

# Identifying the concept of literacies underlying the pedagogic activities developed in a continuing English Teacher Education Program

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**Abstract:** The objective of this research is to analyse to what extent the concept of literacies subsidizes the pedagogical activities of a didactic unit produced within a continuing teacher education program to English Language teachers from the modality of Education for Youth and Adults (EJA). By means of a collaborative research (MAGALHÃES, 2002), two teachers, an English undergraduate student and a PhD researcher of Federal University of Santa Maria (UFSM) produced, based on the concept of literacies, a didactic unit, which constituted the corpus of this investigation. To identify the representations of literacies underneath these activities, we take into account the perspectives of literacy proposed by Rojo (2004), Motta-Roth (2008) and Freire (2001). Therefore, literacy as: a) decoding; b) cognitive process; and c) critical reading. We identified a greater recurrence of activities that explore literacy as a cognitive process (79,32%), followed by activities that focus on critical reading (20,68%). The rhetorical organization presents movements (from cognitive process to critical reading), which seems to represent that, first, the students have to comprehend the text and then position themselves about it.

**Keywords:** Literacies; Continuing English Teacher Education Program; Education for Youth and Adults (EJA).

**Resumo:** O objetivo desta pesquisa é analisar em que medida o conceito de letramentos subsidia as atividades pedagógicas de uma unidade didática elaboradas em um programa de formação continuada para professores de língua inglesa da modalidade de Educação para Jovens e Adultos (EJA). Por meio de uma pesquisa colaborativa (MAGALHÃES, 2002), dois professores, uma aluna de graduação e uma pesquisadora de doutorado da Universidade Federal de Santa Maria (UFSM) produziram, com base no conceito de letramentos, uma unidade didática, a qual constituiu o *corpus* desta investigação. Para identificarmos a representação de letramentos, levamos em consideração as perspectivas de letramento propostas por Rojo (2004), Motta-Roth (2008) e Freire (2001). Portanto, letramento como: a) decodificação; b) processamento cognitivo e c) leitura crítica. Nós identificamos uma recorrência maior de atividades que exploram o letramento como processamento cognitivo (79,32%), seguido de atividades que focalizam a leitura crítica de mundo (20,68%). A organização retórica apresenta movimentos (do processamento cognitivo para a leitura crítica de mundo) a qual que parece representar que, primeiro, o aluno deve compreender o texto e só então, se posicionar sobre ele.

**Palavras-chave:** Letramentos; Programa de Formação Continuada de Professores; Educação para Jovens e Adultos (EJA).

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## 1. Introduction

This work is connected to the Post Graduation Program of the Federal University of Santa Maria (PPGL/UFSM), to the research line *Linguagem no Contexto Social* and to the research group of the *Laboratório de Ensino, Pesquisa e Leitura de Redação* (GT- LabLeR) within the Major in English of the Federal University of Santa Maria. The studies within this research line (e.g., TRIVISOL, 2017b; BRUM, 2017; SILVA, 2014; TICK; SILVA; BRUM, 2013) focus on the interdisciplinary production of knowledge about language, discursive practices, and literacy in social and institutional contexts. These studies had as their objective to describe, analyze and interpret language in use (several contexts), paying attention to the social organization (social roles, relations and identity practices) by means of a critical perspective.

Developed by the research group, *Núcleo de Estudos Colaborativos em Contextos Escolares* (N.E.C.C.E.), the umbrella project *Multiletramentos, interdisciplinaridade e formação colaborativa de professores de linguagem na escola* (TICKS, 2015) is one of the projects associated with the referred research line. The project aims to develop scholar literacies throughout a critical and collaborative perspective, in which all the participants involved (teachers, researchers and undergraduates) engage in reflexive practices of language teaching in school contexts.

Thus, the current research is linked to this umbrella project and aims to investigate to what extent the concept of literacies subsidizes the pedagogic activities produced – within a collaborative research project - for students enrolled in an Education for Youth and Adults (EJA) course.

## 2. Review of literature

### 2.1 Collaborative Research

Collaborative research is a set of collaborative actions that can be developed in school contexts, in which teachers and outside researchers engage to discuss and problematize the construction of knowledge through reflexive sessions<sup>1</sup> (MAGALHÃES, 2002). In this process, the role of the outside researcher is to listen to the context needs and negotiate a project that responds to them within a continuous teacher education program having, as a result, a joint construction of knowledge produced by all members.

