WORKING WITH PHOTOGRAPHS IN THE CLASSROOM: A MULTISEMIOTIC ANALYSIS

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Abstract

Photography is a genre that is quite recurrent in social life but has been relatively little studied in the school context. This proposal is based on the Base Nacional Comum Curricular, which recommends the inclusion of multiple semioses in the reading, writing and interpretation activities of students, who need to develop their ability to critically analyze what they read visually. Therefore, we seek to create proposals for the analysis of photographs in the classroom. With this, methodological support has been found in the categories of modalization. Through this, we have shown how photographs integrate a discursive context and cannot be read in a way that is dissociated from that context, that is, readers' knowledge of the world is relevant to the process of producing meanings.

VISUAL LEARNING • CURRICULAR PARAMETERS • PHOTOGRAPHY • MEDIA EDUCATION

O TRABALHO COM FOTOGRAFIAS EM SALA DE AULA: UMA ANÁLISE MULTISSEMIÓTICA

Resumo

A fotografia é um gênero bastante recorrente na vida social, mas tem sido relativamente pouco estudada no contexto escolar. Essa proposta está fundamentada na Base Nacional Comum Curricular, que recomenda a inclusão de semioses múltiplas nas atividades de leitura, escrita e interpretação dos alunos, que precisam desenvolver sua capacidade de analisar criticamente o que leem em âmbito visual. Portanto, buscamos criar propostas para a análise de fotografias em sala de aula. Com isso, encontramos respaldo metodológico nas categorias de modalização. A partir disso, mostramos como as fotografias integram um contexto discursivo e não podem ser lidas de forma dissociada desse contexto, ou seja, o conhecimento de mundo do leitor é relevante para o processo de produção de sentidos.

APRENDIZAGEM VISUAL • PARÂMETROS CURRICULARES • FOTOGRAFIA • EDUCAÇÃO PELA MÍDIA

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1

EL TRABAJO CON FOTOGRAFÍAS EN EL AULA: UN ANÁLISIS MULTISEMIOTICO

Resumen

La fotografía es un género recurrente en la vida social, pero ha sido relativamente poco estudiado en el contexto escolar. Esta propuesta está fundamentada en la Base Nacional Comum Curricular, que recomienda la inclusión de la semiosis múltiple en las actividades de lectura, escritura e interpretación de los alumnos que necesitan desarrollar su capacidad de analizar críticamente lo que leen en un contexto visual. Por ello, buscamos crear propuestas para el análisis de fotografías en el aula. Con esto encontramos apoyo metodológico en las categorías de modalización. A partir de esto, mostramos cómo las fotografías integran un contexto discursivo y no pueden leerse separadamente de este contexto, es decir, el conocimiento del mundo por parte del lector es relevante para el proceso de producción de significado.

APRENDIZAJE VISUAL • PARÁMETROS CURRICULARES • FOTOGRAFÍA • EDUCACIÓN EN MEDIOS

TRAVAILLER AVEC DES PHOTOGRAPHIES EN CLASSE: UNE ANALYSE MULTISÉMIOTIQUE

Résumé

La photographie est un médium très présent dans la vie sociale, même si elle n'est pas suffisamment étudiée dans le contexte scolaire. La proposition de travailler ce médium en classe s'appuie sur la Base Nacional Comum Curricular qui recommande l'inclusion de multiples sémioses dans les activités de lecture, d'écriture et d'interprétation afin que les élèves puissent développer leur capacité d'analyser de manière critique ce qu'ils lisent visuellement. Nous avons donc cherché à créer des propositions visant à analyser des photographies en classe, du point de vue méthodologique, des types de modalisation. À partir de cela, nous avons montré que les photographies s'inscrivent dans un contexte discursif et ne peuvent être lues indépendamment de ce contexte, c'est-à-dire que la connaissance du monde du lecteur est pertinente pour le processus de production de sens.

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2

WITH THE ADVENT OF THE INTERNET, THE ACCESS TO TEXTS CONSISTING OF DIFFERENT semiotic resources has been facilitated, which has favored the development of educational practices that include different textual genres. This issue, in addition to requiring new teaching methodologies, has required new teaching skills among teachers. Accordingly, in the present article, we choose photography as our object of study; this is a genre that is quite recurrent in social life but has been relatively little studied in the school context.

This proposal is based on the Base Nacional Comum Curricular [National Common Curriculum Base] (BNCC) (Ministério da Educação, 2018), which recommends the inclusion of multiple semioses in the reading, writing and interpretation activities of students, who, because they coexist with these texts, need to develop their ability to critically analyze what they read and write.

