autonomous (self-reliant) development from the ground up and a relative independence from the outside." This type of research does not follow a single model or normative use, as it can be characterized as an instrument present in popular action (BRANDÃO, 1998). In participatory research, the social actors involved can be the researcher and the researched at the same time and utilize dialogue as the most important communication tool in the entire study process and when generating data/information.

The research has a qualitative-interpretative approach (FLICK, 2009) and was based on the content analysis technique (BARDIN, 2016) to treat data. This technique was chosen due to the fact that the study had the purpose of understanding the characteristics, structures, and literacy practices and representations that are implicit/indicated in the comic books genre produced by the collaborators.

During the entire period when data was collected/generated, observation was limited to the development of the class activities, including the process of creating comic books by students, their choice of colors, balloons, drawings, among other elements of the final composition of each story; no audio or video was recorded. Only after the classes had been completed, each of the 15 students were approached, their consent to use their comic books was asked of them, and semi-structured interviews were conducted. During the classes, the observation took place silently, students were not asked questions about the process of creating comic books or about the choice of theme, colors, so that the researcher did not interfere with the students' production. Questions arising during the observation were written down in detail.

Along the research, semi-structured interviews were conducted based on a previous script with open questions. This made it possible to add some questions during interviews with undergraduates when new thoughts emerged, especially upon the need for deeper understanding of some issues mentioned/highlighted by the interviewees. This did not happen with all the interviewees, but interviews were conducted in a flexible manner. Starting with the central issues of the theme, new questions were asked that added great value to the research results.

5 Discussion and data analysis

The comic books are presented from the simplest to the most complex forms, according to their language. When an individual comes into contact with the language of comics, he/she is in contact with the union of different language systems, each with its specificities. The first specific item is non-verbal language with its imagery, symmetry, brushstrokes, shades, colors, etc. Then comes the textual combining grammar, syntax etc. (DOLZ; NOVERRAZ; SCHNEUWLY, 2004).

This union in comics language may show evidence of the literacy that an individual has brought from their life experiences. It is possible to identify this by observing the language used, the colors, the shapes chosen to compose each story. In addition, one is able to identify literacy practices by observing the theme and plot that the author chose to develop their story. The theme chosen by the research collaborators for their comic books can indicate recurring themes or subjects in their daily experiences, let us see:

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[22]   The original text in Portuguese reads: "a metodologia que procura incentivar o desenvolvimento autônomo (autoconfiante) a partir das bases e uma relativa independência do exterior".

Figure 1 – Cutout of the comic books: History of *Capim Dourado* (golden grass) in Jalapão[23]
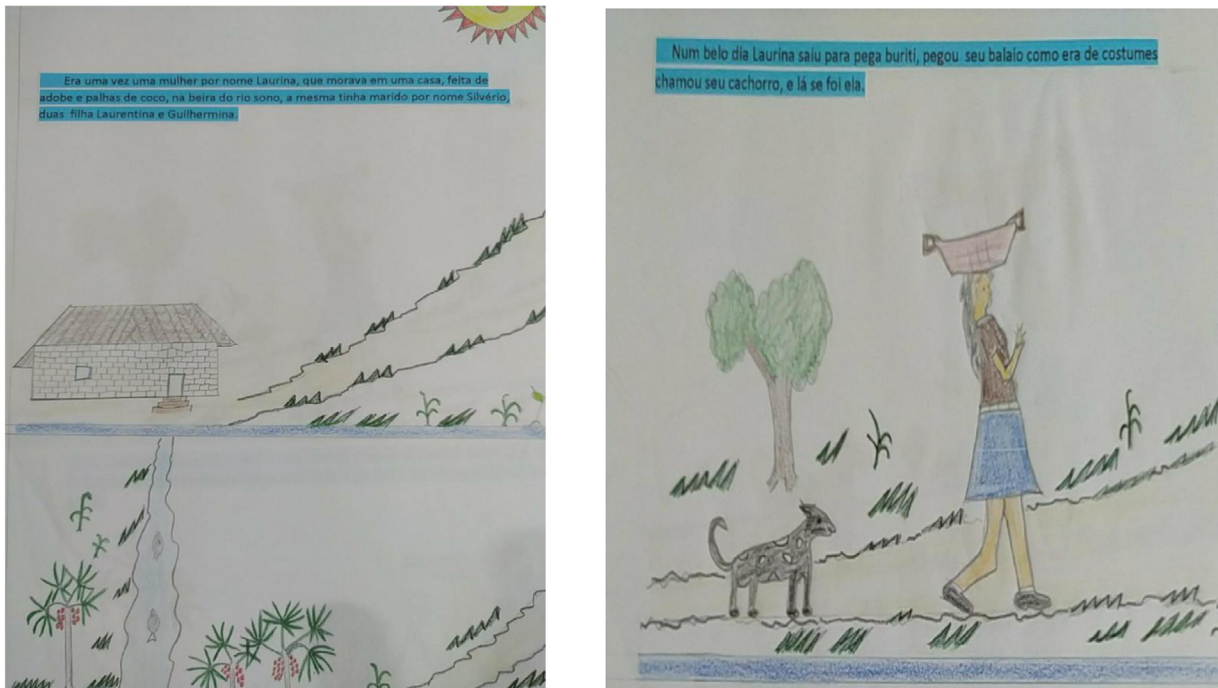
Source: Comic books produced by collaborator Adriano (2019).