Therefore, relations between theory and practice, teaching and research are established throughout reflexive sessions, whereby teachers become researchers of their own didactic practice. In other words, they develop an investigation based on the needs of their school community. Furthermore, the purpose is to discuss a critical and reflexive view of teaching practices based on theories, which are built within their context. As a result, theory and practice have an equal role in collaborative researches.

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<sup>1</sup> Our translation.

Magalhães (2012) also discusses that a continuous teacher education program, in which teachers and researchers reflect about practice and theories, is mediated by language, which should be organized dialogically and dialectically by the participants of the program. In addition, it is interesting to create an environment of trust and respect, where teachers and researchers have the opportunity to speak and listen to each other, in order to share knowledge, doubts, emotions, needs, problematic issues, agreements and disagreements. In the same way, John-Steiner (2000, *apud* MAGALHÃES, 2012) argues that it is fundamental to create a space in which there is no separation between affective and cognitive conflicts, because the process of sharing can (re)signify practices and theories but can also provoke anxiety and the abandon of the process as a consequence.

Ninin (2011) also debates the concept of collaborative research. For the author, this kind of investigation just makes sense if all participants are engaged in the proposal of the continuous teacher education program<sup>2</sup>. Thus, the proposal has to be negotiated with the group in the beginning and along the process, if necessary. Furthermore, a collaborative method can be considered a facilitating approach of adult learning, in which participants can share their lived experiences. For that reason, it is essential to establish a *locus* of reflection.

An example of a collaborative research was reported by Ticks, Silva and Brum (2013), in which researchers, undergraduate students and schoolteachers engaged to develop a continuous teacher education program in a public school. The program was developed along two years, through reflexive sessions with the focus on critical reading, which resulted in a joint production of didactic material. This material helped the participants to experience, through in the practice of production, the theories discussed. In the next section, we approach the concept of literacy in order to discuss how the diversity of our society has to be considered in the process of learning and producing pedagogic activities for the teaching of English in school contexts.

## 2.2 Literacy

Literacy can be defined as the result of an action of teaching or learning to read and write (SOARES, 2009). Expanding this explanation, Kleiman (1998) sees literacy as practices and events connected to different uses, functions and social impacts of language. It is the qualified use of reading and writing in different social practices where people have to interact during their lives. In this way, literacies can achieve multiple functions and meanings, considering the contexts in which they are produced. Therefore, we may say literacy is a set of sociocultural practices that are socially and historically variable (BUNZEN, 2010). In the school context, it is strictly related to a group of discursive practices from the school sphere that involves particular uses of writing jointly with other languages. Bunzen (2010) claims that the school environment is a place of text production by participants within

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<sup>2</sup> Our translation.

the context, such as teachers, students, principals etc., being, for that matter, a sphere of ideological creation, which has particular material, historical and socio-semiotic features.

Our life is continuously undergoing changes in different spheres, which are related respectively to the productive diversity of our society, the civic pluralism and multilayered lifeworlds (THE NEW LONDON GROUP, 1996). Consequently, literacy pedagogy needs to be addressed and rethought taking into account these new demands of our society. Within this objective, The New London Group (1996) proposed a pedagogy of multiliteracies that can be applied in school contexts, which:

[...] overcomes the limitations of traditional approaches by emphasizing how negotiating the multiple linguistic and cultural differences in our society is central to the pragmatic of the working, civic and private lives of student (THE NEW LONDON GROUP, 1996, p. 1).

Whereas school contexts have to deal with differences in the process of teaching and learning, the pedagogy of multiliteracies (THE NEW LONDON GROUP, 1996) is proposed as a tool in this context. According to Cope and Kalantzis (2012, p. 1), the term multiliteracies refers to two major aspects of meaning-making: a) social diversity: texts are variable (in terms of cultural, social or domain-specific situations) depending on the context in which they were produced<sup>3</sup>. Therefore, learners have to be able to figure out “differences in the patterns of meaning from one context to another and communicate across these differences as their lives require”; and b) multimodality: increasingly due to technology, texts present modality “in which written linguistic modes of meaning interface with oral, visual, audio, gestural, tactile and spatial patterns of meaning”. It means that learners have to deal with different semiosis, extending beyond traditional reading and writing skills.

### **2.2.1 Literacy perspectives and reading competencies**

To identify, classify and analyze pedagogic activities, we may consider three different literacy perspectives: literacy as decoding, literacy as a cognitive process and literacy as critical reading and their respective reading competencies (Table 1). Attempting to review the different perspectives of literacy offered by the literature, Silva (2014) and latter Trivisoli (2017b) explored in their researches the following classification, considering Rojo's (2012), Freire's (2001) and Motta-Roth's (2008) investigations. This classification will be used, in this particular research, to identify the perspective(s) of literacy, which subsidizes the activities of our corpus of analysis.

