

**AN EXPERIENCE OF TEACHING LITERATURE**

**UMA EXPERIÊNCIA DE ENSINO DE LITERATURA**

**UNA EXPERIENCIA DE ENSEÑANZA DE LITERATURA**



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**ABSTRACT:** The record of a literature teaching experience in higher education at a private institution presents the obstacles and dilemmas that interfere with the professional development of future teachers. The need to bring students closer to literary texts to actualize the reading experience and promote reader autonomy finds new perspectives in the approach to the relationship between the reader and the literary work.

**KEYWORDS:** Literature Teaching. Higher Education. Reading.

**RESUMO:** *O registro de uma experiência de ensino de literatura no ensino superior em uma instituição privada apresenta os obstáculos e dilemas que interferem na formação profissional de futuros professores. A necessidade de aproximar o aluno do texto literário para que se efetive a experiência da leitura e promova a autonomia do leitor encontra novas perspectivas na abordagem da relação entre leitor e obra literária.*

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** *Ensino de Literatura. Ensino Superior. Leitura.*

**RESUMEN:** *El registro de una experiencia de enseñanza de literatura en una institución privada de educación superior presenta obstáculos y dilemas que interfieren en la formación profesional de futuros profesores. La necesidad de acercar al alumno al texto literario para que sea efectiva la experiencia de lectura y promover así la autonomía del lector encuentra nuevas perspectivas en el abordaje de la relación entre lector y obra literaria.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** *Enseñanza de Literatura. Educación Superior. Lectura.*

## Introduction

I began teaching in higher education in the middle of my doctoral studies in 2015. I had completed a master's degree in Literary Theory on the Russian critic V. G. Belinsky, and in my doctoral studies in Russian Literature, I researched the influence of this critic on the prose of the young Ivan S. Turgenev.

Initially, my teaching was in the Pedagogy course, and from 2018 onwards, in the Literature Teaching course at the same private institution of higher education in the capital of São Paulo, with different units spread throughout the city. In both courses, I taught Portuguese Language and Literature. However, Literature, literary theory, and criticism were predominant in my teaching assignments in the Literature Teaching course, as they were in accordance with the faculty's curriculum. In this course, classes began to be informed the week before classes started with the advancement of the financial crisis when the institution awaited the formation of classes to assign duties to teachers.

Although I had classes from different units – from the north, south, and east zones of the capital – I had the opportunity to accompany a Portuguese Teaching class for four consecutive semesters in the south zone. The Teaching course lasted three years and had been adopting measures to deal with the crisis that affected courses of this kind. An important consequence of this confrontation was called *ensalamento*<sup>2</sup>, a practice that brings together students from different semesters in the same class and replaces the notion of a semester course with a modular one: the sequential orientation of the disciplines is abandoned, and the disciplines that the oldest students in the class need to graduate prevail on the semester schedule, while the modular schedule was gradually introduced to consolidate the new format. The subjects were practically the same; they just didn't follow a sequence, so a student entering the course with the modular schedule could start studying Portuguese Modernism and, in another semester, study Romanticism.

There were two general profiles of students: young people between 18 and 25 years old who were pursuing their first undergraduate degree and adults between 35 and 45 years old, or older, who could then fulfill the dream of attending college or studying Literature specifically. The vast majority worked but intended to teach, came from social classes C, D, and E, and were graduates of public schools. This was a sensitive aspect, not because it leveled the students, but because it referred to their similar experience in learning language and Literature.

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<sup>2</sup> "*Ensalamento*" refers to the allocation of physical space to be occupied by each class.

With the transition from sequential to modular courses, I dealt with a common problem regarding teaching Literature: the urgency of breadth, dictated by literary history, which included various literary periods and diverse writers in the same semester. As mentioned, assignments were communicated to the teacher the week before classes started. The institution had its Teaching Plans, planned lesson by lesson with determined bibliographies, allowing some room for occasional changes by the teacher who would teach the subject, but with restrictions since the plans were shared with the students in the first class, which allowed complaints in case of significant discrepancies between the plans and the lessons given. The academic semester lasted less than three months, considering the bi-monthly assessments, presentations of papers, and eventual holidays, and all the disciplines I taught were two and a half hours, once a week.