Both images in Figure 1 show that both the verbal and the graphic elements bring information associated with country life and peasant culture, corroborating that the author managed to introduce/mobilize the visual signs that portray the landscape of reality he lives in. This is confirmed when the author is asked what he learned most from devising comic books and highlights: "I have learned that we can type our history, ours, our daily lives, that is, our life story in the form of a comic books" (Interview with Adriano, 2019, our translation).[24] In other words, the author takes comic books as a way to record a little of his history and the history of his community.

Among the elements that make the local contours of the story more defined is the structure of the house (made of adobe and coconut straw), the colors that the author used to represent the straw, the choice of drawings placed around the house, that is, the landscape, with a river, the path, grasses, bushes and *buriti* (moriche) palm trees, all typical of the *cerrado* (savanna) biome in the Jalapão area, state of Tocantins. By the way, Adriano, the author of the comic books in question, is a quilombo resident who lives in Jalapão. The presence of all these elements allows the reader to assume that this story takes place in a rural area and is related to peasant culture. It also confirms that the illustrative elements are full of meanings and meaningful to the author.

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[23]   Our translation of the texts, Figure 1: 1. "Once upon a time there was a woman named Laurina, who lived in a house, made of adobe and coconut straw, on the banks of the Sono River. She had a husband named Silvério and two daughters: Laurentina and Guilhermina"; 2. "One fine day Laurina went out to pick buriti, took her basket as was customary, she called her dog, and off she went."

[24]   The original text in Portuguese reads: "Eu aprendi sim, que a gente pode colocar tipo a nossa história, nossa é, nosso dia a dia, ou seja, nossa história de vida em formas de quadrinhos".

The articulation between verbal and visual language of the comics emphasizes the message Adriano wanted to bring up, that is, elements of peasant life and culture. When reading the passages: "[...] she lived in a house, made of adobe and coconut straw, on the banks of the Sono River" and "One fine day Laurina went out to pick buriti, took her basket as was customary, she called her dog, and off she went" (Adriano, History of *Capim Dourado* in Jalapão, 2019, our translation),[25] there is, once again, confirmation that the story portrays the life of a person who lives in a rural area. Eisner (2005, p. 118, our translation)[26] argues that "comic books are a medium confined to static images, devoid of sound or movement, and the text has to cope with these restrictions". The written parts provide the reader with conditions to interpret the story, thus making the connection between the two languages present in comic books.