A) Literacy as decoding: entails basic skills that are developed during the first years of formal education, which involve the processes of knowing the alphabet, comprehending

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<sup>3</sup> This aspect is the main focus of this paper as the activities analyzed were produced for students enrolled in EJA.

the differences between written and other graphic forms, learning how to decode words and written texts, and reading and recognizing words globally (ROJO, 2004);

B) Literacy as a cognitive process: is a mental act, which involves previous knowledge of the world, social practices and linguistic knowledge beyond the phonemes (ROJO, 2004);

C) Literacy as critical reading: means “to know how to express oneself in writing what we have learned from social practices, being able to act critically in the world” (TRIVISOL, 2017a, p. 149).

**Table 1: Literacy perspectives and reading competencies.**

LITERACY PERSPECTIVES			
READING COMPETENCIES	Decoding	Cognitive Process	Critical Reading
	Understanding differences between writing and other graphic forms	Activating world knowledge	Relating text and students' lives
	Mastering graphic conventions	Anticipating or predicting contents or properties of texts	Recovering context of text production
	Recognizing the alphabet	Checking hypothesis	Defining purpose and goals for the reading activity
	Understanding the alphabetic nature of our writing system	Locating and/or copying information.	Perceiving relations of intertextuality
	Mastering the relationships between graphemes and phonemes	Comparing information	Perceiving relations of interdiscursivity
	Knowing how to decode words and written texts	Generalizing	Perceiving other languages
	Knowing how to read, by recognizing words globally	Producing local inferences	Elaborating aesthetic and/or affective appreciations.
	Expanding the perception to bigger portions of the text	Producing global inferences	Elaborating appreciations on ethical and/or political values.

Source: adapted from Trivisol (2017b), based on Rojo (2004); Motta-Roth (2008); Freire (2001).

## 2.2 Education for youth and adults

In 1996, the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (LDB, nº 9.394/96) established the Education for Youth and Adults (EJA) as a modality of teaching, which is directed to students who did not have access to regular education or were not able to continue their studies during regular time/age, following the formal levels of basic education (BRASIL. Parecer CEB nº. 5/1997). In 2000, the National Curriculum Guidelines

for Youth and Adult Education (DCN-EJA) were published, based on LDB. DCN-EJA encompassed not just elementary school, but also the high school within the EJA modality.

Diversity is one of the main characteristics of EJA, as there are differences at age range; levels of education; social, cultural and economic backgrounds, among others (MULIK, 2011). Considering them, EJA is characterized as a complex modality of teaching, once its main purpose is to include a huge diversity of people that could not follow their studies in the regular modality for distinct reasons.

Initially, EJA was thought to teach adults, elderly people and, oftentimes, adults from rural areas, who have never had the opportunity to attend a school. Nowadays, the scenario is different, many young students are moving towards this teaching modality, mainly, because they cannot attend regular classes within basic formal education (BRUM, 2017). Therefore, EJA arises as a new possibility, a second opportunity for them (ARROYO, 2011).

Besides, it is important to highlight that EJA was always broader than teaching, since it was not limited to schooling and also sought to promote human education (DAYRELL, 2005, p. 53). Regarding it a process of inclusion is fundamental, since it primarily has to provide a good environment and, subsequently, conditions for them to continue and conclude their studies (BARCELOS, 2009).

In addition, EJA is currently constituted as a field (ARROYO, 2011) in which courses were created in order to provide initial and continuing qualification specifically for this teaching modality. That is why universities are developing researches aiming to investigate and understand more about the particularities of this context. These actions jointly with public policies contribute to legitimize EJA as a formal and important teaching modality in our society.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Context of investigation**

The context of this investigation is a continuous teacher education program, which was offered by the umbrella project *Multiletramentos, interdisciplinaridade e formação colaborativa de professores de linguagem na escola*. The program was developed in fortnight meetings at UFSM. In these meetings, researchers and school teachers discussed their readings on the concept of literacies and produced pedagogical activities, which were supposed to respond to the needs of their own teaching contexts. The participants were two English teachers, who are currently working in two different school contexts of EJA in peripheral areas of Santa Maria; a PhD researcher of PPGL/UFSM, who is the teacher-mediator and responsible for the development of this continuous teacher education program; and, finally, an English undergraduate student, who assisted the PhD researcher in the program activities and is the author of this paper.