An observation about the Teaching Plans regarding their production is the fact that they were composed jointly by the teachers who attended the academic meeting for this purpose. During the period I taught in the Teaching course, this meeting did not take place, and the current planning was the result of negotiation between various teachers, both new and veteran, who contributed with their training and practice, considering the student profile of the institution. The plans included a schedule of classes that dealt with the historical context, characteristics of the literary period in question, references to representative writers and characteristic aspects of their work, exemplification with some literary work, and some treatment of criticism, often restricted to old academic articles, often chosen for familiarity rather than quality.

In the first semester, when I was assigned Literature in the Literature course, I faced the extension of the content of the Teaching Plan. The model presented was familiar to everyone since school, with the difference of having a bit of criticism in undergraduate studies. I followed the plan, each class covering a topic: historical context, literary context, literary movements with their characteristics, and some works or excerpts to illustrate. Problems arose. The volume of content was absorbed in a rudimentary manner. Reading literary works throughout the semester was not successful: few did it, and participation in discussions was even lower. The general conduct was to listen to what I had to say.

At the end of the semester, in the students' seminars and papers on the chosen literary work, I noticed the reproduction of the patterns received in class. From very poor research sources, students ensured the usual aspects: the contexts and general characteristics of the work, often without the literary text appearing in the presentation or paper. There was no

demonstration of a personal reading of the literary work where the manifestation of students' reflections, opinions, or impressions could be observed.

This was the formation of future teachers, yet there was a repetition of the school model in undergraduate studies, without literary works gaining centrality or students evolving as readers. There were literary theory and criticism disciplines to provide more technical knowledge, so to speak, since teachers were being trained; however, the reality of literature classes was condemned to the scheme described above, without ensuring adequate literary education.

What would be adequate literary education? One that prioritizes the reading of literary works and the proper discussion of the meaning of the text in question among its readers. In the passage below that I highlight from the work *A literatura em perigo*<sup>3</sup>, by Todorov, I identify pertinent aspects of the issue:

Should teaching the discipline give way to teaching the works? No, but rather that each should find its proper place. In higher education, it is legitimate to teach (also) the approaches, the concepts put into practice, and the techniques. Secondary education, which does not address literature specialists, but everyone, cannot have the same target; what is intended for everyone is literature, not literary studies; it is necessary then to teach the former and not the latter. The high school teacher is entrusted with one of the most arduous tasks: internalizing what they learned in university, but instead of teaching it, making these concepts and techniques become an invisible tool. Would this not be asking this teacher for an excessive effort, of which only the masters will be capable? Let us not be surprised later if they cannot accomplish it satisfactorily (TODOROV, 2009, p. 41, our translation).

Todorov refers to the context of literature teaching in France at a time when dominant structuralism exclusively implied the internal reading of the work without relation to the world. This was not the case in my situation, but the excerpt is beneficial in pointing out a crucial problem in the reality I was facing: the teaching of literature hypertrophied the surroundings and did not advance to the confrontation of the literary text itself. The appropriate formulation for teacher training aims to ensure the continuity of the same methods with their students in basic school, particularly in high school. This perpetuates the vicious cycle that confines literature to the sphere of periodization, literary history, biographies, and contexts, without reaching the core of the object itself.

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<sup>3</sup> Literature in Danger.

The need for change had to come from me to promote a reconfiguration in the classroom that put those future teachers at the forefront. Later, I found in the text “*O ensino de literatura e a leitura literária*”<sup>4</sup>, by Neide Luzia de Rezende (2013), a passage that elucidated my dilemma. The author refers to high school education in public schools in São Paulo, but it is a fact that most of my students were graduates from there, and we were perpetuating in the Teaching degree the education they received in school. When questioning the consequences on learning if the school were to appropriate literary texts as teaching content, Rezende responds:

It involves a considerable shift from *teaching literature* to *literary reading*, since the former focuses on the teacher's role and the latter on the student's role. This shift in emphasis is inscribed in the realm of literature and lies at the heart of contemporary pedagogical trends. The transmission of content is juxtaposed with skills and competencies, and the process overrides the focus on results and products. This presupposes that the student's education is no longer one-directional, meaning it is not solely based on what the teacher teaches, disregarding what the student actually learns: monitoring the student's learning process and giving them the necessary time is more important than covering a pre-defined list of contents (REZENDE, 2013, p. 106-107, our translation).