In the comic books in Figure 1, literacy practices of the culture present in the life of the student (author) are indicated, as he brought his social context to his story with elements that are part of his life and survival story. This genre provided research collaborators (countryside social actors) with conditions to put on paper elements that were representative of their own literacy practices, because even if they belong to the academic context as students, a context with its own literacy practices, the comic books genre allowed and gave them freedom to bring into the academy their own ways of thinking, acting and writing, especially how to write about something real or imaginary. In other words, the didactic transposition of the comic books genre in the Rural Education Degree discipline gave complete freedom to change aspects of literacy practices imposed by the university, as students were able to use onomatopoeias, balloons, and other elements that are typical of the genre in their productions. Next, Table 2 presents the themes chosen by the respective students to compose the comic books:

Table 2 – Comic books themes

| Theme	Collaborator[27]
1. History of Kwrytye – Kwrytye-Jayenh.	Afonso
2. History of *Capim Dourado* in the Jalapão area.	Adriano
3. Branco Pereira de Sá and the Jaguar who charged tolls.	Alberto
4. Tears are the last words.	Augusto
5. Football is for whomever wants it.	Albertina
6. Learning: the importance of acceptance.	Amélia

Source: research data (2019).

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[25] The original text in Portuguese reads: "[...] morava em uma casa, feita de adobe e palhas de coco, na beira do Rio Sono" e "Num belo dia Laurina saiu para pegar buriti, pegou seu balaio como era de costumes chamou seu cachorro, e lá se foi ela".

[26] The original text in Portuguese reads: "as histórias em quadrinhos são uma mídia confinada a imagens estáticas, desprovidas de som ou movimento, e o texto tem de suprir essas restrições".

[27] For ethical reasons, collaborators (students and teacher) in the research are intentionally not identified. To this end, aliases were used, as provided for in the research and project protocols submitted to the Research Ethics Committee of UFT, CAAE: 36263320.9.0000.5519.

As can be seen, each theme in the comic books displayed in Table 2 portrays a little of the collaborators' everyday experiences. Theme 1, "History of Kwrytye – Kwrytye-Jayenh", deals with a myth of the Apinayé culture, and talks about an indigenous warrior in the microregion of Bico do Papagaio, state of Tocantins. Theme 2 depicts the discovery of golden grass by dwellers from the Mumbuca quilombo, located in the Jalapão area, Tocantins. Theme 3 focuses on a tale – which is a genre basically derived from the oral tradition – of a jaguar that charged tolls, a story also located in Bico do Papagaio. Theme 4 depicts a suicide story through emojis. In turn, theme 5 addresses the non-acceptance of women in football, and the last theme (6) deals with a student with a learning handicap. Looking at the set of themes, it is possible to observe that each one of the comic books brings elements that are possibly linked to the collaborators' lives, either directly or indirectly. The themes provide evidence of individual and collective literacy, as the research collaborators portray in their comic books elements of traditional culture, current themes in contemporaneity and elements of technology.

Figure 2 – Cutout of the comic books: History of Kwrytye – Kwrytye-Jayenh[28]
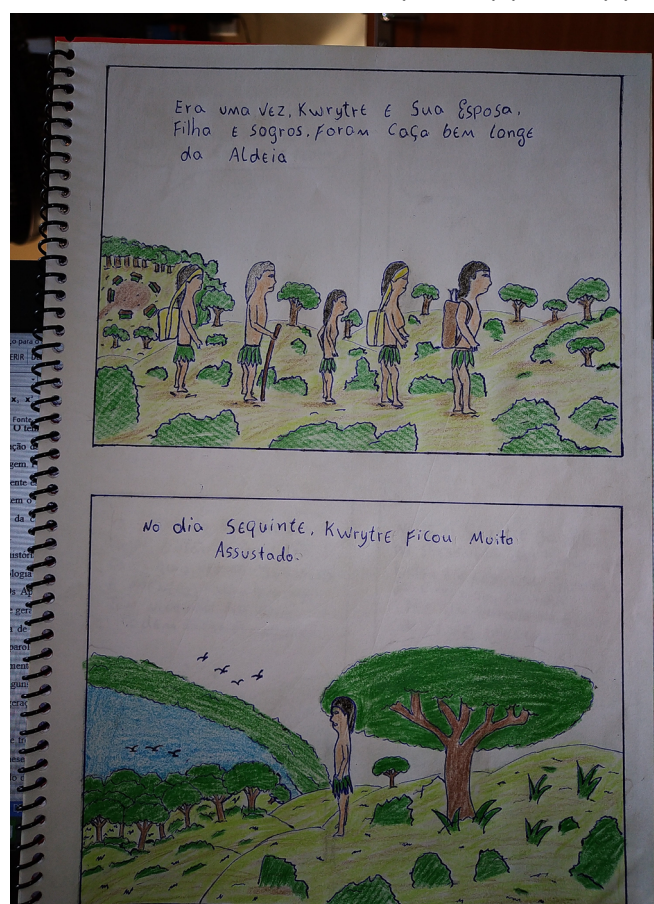
Source: Comic books produced by collaborator Afonso (2019).