## 3.2 Corpus

We have a number of instruments available to conduct an investigation that involves teaching actions and beliefs (VIEIRA-ABRAHÃO, 2006). In order to analyze to what extent the concept of literacies subsidizes the pedagogical activities produced for students of EJA, we adopted a qualitative perspective. Qualitative research aims to comprehend how a specific sociohistorical and cultural environment works, how it is constructed by its participants, and how they interpret it (VIEIRA-ABRAHÃO, 2006). This kind of research pursuit is to describe the process of social construction of collective actions, through interactive practices mediated by language. Regarding it, the research is developed not just to or by the participants, but with them (CAMERON *et al.*, 1992).

Considering this perspective, our *corpus* is composed by pedagogical activities (a didactic unit) produced in the continuous teacher education program by one of the EJA English teachers in collaboration with the researchers at UFSM and put into practice in the school contexts in which the referred participant worked. This particular unit was produced for young high school EJA students. Therefore, the theme chosen for the unit was the practice of looking for a job, practice considered relevant by the students.

## 3.3 Procedures and categories of analysis

The procedures of analysis were: 1) to identify, classify and analyze the semantic categories and reading competencies explored by the activities in the unit, 2) to quantify the recurrence of the activities previously classified, and 3) to explain the main results found.

### 3.3.1. Semantic categories and reading competencies

Considering the concept of literacy, we take into account three perspectives discussed by Rojo (2004), Motta-Roth (2008) and Freire (2001): literacy as decoding, literacy as a cognitive process and literacy as critical reading.

According to Rojo (2004), as discussed previously in the review of literature, decoding includes basic skills, which are generally learnt and taught during the process of alphabetization, in the initial grades of Elementary School. Cognitive process is constituted by mental work, which involves world knowledge, knowledge of social practices and linguistic knowledge besides the phonemes (ROJO, 2004, p. 3). Lastly, critical reading goes beyond, as it implies to know the reality around us, to know how to express oneself by writing and to be able to act critically in the world (FREIRE, 2001, p. 1-2).

In order to analyse how these semantic categories are explored in the activities, we consider different reading competencies previously introduced in the review of literature. Table 2 presents examples of the reading competencies related only to the cognitive process and the critical reading perspective, both extracted from the activities. Decoding was not found in the corpus as its competencies are developed in the first years of

elementary school (ROJO, 2004) and the material was produced to high school EJA students, who are already literate.

**Table 2: Examples from the corpus of reading competencies.**

Cognitive process		Examples
Readings competencies	Locating and/or copying information.	1- Where do people usually look for Job? ( ) magazines ( ) newspapers ( ) internet ( ) directly at the companies ( ) book
	Producing global inferences	3- Look at the texts A and B and answer the questions: b) Justify your answer with elements from the texts.
	Generalizing	4- What is the objective of these texts? What words indicate that?
	Comparing information	8- Do you see differences or similarities between the two job advertisements presented? Which ones? Explain your answer.
	Activating world knowledge	9- Take a look at the image in Text B. Have you ever seen a similar image? In each context?
Critical reading		Examples
Readings competencies	Locating and/or copying information.	7- Why do you think the company requires some psychological characteristics?
	Perceiving intertextual relations.	10 - In your opinion, why the company (in text B) used a similar image from this American symbol?
	Elaborating appreciations on ethical and/or political values.	12 - a) Do you disagree with any of the don't s presented in the video? Justify
	Perceiving interdiscursive relations.	16- Based on activities 14 and 15, construct one role play simulating a job interview: (in pairs)
	Relating text and students' context.	17- In pairs, create a job advertisement for one profession according to the card you received. You can use this guideline to create the advertisement: 1) Job position; 2) Part time/ full time; 3) Requirements; 4) Job description; 5) Benefits; 6) Who and ways to contact

Source: based on Rojo (2004), Freire (2001) and Motta-Roth (2008).

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Analysis of the concepts of literacy underlying the activities of the didactic unit

In the analysis of the concepts of literacy, we have identified the presence of two semantic categories being explored along the unit: literacy as a cognitive process and literacy as critical reading. During the investigation, we identified 18 main activities. Some of them were subdivided, summing up a total of 29 exercises. There is a higher recurrence of activities that explore literacy as a cognitive process (23 activities, 79,23%), followed by activities that focus on literacy as critical reading (six activities, 20,68%), as illustrated in Table 3.



**Table 3: Concepts of literacy explored within the unit**

SEMANTIC CATEGORIES	NUMBER OF ACTIVITIES	NUMBER OF ACTIVITIES (%)
Cognitive process	23	79,32%
Critical reading	6	20,68%

Source: author.