Taking this as a parameter, in the present study, we seek to create proposals for the analysis of photographs in the classroom using the perspective of multiliteracies (Rojo, 2012). Thus, we seek not only to highlight how semioses are determinant in the reception and interpretation of photographic texts but also to demonstrate how these convey meanings that are linked to the cultural universe of their producers, fostering social and ideological debates.

Multisemiotic analysis is suggested by the BNCC in conjunction with three other Portuguese language skills that belong to the curricula of the 6th–9th grades of elementary school, which comprise the following axes: the axis of reading, the axis of text production, the axis of orality and the axis of linguistic/semiotic analysis. Specifically regarding the fourth axis, the document states that it refers to the strategies "for [the] conscious analysis and evaluation during the processes of reading and producing texts (oral, written and multisemiotic) [and] for the materialities of the texts that are responsible for their effects of meaning" (Ministério da Educação, 2018, p. 78, own translation). Thus, for multisemiotic texts, such as photographs, such analysis will focus on the "forms of composition and style of each of the languages that integrate them, such as plane/angle/side, figure/background, depth and focus, color and intensity in static visual images" (Ministério da Educação, 2018, p. 79, own translation). In line with this, methodological support has been found in the categories of modalization, such as contextualization, color saturation, illumination and color differentiation, elaborated by Kress and Leeuwen in their work *Reading images: The grammar of visual design* (1996/2006).

This article is thus divided as follows: in the first section, the correlation between multiliteracies and multisemiotic texts is addressed; we utilize, in the second section, photography (Martins, 2013) as an example of such texts to support the use of multisemiotic analysis in the classroom based on four selected visual resources/markers. Afterwards, we analyze three photographs selected from the platform Unsplash. This analysis addresses issues that can be problematized in the classroom by considering the contexts of the production, circulation and reception of photographic productions as well as the semiotic resources that indicate their meaning and integrate the enunciative process in which such photographs are inserted. Finally, we present the final considerations of this work.

Multiliteracies and multisemiotic texts

Given the characteristic cultural diversity of a society that is increasingly globalized and aware of the multimodal nature of the texts circulating in this context, in 1996, the New London

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3

Group (NLG) created a manifesto that addresses a pedagogy of multiliteracies. This document highlights the role of a school in the need to promote new literacies that address not only cultural plurality but also the multimodality of texts. This need has been exacerbated by the development of digital information and communication technologies (DICT) (Rojo, 2012).

In this context, the advancement and popularization of access to DICT have changed the way society communicates, produces and reads texts. The use of text editing and production programs have facilitated the combination of words, images, sounds and movements, which has caused a greater hybridization of the productions that circulate in the various spheres of society. Thus, multisemiosis has become a feature that is increasingly present in texts of various genres, including photographs, commercials, videos, vlogs, hypercontacts, and animations, contributing to the construction of intended messages and aiding in the production of senses. Moreover, all the constituent elements of these texts are carriers of meaning with their own cultural and ideological meanings, impelling the motivation for their selection.

In addition, communication has begun to occur through new textual genres, often inherent to the digital medium, which offer access to the combination of different semioses and require, from both the reader and the producer of such texts, new skills for the mobilization and handling of these tools. These new genres, for the most part, are multisemiotic texts, that is, texts that articulate different semiotic elements, such as verbal language, images, sounds, movement, and links. Although these transitions have affected both printed and digital texts, the latter have shown an even greater tendency to present an articulation between different modes and semioses because the tools offered by such supports allow and facilitate this combination.

Thus, producers/writers are able to mix several languages that collectively contribute to the construction of their message and the production of meanings, which are attributed through semiotic choices in the contexts of cultural production and reception where a text is inserted. It is therefore important to carefully read all the elements that were selected to compose a text, whether verbal or nonverbal, since all will carry some meaning. Based on this perspective, the BNCC (Ministério da Educação, 2018, p. 73, own translation) suggests that reading,

> . . . taken in a broader sense, relates not only to written texts but also to images that are static (a photo, painting, drawing, scheme, graph, or diagram) or in motion (films, videos, etc.), as well as sounds (music), which accompany and cosignify [one another] in many digital genres.

Accordingly, children and adolescents typically obtain high mastery of digital technologies, using them for various purposes. However, it is up to a school to contribute to the development of the critical and reflective use of these technologies by promoting readings and productions that involve the contexts and social situations of their textual production and that reflect the effects of meaning that are produced through semiotic choices. In addition, educational institutions should encourage students to explore the potential of these tools for cognitive and intellectual development, for learning and for the search for knowledge, since the internet is a great showcase of research and information and can become an ally for the training in these subjects.