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[28] Our translation of the texts, Figure 2: 1. "Once upon a time Kwrytye and his wife, daughter and in-laws. They went hunting far away from the village"; 2. "The next day Kwrytye was very frightened."

Figure 2 brings an excerpt from story 2, which portrays a myth of the Apinayé culture. Afonso, author of this comic books, belongs to this ethnic group. It is important to highlight that every indigenous culture is full of mythology, ranging from birth to death, each culture has its myths that are different in its own way, such as "telling stories, portraying myths, singing knowledge is a culturally indigenous tradition, whose transmission involves us and has contributed to maintaining oral tradition over the centuries" (ZAPAROLI, 2016, p. 45, our translation).[29] The oral culture, for the Apinayé, is a tradition, that is, their myths and legends are passed from generation to generation through orality and the construction of these comic books brought a new way of passing on and keeping culture alive, a new way of recording culture because they are "Typical of oral cultures, myths interrelate, cross with daily instruments and give new meaning" (ZAPAROLI, 2016, p. 56, our translation).[30] In other words, by telling the tale through orality, some aspects may change, but by producing these comic books, the myth was able to pass on to future generations in the original way.

Bringing this theme to create his story (comics), Afonso, as a member of the Apinayé ethnic group, shows his identity, his way of existing, and this is quite apparent when he was asked about the reason that led him to choose this theme. He answered: "It was the first topic that came to my mind, I managed to do research, right, with some ancestors, elders, right, according to the research I did, this story is like a myth, right [...] a myth of Apinayé culture" (Interview with Afonso, 2019, our translation).[31] Myths are very important to reinforce the social identity of the indigenous people. In this speech, we have an identity statement, as it shows that at no time did the author think of writing something that was not related to the culture of his people, in addition to having gone after the knowledge of the elders, in search of the traditional knowledge of the old indigenous people and their memoirs, to deepen his knowledge about the myth to truthfully write the plot of comic books.

For many people, myth may be an imagination, but for indigenous people it is true, because they live it, it is part of their existence. Furthermore, choosing myth as the theme of his comic books illustrates literacy representations in the indigenous culture, to which the author belongs. Myth exposed in a production is also a way of recording history. Through myths, we can learn a little about the culture of the Apinayé since their organization and functioning are surrounded by mythology.

The graphic elements of the comics in Figure 2 show that this myth seems to have emerged some time ago, as the clothes appearing in the drawings are not those indigenous people wear today. Afonso chose to portray the clothing that was common to his people at a time when they had little contact with society. The story told by the Apinayé elders does not have spelling/drawings, only the speech. Despite this, the author reveals an imagery with impressive dimensions, depicting through visual language the entire continuous process of interaction between what was being told by the elders and the dynamics of their imaginary world. Therefore, the author sought to portray a theme that is part of their culture, their social reality, and

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[29]   The original text in Portuguese reads: "contar histórias, retratar mitos, cantar saberes é uma tradição culturalmente indígena, cuja transmissão nos envolve e tem contribuído ao longo dos séculos como manutenção de uma tradição oral".

[30]   The original text in Portuguese reads: "Típicos de culturas orais, os mitos se inter-relacionam, cruzam com instrumentos diários e se ressignificam".

[31]   The original text in Portuguese reads: "Foi o primeiro tema que veio na cabeça, eu consegui pesquisar né, com alguns antepassados, anciões né, de acordo com a pesquisa que eu tive né, esta história é como se fosse um mito né [...] um mito da cultura Apinayé".

their experiences, confirming that the genres we produce somehow beckon literacy practices based on elements of one's social and cultural practices.