In the following step, we analyzed how the semantic categories are rhetorically organized and which reading competencies are highlighted by the exercises. In general, we can verify that the rhetorical organization of the activities is composed by four cyclical movements. Firstly, cognitive competencies are explored (such as locating and/or copying information, activating world knowledge, producing global inferences, generalizing and comparing information) and, then, the competencies that explore critical reading (such as elaborating aesthetic and/or affective appreciations, perceiving intertextual relations, elaborating appreciations on ethical and/or political values, perceiving interdiscursive relations and relating text and students' context).

As we can see in Table 4, in the beginning of the unit, there is a greater recurrence of cognitive activities (exercises 1 to 6), and critical reading activities are more recurrent in the middle and end of unit. At first, this rhetorical organization seems to suggest that the students have to explore and understand the text being read and, afterwards, construct a critical position about it. This result confirms the findings identified by Trivisio (2017b).

**Table 4: Identification of reading competencies explored by the activities**

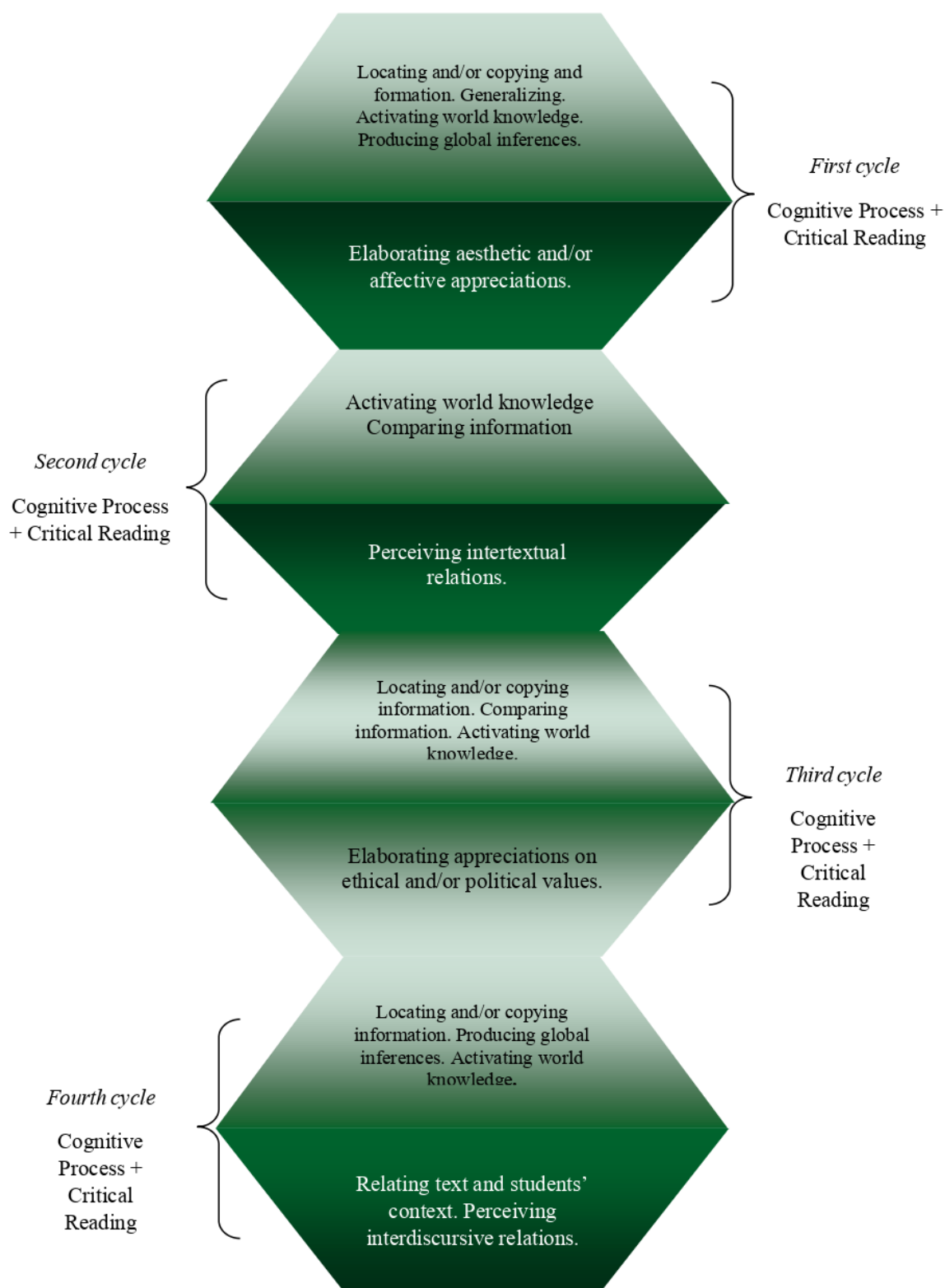
ACTIVITIES	SEMANTIC CATEGORIES	READING COMPETENCIES
1 a)	Cognitive process	Locating and/or copying information.
1 b)		Activating world knowledge.
2 a)	Cognitive process	Locating and/or copying information.
2 b)		Activating world knowledge.
3 a)	Cognitive process	Locating and/or copying information.
3 b)		Producing global inferences.
4)	Cognitive process	Generalizing.
4 a)		Locating and/or copying information.
5)	Cognitive process	Locating and/or copying information.
6 a)	Cognitive process	Locating and/or copying information.
6 b)		Activating world knowledge.
7)	Critical reading	Elaborating aesthetic and/or affective appreciations.
8)	Cognitive process	Comparing information.
9)	Cognitive process	Activating world knowledge.
10 a)	Critical reading	Perceiving intertextual relations.
10 b)	Cognitive process	Activating world knowledge.
10 b)		Locating and/or copying information.
10 c)		Locating and/or copying information.