Therefore, according to Rojo (2012) and given the aforementioned issues, it is up to a school to fulfil the mission of literacy by ensuring students' multiliteracy, since these changes – largely caused by the development of DICT – have transformed literacy into multiliteracy. Hence, for students to make full use of language, "new tools are needed – in addition to those for manual

Cad. Pesqui. (Fund. Carlos Chagas), São Paulo, v. 54, e10073, 2024, e-ISSN 1980-5314

4

writing (paper, quill, pencil, pen, chalk and whiteboard) and printed text (typography, press) – such as audio, video, image processing, [as well as] editing and diagramming [tools]" (Rojo, 2012, p. 21, own translation). It is thus not enough to develop reading and production skills only for oral or written verbal texts; such skills must also be cultivated for static and moving images, gestures, colors, expressions, symbols, sound effects, etc.

Specifically, the Base Nacional Comum Curricular (2018) highlights the need for schools to focus on both oral and written texts as well as multisemiotic texts to develop the "understanding of the effects of meaning caused by the use of linguistic and multisemiotic resources in texts belonging to different genres" (Ministério da Educação, 2018, p. 73, own translation). As we have already mentioned, most students have access to digital technologies and participate in the web as both the producers and recipients of its texts. However, the challenge facing schools is to mediate the critical use of these practices with regard to both the relevant ethical and cultural issues and the effects of the meanings that the articulation between different modes and semioses will promote.

Reading photographs: A process of producing meanings

Multisemiotic analysis belongs to the axis of linguistic/semiotic analysis and is performed consciously during the production and reading of multisemiotic texts (Ministério da Educação, 2018). Accordingly, this section specifically addresses the analysis that is performed during the reading of static images, such as photographs. This is justified because, following Nascimento et al. (2012, p. 532, own translation), it encompasses

> . . . the growing space that images have come to occupy, in comparison to verbal language, in the most diverse texts of our daily life, which highlights the importance of the various resources of meaning used in images, such as framing, color selection and distribution of elements on the page/screen.

Hence, it is relevant to analyze the different semioses that are visualized in the final arrangements of a photograph, such as illumination, color, angle, perspective, and contrast, which include the presence of written verbal modes, if the photograph has signs, billboards, or any other verbal form in its arrangement. Thus, regardless of its final arrangement, a photograph produces meanings when it is received by someone; meanings that reproduce the factors of the cultural reality of its producers and interlocutors. This is because, as stated by Martins (2013, p. 19, own translation),

> With the evolution of time, photography began to play a very important role because, in addition to informing, it reinforced the view of social reality. The camera captures the moment in a given space, and the interpretations are at the mercy of each one. However, observing and reading a photograph implies knowing the world and the reality that surrounds us.

Thus, to understand their message, it is also necessary to analyze the contexts of production and reception of these texts, as they evidently have different objectives within various social practices. This occurs mainly because the genre of photography itself is classified into types; documentary photography, for example, is performed differently from other types, such

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5

as commercial/advertising, fashion, artistic, etc. This point alone highlights the different forms of the production of semiosis in documentary photography: "All the documents required from us by the institutions of power are only validated by the[se] photos, which means that we are officially identified by the image that the camera operator gives us of ourselves" (Machado, 1984, p. 20, own translation).

Alternatively, documentary photography aims to draw attention to sociocultural issues in a region, state or country. Most known historical photographs belong to this documentary type; photographs of war, destruction, hope, farewell, or any other moment that inspires critical reflection on the part of a reader are not rare. Some are even commonplace because photo-documentarism "can also be used by photographers to describe everyday life, to portray the experiences of ordinary life or to document something that is disappearing. Often, photo-documentarists are simply seeking new ways of seeing and portraying the world" (Lombardi, 2008, pp. 43-44, own translation).

In contrast, an advertising photograph entails maximum illumination and brightness in its execution, as it is a commercial appeal that seeks to draw a consumer's attention to the details of the product or service presented. Thus, the greater the illumination, the more inviting the advertising object to be disclosed. Machado (1984, p. 30, own translation) highlights the possibility of manipulating truth and the capacity for abstraction in this photographic art:

> Nobody knows this technique of transfiguring the referent to increase the power of conviction of its image better than the photographers who work in advertising. . . . The appetizing peaches that invite a bite are made with rice powder, the apples with rouge; the vegetables are polished with petroleum jelly, while the roasted chicken leg is browned in a sugar syrup.