All comic books' themes included in this research are rooted in cultural elements. In turn, Brandão (1985, p. 16, our translation)[32] defines culture as "something that exists and is reproduced under certain conditions, that spreads inequalities and antagonisms and that can be intentionally transformed." Over time, social actors change and go through cultural transformations, with an intense movement of knowledge in social groups. Culture articulates and moves in different places, times, and ways. According to Bosi (2003, p. 319, our translation),[33] culture is the "set of ways of being, living, thinking and talking about a given social formation". An example of this is telling a story, which is a very representative theme of peasant culture and found in the comic books in Figure 3:

Figure 3 – Cutout of the comic books: Branco Pereira de Sá and the Jaguar who charged tolls[34]

Source: Comic books produced by collaborator Alberto (2019).

In this narrative (comics), the author reproduces a story involving a young man who, after drinking a lot of alcohol, got out on his motorcycle and came across a painted jaguar in the middle of the road. The animal attacked him and took away the suitcase he was carrying in his vehicle. In the end, the boy stops the motorcycle, kneels, and thanks him for having survived the animal's attack, without even noticing that his suitcase was gone. This type of story has been present in the culture of the people of Tocantins (and of other regions) for a long time, being passed orally from generation to generation. The story gains space and life in oral literature, goes beyond time and is directly linked to forming an identity and developing imagination.

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[32]   The original text in Portuguese reads: "algo que existe e se reproduz sob determinadas condições, que espalha desigualdades e antagonismos e que pode ser intencionalmente transformada".

[33]   The original text in Portuguese reads: "conjunto de modos de ser, viver, pensar e falar de uma dada formação social".

[34]   Our translation of the texts, Figure 3: 1. "The boy seeing the jaguar started to think?..."; 2. "I have to pass quickly so that the animal does not catch me!"; 3. "This story took place in a village in the region, in Bico do Papagaio, in the state of Tocantins, on the border with the states of Pará and Maranhão..."

Therefore, reporting this type of story can bring the individual even closer to his social context, to his way of life, to his community. At the beginning of the story, Alberto (the author) makes it clear that the fact narrated in the story took place in the area where he lives.

The story, as shown in the verbal text in Figure 3, makes clear the author's intention to explain his identity in the hinterland of Tocantins. Considering how images are composed and what the author writes, one assumes that the story took place in a peasant community, in the region of Bico do Papagaio. Oliveira (2006, p. 25, our translation)[35] explains that "each image awakened by the story reveals or raises a universe of internal images that give shape and meaning to the person's experiences in the world", allowing us to see that the story unfolds within the universe of the author's experience and that, because he is a young person, he may have heard someone else's story, maybe a member of his family. Thus, a list of great storytellers must include "[...] for their wanderings and the possibility of exchanging new stories, travellers; the elderly for their experience, time and collection of stories filled in their memory, and teachers and community leaders, as a working or approximation tool" (OLIVEIRA, 2006, p. 25, our translation).[36] But when it comes to our research, the author of the tale is Alberto, a young peasant. This allows us to say that, as part of the students' literacy practices, they can contribute to the maintenance of the story in the local culture.

Considering the research data, it is noticeable that, through the themes chosen when writing the comic books, collaborators introduced elements of the traditional culture of their communities as well as elements of the hegemonic culture. As shown in Table 2, the first three themes come up with records, elements of the history and daily life of the peasant world, the cultural heritage of the research collaborators, the history of the discovery of golden grass, the Apinayé's struggle to preserve and maintain their lands and the tale that tells about a jaguar and a man. Although not peculiar to peasant culture, such as myth and tale, for example, the other three themes (4, 5 and 6) of the comic books also focus on current issues in the daily lives of the research collaborators. This is the case of the theme of suicide and the acceptance of women in football, topics that have been much discussed in the media and social networks in recent years. In addition to these, the last theme focuses on a very current issue and of great relevance to families, as it discusses teaching and the importance of parental acceptance of children with learning disabilities.

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[35] The original text in Portuguese reads: "cada imagem despertada pelo causo revela ou suscita um universo de imagens internas que dão forma e sentido às experiências da pessoa no mundo".

[36] The original text in Portuguese reads: "[...] por suas andanças e possibilidade de troca de novas histórias, os viajantes; os idosos pela experiência, tempo e regate de causos arquivados na lembrança, e os professores e líderes comunitários, como ferramenta de trabalho ou de aproximação".