10 d)		Locating and/or copying information.
11)	Cognitive process	Comparing information.
11 a)		Activating world knowledge.
12	Cognitive process	Locating and/or copying information.
12 a)	Critical reading	Elaborating appreciations on ethical and/or political values.
13)	Cognitive process	Producing global inferences.
14)	Cognitive process	Locating and/or copying information
15)	Cognitive process	Activating world knowledge.
16)	Critical reading	Perceiving interdiscursive relations.
17)	Critical reading	Relating text and students' context.
18)	Critical reading	Relating text and students' context.

Source: author

In figure 1, we represent visually the rhetorical organization of the activities explored in the unit. We identify the following cyclical movement: from cognitive to critical and from critical to cognitive. Along the unit, the activities explored transit between different levels of complexity (TRIVISOL, 2017b). There is an effort to promote learning which goes beyond the initial and basic levels of reading as the unit proposes a sequence that explores less complex reading competencies (such as locating and copying information), moving towards the most complex ones (such as elaborating aesthetic and/or affective appreciations). Therefore, this rhetorical organization seems to be organized to encourage a progressive learning.

**Figure 1: Representation of the rhetorical organization of reading competencies explored by the activities considering the levels of complexity.**



Source: based on Trivisoli (2017b).

Following the scale of complexity proposed by TrivisioI (2017b), we may identify the levels of complexity of each reading competence. Figure 1 illustrates, through different shades of green, the level of each reading competence, in which dark green indicates greater complexity and light green lower levels of complexity. This scale can help us analyze the complexity of the reading competencies explored by the unit.

In the cognitive process, “locating and/or copying information” is the reading competence more recurrent and the less complex together with generalizing. According to Rojo (2004), “locating and/or copying information” is a reading competence that does not operate alone, it is combined with other competencies, as the reader is constantly searching and locating relevant information to store it and, after, (re)using in an organized manner. Furthermore, “comparing information” characterizes activities of medium level and “activating world knowledge”, the second more recurrent, and “producing global inferences” are reading competencies in which it is required a higher level of cognition.

In terms of critical reading, we identified activities that can be classified as medium and high levels of complexity (TRIVISIOI. 2017b): “relating text and students’ context”, “perceiving intertextual relations and interdiscursive” relations are strategies which demand a medium level of complexity. On the other hand, “elaborating aesthetic and/or affective appreciations” and “elaborating appreciations on ethical and/or political values” are considered strategies of high level of complexity.

#### 4.1.1 Cognitive process activities

Focusing particularly on the activities that explore the cognitive process (Table 5), we see a higher recurrence of locating and/or copying information (11 activities, 47,8%), followed by activating world knowledge (7 activities, 30,4%), producing global inferences (2 activities, 8,7%), comparing information (2 activities, 8,7%) and generalizing (1 activity, 4,4%). In Table 6, the different shades of green represent the level of complexity of each reading competence, in which dark green indicates greater complexity and light smaller one.

**Table 5: Cognitive process: reading competencies explored in the unit and their recurrence.**

COGNITIVE PROCESS	NUMBER OF ACTIVITIES	NUMBER OF ACTIVITIES (%)
Locating and/or copying information	11	47,8%
Activating world knowledge	7	30,4%
Producing global inferences	2	8,7%
Comparing information	2	8,7%
Generalizing	1	4,4%
Total	23	100%

Source: author.