Without taking into account all the consequences and practices that the concept of literary reading requires, understanding the change in perspective in the classroom and the primacy of the literary text led to new measures and procedures in my teaching practice that contributed more effectively to the formation of future teachers.

## Ongoing Changes

Although much of the content had been covered, the semester's assessment was negative in terms of the student's development as literary readers and their autonomy in knowledge construction. In the following semester, with another group, I received institutional planning and prioritized reading literary texts in the classroom. Poetry predominated, but I did the same with prose that was present.

The idea was to select poems and short stories from the periods and authors scheduled for the course, so that the reading and discussion of the material would take place in the classroom. There was no general adherence from the class; participation was timid,

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<sup>4</sup> Teaching Literature and Literary Reading.

spontaneous, and encouraged. There was a predominant attitude of expectation regarding the teacher to take the floor and provide answers, which resulted in the absence of debates. However, the fact that the literary text gained prominence and served as the basis for ideas and comments brought more vitality to the content for the class, which was no longer limited to abstract approaches to critical, historical, and biographical analyses. In particular, I found it more rewarding to have an exploratory discussion of the literary texts among some class members than to deliver a conventional lecture.

In the first evaluative assignment they had to do, I asked for an account of the reading experience of a particular literary work, for them to comment on the text based on judgments and personal taste, associations, and questions raised by the reading, impressions, and evocations, and interests provoked, in order to capture their reading in a register. They could work in pairs to foster discussion about the work and present in the account the contrasts, comparisons, approaches, and conclusions of the discussed experience. There was some general perplexity regarding the proposal, doubts about the evaluation, fear of the value of their opinion, and misunderstanding about my intentions, even though I clarified that their accounts would not be evaluated based on right or wrong content but on the production of the activity.

Reading these accounts proved to be quite enlightening, especially in providing a mapping of the class and a broader understanding of each student's background, from functional reading issues to reports highlighting the readers' experiences. In the second term, the course format continued, maintaining the historical and literary contexts, as well as the chronological sequence and reference to literary periods. However, the space dedicated to these elements was reduced, and the approach to these aspects took on a more organic form, grounded in the discussion of the literary text itself, rather than using literary texts merely as illustrations of theoretical or historical content.

Theoretical reading was assigned as homework. At the end of the semester, I dispensed with seminar presentations to repeat the proposal of recording the reading experience of another work, maintaining the choice to do it individually or in pairs. I noticed an increase in the number of individual productions, and some pairs that repeated showed more developed elaborations regarding the reading done. The main thing for me was to have achieved a closer relationship between literary text and student dynamics, and to observe a more active participation of students throughout the semester.

When I was assigned another Literature course for the same class the following semester, the dynamics of the classes repeated, and the student's participation showed a

considerable change. There was greater confidence in expression on their part, contributing with questions, opinions, or information researched out of personal interest. I decided to reinstate seminars at the end of the semester with a new format: it was essential that they include in the group presentations the discussion they had on the reading of the work and choose a passage or more from the work to demonstrate the point of view of the discussions.

The change in attitude of the students appeared in their formulations presented in the seminars. There was no total adherence; some clung to the old model shaped by internet research and the conventional script, but, in compensation, others enthusiastically expressed their readings, even bringing to class divergences of understanding that occurred within the group. It was noted, therefore, that the readings of the works made more sense to many, as their experiences and opinions mattered. Even in the context of a Literature course, mandatory reading runs the risk of being bureaucratic and little, if at all, interactive, as it "only served for a grade".

In this sense, I found resonance in the discussion by Jover-Faleiros (2013) about the compulsory reader and the playful reader. The possibility of reconciling them requires reflection on the teaching of literature:

Discussing the nature of this distance between the compulsory reader and the playful reader thus involves understanding the way in which literary studies perceive the reader, as it is their assumptions that form, in the context of the Literature course, the specialists, responsible, in turn, for the formation of new readers. There is thus a reproduction of reading models whose origin lies in the role assigned to readers facing a literary text. The discussion about the nature of this distance is also related to the discussion about what is taught, when literature is taught (JOVER-FALEIROS, 2013, p. 121, our translation).