Figure 4 – Cutout of the comic books: Football is for whomever wants to[37]

Source: Comic books produced by collaborator Albertina (2019).

As shown in the story whose title is "Football is for whomever wants it", Albertina, the author, portrays the prejudice that women have faced over the years in society that football is not a place for women. In dealing with this theme, the author demonstrates that she has a critical sense in the face of prejudice, sexism and discrimination against women and confirms that she is aware of the changes and transformations that the contemporary scenario has been undergoing. This cutout reveals that the author is connected with the macro context and not only with the situations of her local peasant community, but she is also tuned with the set of media events. By choosing this theme, so dear to gender equality, Albertina gives us evidence of her literacy practices, reinforcing that she can discuss social issues from a global perspective.

It is noteworthy that the topic addressed was very present in 2019 in written and media texts, demonstrating that the comic books by the author has representations of literacy in the digital world. Even living in the countryside, where access to written and digital communication through Digital Information and Communication Technologies (DICT) ends up being limited, Albertina came up with a theme that was often covered by newspapers, magazines, websites, and other digital linking media. As says Oliveira

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[37]   Our translation of the texts, Figure 4: 1. "Lili offers to be a goalkeeper, and everyone finds it strange, and immediately says that she doesn't know… But since the team was losing, they accepted"; 2. "If you want I can stay in goal for you"; 3. "Go Lili, go for it"; 4. "Who will be goalkeeper now?"; 5. "That's fine with me, we are already losing…"; 6. "Put Lili as goalkeeper"; 7. "Now you are really going to lose."

(2012, p. 4, our translation),[38] "[...] digital technology can be an important tool to enhance the attributes that make up a new way of thinking about the contemporary world and acting on it". The author's story in the comic books corroborates this.

Therefore, we conclude that in designing this comic books, the author used literacy practices and representations developed through DICT. This reinforces that, in order to build her story, she would have had previous access and read different texts – printed, visual, oral, among others – mediated by technologies. Thus, by analyzing this story, we have found elements of digital, visual, and informational literacy, which were used and harmoniously organized in intertwined practices, mutually helping each other, so that the author reached the final product, that is, her story (comics).

Figure 5, as follows, reveals the story with the title "Tears are the last words", which also used elements of digital literacy in making the story (comics):

Figure 5 – Cutout of the comic books: Tears are the last words[39]
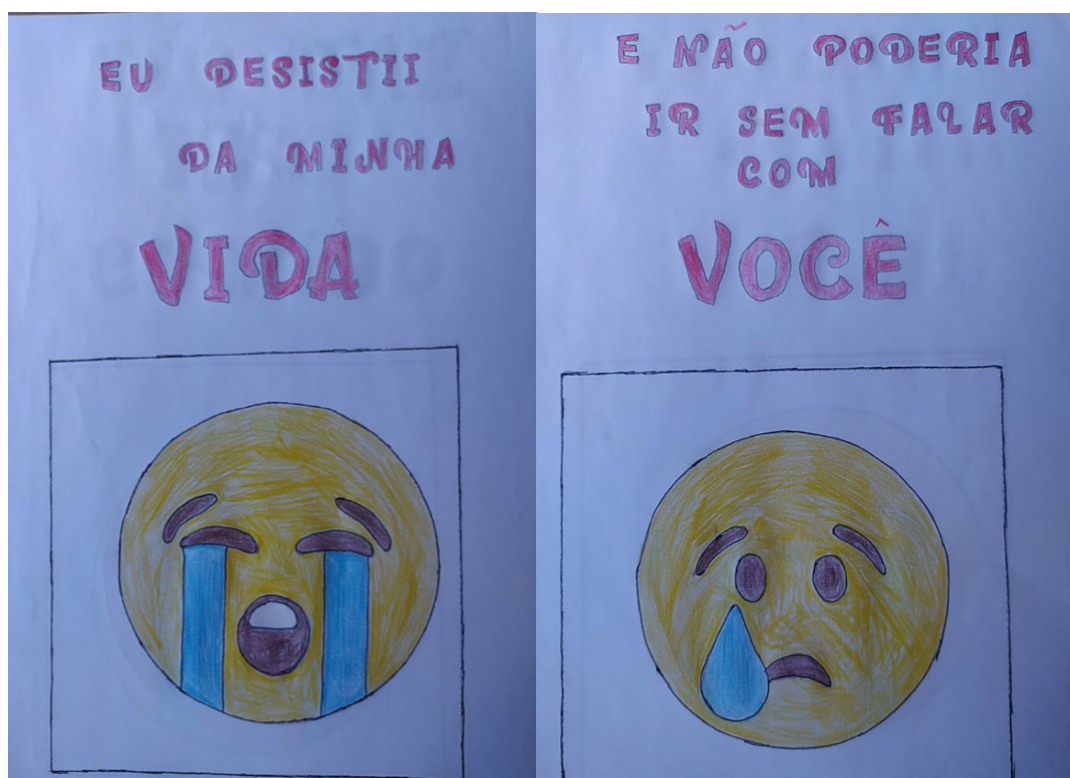
Source: Comic books produced by collaborator Augusto (2019).