Regarding the cognitive process and its levels of complexity of reading competencies, we analysed the reading process proposed by the unit, providing evidences from the *corpus*. Our focus was on the four most recurrent: locating and/or copying information, activating world knowledge, producing global inferences and comparing information, which belong to three different levels of complexity.

In the first activity of cognitive process, it is required to locate information combined with activating world knowledge (Excerpt 1).

**Excerpt 1 – Activity that explores cognitive process: locating and/or copying information and activating world knowledge.**

**1- Where do people usually look for Job?**

- ☐ magazines                      ☐ newspapers      ☐ internet  
☐ directly at the companies      ☐ book  
☐ others. For example: \_\_\_\_\_

Source: Machado & Brum (2017).

We can divide this activity in two parts: in the first one, the student has to locate information from a set, and then, activate world knowledge through examples that will be provided by the student. As we have mentioned, according to Rojo (2004), locating and/or copying information does not operate alone, in this exercise, we have two reading competencies operating together. Activating world knowledge demands a relation between the reader's knowledge and that required and used by the author in the text (ROJO, 2004).

In the following activity (Excerpt 2), we identify locating and/or copying information and producing global inferences.

**Excerpt 2 – Activity that explores cognitive process: locating and/or copying information and producing global inferences.**

**3- Look at the texts A and B and answer the questions:**

*a) What kind of text are these? b) Justify your answer with elements from the texts.*

- ☐ recipe                      ☐ bill                      ☐ menu  
☐ job advertising              ☐ news

Source: Machado & Brum (2017).

Firstly, as shown in Excerpt 2, the student has to locate specific information from a set (3a), and then, justify his/her choice based on elements from the texts (3b). Considering that, there are aspects of the text that are implicit, as the student has to use clues left by

the author in the texts to produce global inferences (ROJO, 2004). Again, we have locating and/or copying information operating with another reading competence, producing global inferences.

In the next activity (Excerpt 3), we identify "comparing information" being explored.

### **Excerpt 3 – Activity that explores cognitive process: comparing information.**

8- Do you see differences or similarities between the two job advertisements presented? Which ones? Explain your answer.

Source: Machado & Brum (2017).

In this activity (Excerpt 3), the student is invited to compare two job advertisements. This reading competence helps readers to construct the meaning of the text. Furthermore, comparing is essential to measure the relevance of the information that will be used, posteriorly, in a summary or text synthesis (ROJO, 2004).

Although the unit has a good number of cognitive strategies being explored, we have not identified activities that stimulate students to produce local inferences, anticipate or predict contents or properties of a text and also the activities that focus on the checking of hypothesis raised. This way, the activities do not explore the immediate context, depriving students of producing local inferences related to the practice of job seeking. Rojo (2004) states that inferential strategy could help students to clarify the lack of comprehension through the immediate context of the text and, by building meanings, it is possible to infer or discover the unknown words or structures. In addition, another reading competence that was not explored is the anticipation or prediction of contents or properties of a text, which is intrinsically related to producing local inferences. By exploring this strategy (producing local inferences), the reader, based on his previous knowledge, recognizes in which support the text was published and how it is organized on the page. After collecting this information, it is possible to raise hypothesis about the content and form of the text, or the portion of the text that the reader will read (ROJO, 2004). In the unit, hypothesis related to the practice of looking for a job are not raised and consequently not checked. To check hypothesis is a reading competence, according to Rojo (2004), which helps students to confirm or not the raised hypothesis, if they are not confirmed, new and more suitable ones may be raised.

#### **4.1.2 Critical reading activities**

In the critical reading activities (Table 6), we conclude that relating text and student's context is the most present (2 activities, 33,3%), followed by elaborating aesthetic and/or affective appreciations (one activity, 16,6%), perceiving intertextual relations (one activity, 16,6%), elaborating appreciations on ethical and/or political values (one activity, 16,6%) and perceiving interdiscursive relations (one activity, 16,6%). In Table 6, the different shades of

blue represent the levels of complexity of each reading competence, in which dark blue indicates greater complexity and light smaller one.

**Table 6: Critical reading: reading competencies explored in the unit and their recurrence.**

CRITICAL READING	NUMBER OF ACTIVITIES	NUMBER OF ACTIVITIES (%)
Relating text and students' context.	2	33,3%
Elaborating aesthetic and/or affective appreciations.	1	16,6%
Perceiving intertextual relations.	1	16,6%
Elaborating appreciations on ethical and/or political values.	1	16,6%
Perceiving interdiscursive relations.	1	16,6%
Total	6	100%

Source: Author.