And further adds:

In this opposition [between the compulsory reader and the playful reader], one sees one of the essential themes for reflection on the teaching of literary reading, for an opposition of such an order would ultimately imply that the pleasure of reading of the playful reader cannot be accompanied by the construction of knowledge from what is read and that this reader perhaps could not reflect on the pleasure generated by reading (JOVER-FALEIROS, 2013, p. 125, our translation).

As I mentioned above, there was a noticeable disparity in the students' reading practices in the class: some read regularly, others only read what the college required, and those who didn't enjoy reading, so they didn't read at all. I cannot delve into the merit of what they read



because we did not discuss that. I focused on the concern of developing their reading of the course materials, which made sense to the majority. In the passages cited above, I recognized the process that unfolded in the class: students who began to recognize their reading preferences among the proposals for the semester, with some delving deeper on their own; students who spontaneously commented on the readings they did; in addition to the other points already mentioned regarding participation in classes and assignments. Although this formulation between the compulsory reader and the playful reader referred to extreme stereotypes of readers, the increasing involvement of students in the readings highlighted their greater engagement in acquiring knowledge, whether about the work or from it, and an essential part of this process was the appreciation of their contributions in the course's progress.

The difference between the passive condition of learning in silence, when the teacher's voice prevailed, and the active condition of readers of the works who were listened to in the classroom, brought mandatory reading and enjoyable reading closer, altering the content of the discipline, as we prioritized the discussion of the meaning of the literary texts read. From this movement, the notion of learning literature ceased to be unidirectional and became shared. The ideal reconciliation between compulsory readers and playful readers did not happen for several reasons, with the factor of time being important, but I witnessed a significant advancement in the development of reading skills for a large part of the class in the lessons, and I learned that in teaching literature, the discussion of literary texts should prevail.

Even though critical readings of the work have been established, constructing its meaning through classroom discussion is a fundamental exercise for the formation of literary readers. It is not that established readings should be abandoned, but they should fulfill their role at another stage, subsequent to the initial exercise of shared discussion: the more autonomy a reader has in reading a work, the greater their ability to articulate personal reading with that of the specialist, and consequently, the greater their ability to build knowledge.

Parallel to this class, still in the same semester, there was another situation: I received a new Literature class that informed me that they had not covered all the content in the previous semester due to lack of time and asked to include it in the semester we were about to start. The problem of the extensive content schedule was now compounded by the even greater expectations of those new students concerned about the gap in their studies. I had to prioritize literary texts in the lessons, but time was a variable that had to be used favorably. Rushing against time would be another way to sacrifice the literary text, so I opted for a parallel activity to the lessons for the students to develop a reading of the missing content.

Thus, I proposed the production of an individual reading diary for the semester. I asked them to choose from three recommended titles of literary works representative of the period and to record in the diary their reading experience: free opinions about the work; recording of impressions, associations, feelings, and emotions experienced with the work, as well as reflections on the meanings extracted from that literary text, with its specificities and human universality, were pertinent to the activity. A theoretical text on the period was also assigned for reading, which could be considered in dialogue with the personal reading of the literary text, whether in agreement or disagreement, establishing relationships or disparities between them.

The proposal was received with interest, and indeed, more than once, I saw students discussing among themselves the work chosen for the diary, which signaled to me the soundness of the ongoing activity. Some aspects of the practice were discussed upon feedback on the read diaries. It was new to most, and the favorable opinion was unanimous regarding learning the work and the benefit of the reading. Both the practice of the diary in this class and the reading reports in the other mentioned above had in common in the students' comments the satisfaction with the appreciation of personal reading throughout the course; it was a discovery for many that their active participation in the appreciation of the work, as well as greater awareness of the act of reading, were part of their education.

I had already taught Portuguese Language to the class that did the diary, and I ended up having the opportunity to accompany them for three more consecutive semesters with literary disciplines. It was a small, close-knit, and committed group. Although it changed due to the *ensalamento* over time, it was possible to integrate the new students into the classroom practice based on literary texts; in fact, they contributed significantly with their progressive participation.

Discussion circles were adopted as another modality for taking advantage of individual reading of the works throughout the course. There were always the evasive, the absent, and the disinterested; however, others saw the opportunity to speak and listen to opinions or comments about the work as another effective way to build their practice of reading and reflection and to confirm the acquisition of knowledge.