Unlike the other comic books, Augusto illustrated his entire history with emojis. According to Tenório (2018, p. 131, our translation),[40] "Emoji is a pictogram, an ideogram, whose function is to convey

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38   The original text in Portuguese reads: "[...] a tecnologia digital pode ser uma ferramenta importante para potencializar os predicados que compõem um novo modo de se pensar o mundo contemporâneo e agir nele".

39   Our translation of the texts, Figure 5: 1. "I have given up on my life"; 2. "And I could not leave without talking to you."

40   The original text in Portuguese reads: "Emoji é um pictograma, ideograma, que tem por função transmitir o sentido de uma ideia completa, de uma palavra, uma expressão, um sentimento".

the meaning of a complete idea, a word, an expression, a feeling". Generally, emojis are used to convey a message with no writing. Emojis are common in the world of technology, reinforcing our assumption that the author came up with representations of literacy from the digital world. In this story, emojis and images are presented as ideological signs made up of other signs.

In designing his comic books, Augusto demonstrates he understands that communication does not occur in a monomodal fashion only, that is, exclusively verbal. Communication is rather multimodal, intertwined with a wide range of implementation modes, with digital media appearing here as lines like emojis. For Lemke (1998, p. 283 *apud* CARVALHO; ARAGÃO, 2015, p. 12, our translation),[41] "our technologies are moving us from the era of writing to the era of multimedia authorship in which sound, images, and the written text are mere elements in a larger composition of meaning".

As can be seen, the DICT have the power to introduce new literacy practices and representations grasped by rural youth, because it has and offers elements capable of turning them into a new worldview. Young people are then enabled to write about their realities and to talk about issues in the global world using specific elements of communication mediated by digital technology. Thus, the elements in Figure 5 depicting the comic books produced by Augusto reinforce that the author, although he lives in the countryside – where access to DICT is restrained and almost always precarious –, demonstrates the appropriation of such elements via digital literacy.

In the contemporary world, everything is integrated and interconnected with cell phones, computers, TV sets, tablets and even if they live in the countryside, young people have access, albeit limited, to some of these devices affecting their access to information from all contexts and cultures. Clearly, this quick access to information that is easily shared by any of these electronic devices can change anyone's literacy practices, regardless of context or culture.

Suicide, an issue addressed in this story (Figure 5), is present in conversation circles, in the media, and has even been the theme of a TV or internet streaming series. Suicide has become a public health problem, the number of attempts increasing in recent years. And the author of the story emphasizes such topics when asked about the reason that led him to choose and work on this theme, let us see:

> It is a topic that is very serious among young people, my age group, and other people as well, right? It does not only affect young people, and for the time being, everything, and there are many people who are taking their own lives, and many people think it is the lack of God, a lack of play. So, I think that is why I chose my theme. (Interview with Augusto, 2019, our translation).[42]

At the UFT itself – the university where the author is a student – there have been records of suicides involving undergraduates in recent years. By dealing with this subject, the author demonstrates that he is aware of current issues in society, showing a critical sense capable of breaking the taboo about suicide, as

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[41] The original text in Portuguese reads: "as nossas tecnologias estão nos movendo da era da escrita para a era da autoria multimidiática na qual o som, as imagens e o próprio texto escrito são meros elementos em uma composição maior de significado".