Regarding the critical reading and its levels of complexity of reading competencies, we analysed the process of reading proposed by the unit, providing evidences from the *corpus*. Our focus was on the two more recurrent: relating text and students' context and elaborating aesthetic and/or affective appreciations. These strategies belong to medium and high levels of complexity respectively.

In excerpt 4 of critical reading, we identify relating text and student's context.

**Excerpt 4 – Activity that explores critical reading: relating text and student's context.**

**18- Research some companies/stores in your neighborhood that are hiring some professionals to work for them. Bring your notes to class, choose one company/store and create a job advertisement for it. (Your advertisement will be published at the school radio, in English and Portuguese).**

Follow the guideline below to construct your job advertisement:

- 1) Job position
- 2) Part time/ full time
- 3) Requirements
- 4) Job description
- 5) Benefits
- 6) Who and ways to contact

Source: Machado & Brum (2017).

In this activity (Excerpt 4), the student has to develop a research, in his/her neighborhood, companies and stores that are hiring professionals, and then, to create a job advertisement for them considering a guideline provided by the activity. Thus, the student is relating text and their context. According to Motta-Roth (2008), this competence promotes the acquisition of knowledge and a reflection based on it about the social context.



In the following activity (Excerpt 5), the student is invited to elaborate aesthetic and/or affective appreciations.

**Excerpt 5 – Activity that explores critical reading: elaborate aesthetic and/or affective appreciations.**

**7- Why do you think the company requires some psychological characteristics?**

Source: Machado & Brum (2017).

The activity is organized as an open-ended question in which the student has to position herself/himself in relation to a specific issue from a text (job advertisement). This is an important competence, once the student, as reader, does not have to accept everything that is written in a text, being relevant a critical reflection about it. According to Rojo (2004), in the critical reading process, the reader is constantly reacting to the text, in terms of likes and dislikes and beliefs. Though these activities explore critical reading, the unit does not promote a reflection in terms of recovering the context of the text, in which the students can think critically about their purpose and goals within the reading activity and perceiving other languages.

According to Rojo (2004), to interpret a text, the student needs to recall contextual information, (who is the author?; what is his/her social position?; which are the ideologies involved?; in which situation does he/she write?; what is his/her objective?; who is the desired target audience?; and etc) and, through it, the reader can dialogue with the text in a more appropriate and critical manner. However, the unit does not provide activities in which this reading competence can be developed by students. Besides that, in the unit, there are not activities that promote a reflection about the purpose of reading. Following Rojo (2004), the reading process is subordinated to the goals or purposes of reading imposed by the situation, in which we have to read.

Furthermore, regarding our contemporary and multimodal lives, it is indispensable to consider different languages (images, sounds, moving images, diagrams, graphics, maps, etc) as constituent elements of meaning and not only of verbal language in texts that we read (ROJO, 2004). Nevertheless, this reading competence, perceiving other languages, is not explored in the unit.

## **5. Final remarks**

The current research investigates to what extent the concept of literacies is explored by pedagogic activities produced – within a collaborative research project - for students enrolled in an Education for Youth and Adults (EJA) course, focus on three perspectives of literacy (decoding, cognitive process and critical reading) (ROJO, 2004) and their reading competencies. The analysis developed indicated that the unit explores the concept of literacies enabling students to comprehend the text by means of different cognitive



strategies (79,32% of activities), and thus, connecting with the social environment where they live via critical reading activities (20,68% of activities).

Though almost all the critical reading strategies proposed by Rojo (2004) are explored by the activities, the recurrence is smaller and discrepant comparing to activities that explore the cognitive process. This data combined with the rhetorical organization of the unit (four-cycle movements – from cognitive process to critical reading) suggests that, first, students have to understand/comprehend the text as a whole and only then position themselves about it. However, in the analysed unit, this process of positioning could have been more recurrent, going deeper into the discussion of particular aspects of the practice of looking for a job in the particular context in which the students are related.

In terms of levels of complexity (TRIVISIOL, 2017b), the cognitive process is explored by activities from different levels (small, medium, high), but there is a greater recurrence of activities of small level of complexity which, in some cases, are combined with activities of medium or high level of complexity, thus operating together. On the other hand, the activities that stimulate critical reading transit through two levels of complexity, high and medium, operating alone.

We understand that the unit proposes activities of different levels of complexity, in which the student can develop several reading competencies, contributing to the construction of knowledge. However, activities that explore small level of complexity are considerably more recurrent leaving less space in the unit for the student reflects and acts about his/her immediate context.

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