## Some Results

The reflection of these changes that I imparted in my teaching could also be observed in the more enduring works of the students: as more personal approaches to the readings of the works emerged, and I refer here to the students' authorship of the readings as opposed to ready-made researched ones, they also gained more consistency, elaboration, and coherence regarding the meaning of the literary text.

Another indicative experience of the acquisition of autonomy by the more enduring students was the guidance in the final course papers. The reality of these papers, done in the last two semesters of the undergraduate program, is different from that of the papers from other disciplines because they measure the students' research and articulation skills – originality is not mandatory. The choice of topic is free, as long as it falls within the scope of linguistic or literary studies; however, students must demonstrate reading of a representative bibliography on the subject and the coherent concatenation of ideas in the production of the thesis; moreover, they are evaluated by a panel.

Most older students chose to work with literary works in their final papers. In the path that starts with the choice of topic, passes through the elaboration of the project, and encompasses the stages of thesis development, I was able to witness their evident progress. The meetings and submissions of material they produced for my reading were a good gauge of the process. Undoubtedly, the resources demonstrated resulted from collective action and individual merits; however, in dealing with the formation of relevant ideas for research and the gradual construction of texts, a commendable degree of complexity was witnessed in the manifestation of those readers and text producers who had been known two years earlier. Parallel to the production of the thesis, the literature classes continued with the practice of reading and discussing literary texts.

The narrative I present here is a snapshot of my teaching in higher education. Not only does it not cover all the experiences I had during this period, but the trajectories of the students were also not the same. However, the opportunity to follow some for two consecutive years allowed me to evaluate them from a broader interval of progress. With a teaching practice supported by literary texts, I observed the more active participation of students and the progressive autonomy in their reading of literary works.

There is no intention to claim originality in reporting the changes that occurred in my practice; these have long been recognized and drawn from my time as a student of Portuguese

Language Teaching, after completing my Bachelor's degree, as well as from the period when I taught in primary education. All these sources sought to address the challenges I encountered in teaching at a private institution of higher education. After nearly ten years devoted to research, the mismatch between my specialized training and the needs of the students I encountered was alarming, which is what interests me as a teacher. This narrative also refers to a stage that was fulfilled in my teaching experience: the older students graduated, then the pandemic came, remote teaching was imposed, and finally, the course transitioned to the online format, outsourced in the second semester of 2020, resulting in the dismissal of teachers from the in-person course.

### **New Perspectives**

I would like to revisit the issue of the mismatch between my training and the reality of the students. The conditions I have for teaching are the result of my training and ten years of research with an emphasis on literary history and criticism. In this sense, specific knowledge is an indispensable and applicable resource in reproducing traditional content. Theoretical study provides the specific repertoire to situate a work in the tradition; recognize its characteristics; establish relationships and influences between works and other references; analyze and interpret its meaning from different perspectives, never exhausting what can be said about a living and updated literary work through reading.

Essentially, this was the roadmap I initially followed, along with the format of the students' assignments that I received. Understanding that well-prepared expository lectures kept the course moving, but did not ensure students' autonomy in reading literary works, raised a red flag. How, then, can we balance the acquisition of specific knowledge with the encouragement of literary experience if this was invisible in the planning of the extensive content of the syllabi? Shouldn't the practice of reading literary works be included in the content, in order to establish student participation beyond evaluative activities, integrating it into a type of class that serves as a formative encounter for exchanges and debates?

Undoubtedly, there are various approaches to the analysis of a literary work, ranging from superficial, boring, and repetitive to stimulating, captivating, and revealing. The challenge that arose was to teach Literature in a way that promotes the literary experience of participants in a Bachelor's degree course in Literature, thus encouraging the acquisition of specialized

knowledge. This challenge involves establishing a dialogue between these two approaches so that future teachers come to the classroom with a broader and integrated repertoire and are willing to take on the initial challenge of discussing works collaboratively and collectively constructing their meanings and relevance in life. Todorov (2009, p. 31-33, our translation) is referred to precisely because of his declared concern with the conduct of literature teaching, so that it assumes its true value in the lives of non-professional readers, weighing the means and purpose of this teaching:

It is true that the meaning of a work is not confined to the purely subjective judgment of the student, but concerns a process of understanding. Therefore, to tread this path, it may be useful for the student to learn the facts of literary history or some principles resulting from structural analysis. However, in no case can the study of these means of access replace the meaning of the work, which is its end. To erect a building, the assembly of scaffolding is necessary, but the former should not be substituted for the latter: once the building is constructed, the scaffolding is destined to disappear.