[42] The original text in Portuguese reads: "É um tema que está muito grave entre os jovens, da minha faixa etária e também outras pessoas, né? Não afeta só os jovens, e pelo momento também, tudo, e tem muitas pessoas que estão tirando a sua própria vida, e muitas pessoas acham que é falta de Deus, falta de, de brincadeiras. Então, acho que escolhi meu tema por isso".

this theme is often kept silent, as if it were invisible, as if it were far away from the conversations social actors have in the countryside.

Another theme that is quite prevailing in society in general was also highlighted by Amélia, the author of the comic books illustrated in Figure 6, entitled "Learning: the importance of acceptance".

Figure 6 – Cutout of the comic books: Learning: the importance of acceptance[43]

Source: Comic books produced by collaborator Amélia (2019).

The issue addressed by Amélia in her comic books is very important, since there have been few debates about the situation of students with learning disabilities in rural schools. It makes it possible to see the need for more research on the inclusion of students with special needs in the school environment of the countryside. In this story, it is not known for sure whether the author came up with a fictional story or its reality, but one can observe that the author emphasizes that parents must accept the condition of their children because it is something that can be treated.

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[43] Our translation of the texts, Figure 6: 1. "Is there any problem with André, teacher?…"; 2. "Parents, André has slow, irregular reading, no comprehension, and writing with an abnormal handwriting profile and no improvements. I think it would be important for you to take André to the doctor to see these learning difficulties so that he can improve his learning"; 3. "Look teacher, André does not have any problems. We are going to make a partnership between you and me and André will improve on these questions"; 4. "After the meeting and the teacher realizes the non-acceptance of André's parents that he has some learning problem, she goes in search of ways to help him during his classes."

With the story, the author also demonstrates she is aware of how much children with special needs are neglected in their care and acceptance, which leaves us with a question: did she address this topic because she herself had a problem with a learning handicap or because a relative has had it? This comic books allows us to see the invisibility of people with special needs in the countryside, as well as the discrimination and the absence of public policies to implement schools capable of welcoming these students in the rural context. Amélia, when portraying the theme dealing with the learning handicap of a peasant child, expresses to the reader her literacy practices and representations, opening the discussion about basic education in the countryside, with inherent demands in formal education.

Cultures are constantly being shaped and reshaped as are literacy and literacy practices; every day they move, vibrate, throb, and come alive because they are not only expanded, but they also transform, change, and expand through daily innovation and discoveries the globalized world offers to everyone. Thus, as asserts Street (2014), literacy can only be conceived in its multiplicity, as individuals are always performing new literacies. The more individuals get involved and take different roles in society, the more they absorb new cultures and new literacies. That is exactly what our research reveals.

6 Final remarks

Using the comic books genre allowed authors to go deeper into their themes in different ways. They have not only used verbal language, but also introduced visual language to supplement their stories, and this allowed for an in-depth view and exposure of their ideas. As can be seen through the stories illustrated in this paper, comic books can be adopted in higher education as a form of teaching methodology related to written production, to enhance research programs and other forms to be used in teaching, research, and extension. The possible uses of this genre in the classroom are inexhaustible, permeating a great deal of disciplines in order to achieve an interdisciplinary genre.

In social life, individuals can fulfil or take different roles and engage in different literacy practices and representations. Thereby, the themes chosen for the comic books illustrated here show that the research collaborators make use of their daily language absorbing what is around them is a global perspective. We inferred that the literacy practices appearing in the themes developed in the comic books embraced both singular and plural configurations, focusing on life stories, practices, and recurrent activities in the daily lives of collaborators, within the socio-historical context they live in. More contemporary themes also appeared connecting them to the global world, such as gender equality and suicide.

Therefore, the analysis of the research data also corroborates that, although the authors of the six comic books illustrated in this article are peasants living in rural communities – where access to digital technologies is precarious and limited – revealed productions, especially in themes 4, 5, and 6, that indicate representations and literacy practices directly associated with today's digital literacy. It should be noted that this is an important finding, especially taking into account this moment of social isolation due to the COVID-19 pandemic, when access to DICT has become essential requiring the need to master the use of digital tools to communicate, get informed, work and study.

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