[...]

It is necessary to go further. Not only do we poorly study the meaning of a text if we adhere strictly to an internal approach, but works always exist within and in dialogue with a context; not only should the means not become the end, nor should the technique make us forget the purpose of the exercise. We must also question ourselves about the ultimate purpose of the works we deem worthy of study. As a general rule, the non-professional reader, both today and yesterday, reads these works not to better master a teaching method, nor to extract information about the societies from which they were created, but to find in them a meaning that allows them to understand the man and the world better, to discover a beauty that enriches their existence; in doing so, they better understand themselves. Knowledge of literature is not an end in itself, but one of the royal roads that lead to the personal fulfillment of each individual. The current path taken by literary education, which turns its back on this horizon ("this week we study metonymy, next week we move on to personification"), risks leading us to an impasse - not to mention that it is unlikely to result in a love for literature.

The existence of a vast body of material reflecting on the aspects of literature teaching and related issues shows a vital debate that has been ongoing for decades and vastly expands the questions I encounter. I focus on two texts that have hit "the exposed nerve of the problems," as Drummond writes. The text "*Literatura: desafios para o professor*<sup>5</sup>", right at the beginning, presents an illuminating passage for the issue:

There is no doubt that a teacher needs to have a proficient knowledge of their subject matter and possess teaching skills. However, in the case of Literature,

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<sup>5</sup> Literature: challenges for the teacher.

how does this occur? What is the specificity of this content and its pedagogy? What has generally been offered in schools is what surrounds Literature: authorship, dates, abstract categories like plot, time, space, narrator, and not abstracted from the text – a model that is criticized today but persists as school culture (REZENDE, 2017, p. 1, our translation).

I recognize in the "surroundings of literature" exactly what I experienced in relation to the Teaching Plans. Even though the text deals with the school situation, it is a fact that this is reproduced in the formulation of questionable plans for a less privileged Teaching Degree, precisely because it adjusts to the legacy that its students, mostly from public schools, will bring. Many intend to return to these same schools to teach, and some aim for private schools, but it is common for them to bring the belief in professionalization in Literature through the molds of "technical" knowledge, a belief reinforced in the training they receive.

The mentioned text rejects the mechanistic perspective of literature teaching and advocates for the reader as the central piece in effective reading practices in schools. Using two films by the Franco-Tunisian director Abdellatif Kechiche as illustrative examples, the author reflects on the role of both the teacher and Literature, arriving at a conclusion:

It is indeed possible to propose new modes of questioning the text, capable of eliciting unique readings, so that students engage in reading, relating it to what is "outside of literature," transforming and enriching life, as in Kechiche's films. Only in this way, starting from an effective, involved, and personal reading, is it possible to build knowledge about literature, to construct in the classroom one or more interpretations, and to allow student readers to perceive how they develop meaning for themselves in confrontation or cooperation with the class. And perhaps, they will be able to establish bridges between "common" readings and classical works (REZENDE, 2017, p. 1, our translation).

I believe the author points to an important direction for the considerations expressed here. The practice of reading literary texts that privilege the reader and reverberate in life opens a path in the formation of the teacher who will arrive at the school. More than ever, the realization that a Bachelor's Degree in Literature must include the student's reading experience in its content so that this becomes a reality in their future professional practice. Not that the solution is ready-made, as the student who arrives to us is heir to a "school culture" and expects, sometimes demands, conventional and extensive content.

For some of them, discussing the reading of a literary work openly and subjectively may seem like a waste of time and money, even if the habit of reading is not part of their lives. Nevertheless, it is an unavoidable fact, in the construction of the identity of this future teacher,

the need to "establish the student as a reading subject," as Annie Rouxel (2013, p. 20, our translation) explains in "*Aspectos metodológicos do ensino da literatura*<sup>6</sup>":

This means, first of all, for both the teacher and the student, renouncing the imposition of a conventional, immutable meaning to be transmitted. The task, for both, is more complex, more difficult, and more exhilarating. It is a matter of starting from the student's reception, inviting them to interpretative adventure with its risks, and reinforcing their competencies through the acquisition of knowledge and *savoir-faire*. The paradox of literary reading in the classroom lies in the fact that, a place of study and knowledge acquisition, it is, in fact, no longer just a reading. How do we make it so? How can we develop, to the benefit of reading – that is, without prejudice to the reader's investment – the dialectic reading/study/reading? Ultimately, how do we acquire knowledge in the context of reading?

The quote applies to the problem that the training of undergraduate students in Literature Teaching also requires, articulating the "student as a reading subject" with the specific knowledge for their professional formation. It is a fact that the content of literary studies is not exhausted in an undergraduate program; indeed, it should provide tools for these students to learn to handle them in a way that promotes the individual acquisition of constant and endless knowledge.

The author's treatment of the constitutive knowledge of reading is also valuable, namely the "knowledge about texts, knowledge about oneself, and knowledge about lexical activity." I highlight a fragment of the first, which well illustrates how the specialized teaching of literature proceeds in a methodology focused on the student:

*The knowledge about texts - understanding of genres, poetics of texts, functioning of discourses, etc. - is discovered and acquired within the realm of reading. The study of a complete work, for example, allows one to discover, identify, and comprehend the phenomena upon which the concepts and notions will be based, which, over time, will transform into reading tools. Reading the work provides the opportunity for reinvestments capable of automating and refining the approaches to the text. This knowledge can also be verified in literary writing activities in which the student assumes the role of an author invested with an artistic intention (ROUXEL, 2013, p. 21, our translation).*

Although literary writing is rarely addressed in undergraduate studies, the text argues that it should not be dismissed as a possibility for teacher training. This approach allows undergraduates to use the appropriate literary creation tools for the proposed genre, allowing

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<sup>6</sup> Methodological Aspects of Literature Teaching.



their writing to incorporate relevant knowledge and, consequently, contribute to consolidating their understanding. However, the text emphasizes the importance of reading literary texts in the formation of these students, an aspect more feasible in the courses under discussion. This would allow the student to use this experience as a basis for knowledge acquisition, rather than following the common model of using knowledge for the interpretation of literary works.

Certainly, discussions of literary texts should encompass written production about the students' readings, an essential activity to mature their understanding of the work, but when done after class exchange, the student is better prepared to organize their reading and include others in its consolidation. Rouxel's conclusions (2013, p. 31, our translation) are quite encouraging in promoting the necessary changes for literature teaching to include the student as the focal point in learning.

Current research in literature didactics, based on a very precise study of course transcripts, shows that the attention given to the student as a subject, to their speech, and to their thought constructed in and through writing favors their investment in reading. The importance of the climate established within the interpretative community (the class, the teacher) is emphasized: a context where trust, respect, and mutual listening reign is conducive to the encounter with literary texts – and is even determinative. It allows (while being a product of it) the teaching of "attitudes" that constitute, according to Jean-Claude Chabanne (2009), a "third knowledge". Availability to the text and desire for literature are phenomena constructed, resulting from both cognitive and affective domains. Current research in literature and cultural anthropology is interested in emotions and the bonds they weave with cognition. It is through emotion and intellect that the aesthetic relationship and literature are built. Through sensitive reading of literature, the reading subject constructs themselves and constructs their humanity. In the didactic approach to literature as art, the realm of emotions is still little explored and undoubtedly constitutes a pathway for future research.

The understanding that my students lacked this experience and that the institutional model stifled the development of adequate training for future teachers as actors in the dissemination of reading literature as pleasure and knowledge was decisive in transforming my role as a teacher. The reality of the students I dealt with was marked by a historical view of literature, which refers to ready-made knowledge, and not to the practice of reading it.

The illusion that literary knowledge resides in this disregards the experience of reading and the exchanges that can take place between readers in the classroom. Dealing with the professional training of teachers in the Bachelor of Arts in Literature, it was undeniable that both the students presented school deficiencies resulting from inexperience with literary text as effective readers, and I needed to reformulate the teaching practice of literature in the



classroom. The experiences carried out contributed to promoting the autonomy of these students as readers of more experienced literary works and aware of the implications of this in their professional performance, thus opening up a new and promising horizon of improvements in our professional activities.

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