Thus, produced semioses will dialog with the message that is projected by photographers, who consider these enunciative purposes. In addition to the expressed, visually explicit, part, there is the context of reception and its subjects, the dimensions of times/spaces, and the knowledge and values of these subjects. As a photograph expresses and produces meanings and incites questions, there will always be a possibility for interpretation. Dubois (2012) thus considers a photograph a photographic statement, either as a function of its procedurality or as a function of its inseparability from its total enunciation. It is an image experience, a totally pragmatic object that shows how this "supposedly objective mechanical-optical-chemical environment, of which it has been said many times in the philosophical plane that it is performed 'in the absence of man', ontologically implies the issue of the subject, and more especially of the subject in process" (p. 15, own translation). Here, it is relevant to consider two intertwined moments: a) the photographic statement in the act/event where the photograph takes place and b) the photographic statement in the act/event of reading, that is, in the act of the consumption (reception/reading) of an image. In this process, three subjects interact: a) the photographer – the author of the statement; b) the photographed subject – the object of the photographer's discourse; and c) the reader of the image – the predicted reader, projected.

Every statement carries a meaning, rendering it a discursive project that seeks to fulfill a purpose, whose enunciator always makes discursive choices that disclose value judgments about the photographed object and leave clues to direct interpretation. From the combinations of semiotic resources, a photographic statement creates an effect of meaning: the author-photographer locates

Cad. Pesqui. (Fund. Carlos Chagas), São Paulo, v. 54, e10073, 2024, e-ISSN 1980-5314

6

himself or herself as someone who captures a certain situation/object at a particular moment and creates, via perspective/prominence based on light techniques, shadows, framing, etc., a situation/object of discourse that comprises an enunciative-discursive whole (photography).

To illustrate this discussion, we refer to the enunciated photographs of one of the most recognized Brazilian photographers, Sebastião Salgado, whose work, in addition to being a worldwide reference in productions in the field of arts, can be read as social denunciations. One of his collections of photographs is entirely composed of black and white representations, where colors foster feelings of sadness and appeal evidenced by the people or places they capture, recurrently showing the poverty, hunger and lack of basic conditions in Brazil.

Therefore, not only colors but also the other semioses that are part of the modalization act in the production of meanings. Thus, modality represents the choices of image composition and reflects the ideals of the author regarding the message that should be received by a reader, i.e., the resources that are used to ensure the communicative purposes of the imagetic text, ranging from a lower to a higher degree of credibility. These resources are called modality markers and, according to Kress and Leeuwen (1996/2006), are characterized by: a) representation; b) contextualization; c) color saturation; d) color modulation; e) color differentiation; f) depth; g) illumination; and h) brightness. Regarding our analysis of the selected photographs, we will address four of these markers/resources, namely, contextualization, color saturation, illumination, and color differentiation:

i. Contextualization: refers to the presence or absence of a background, i.e., "a scale running from the absence of background to the most fully articulated and detailed background" (Kress & Leeuwen, 1996/2006, p. 161). According to the authors, the greater the level of detail in the background, the greater the degree of contextualization of an image or of those represented in it. A medium degree of contextualization can occur with an overexposure of brightness or with dimness, when some understandable details, certain marks, are seen, while the lowest level entails a total lack of visualization, "the background may merely show an irregular pattern of light and shade, or a field of unmodulated colour, or black, or white" (p. 161).

ii. Color saturation: this includes total color saturation up to the absence of color, that is, it ranges from the "scale from the most intensely saturated or 'pure' manifestations of a colour to its softest, most 'pale' or 'pastel', or dull and dark manifestations, and, ultimately, to complete desaturation, to black and white" (Kress & Leeuwen, 1996/2006, p. 233). Thus, a difference in saturation also has sensory impacts: the most saturated colors are vibrating and exuberant and may even be exaggerated, while the absence of saturation can give a cooler, repressed or neutral atmosphere.

iii. Illumination: "a scale running from the fullest representation of the play of light and shade to its absence." (Kress & Leeuwen, 1996/2006, p. 162). Hence, the participants who are represented in an image receive different types of illumination, depending on their source. According to Kress and Leeuwen (1996/2006), correct illumination can cause certain shadow contours to impact the objects and people in images.

iv. Color differentiation: colors can stem from a single monochromatic palette or can be present in great variations that start from the primary colors. Colors have a potential sensory effect and by themselves, within a given culture, can represent different meanings.

Cad. Pesqui. (Fund. Carlos Chagas), São Paulo, v. 54, e10073, 2024, e-ISSN 1980-5314

7

Exploring these highlighted resources is a relevant didactic strategy for the critical reading of imagetic productions. According to Machado (2000, p. 5, own translation),

> The photograph is the technological, conceptual and ideological basis of all contemporary media and, for this reason, to understand it, to define it, is also to understand and define the semiotic strategies, the models of construction and perception, the support structures of all contemporary production with visual and auditory signs, especially that which is completed through technical mediation.

Accordingly, teaching practices should address the technical, conceptual and ideological issues that circumscribe the photography genre. Exploring these issues may represent a strategy for the formation of readers who understand that photography is "a practically infinite range of intervention possibilities, both in the production plane . . . and in the planes of circulation and social consumption of a photograph" (Müller-Pohle, 1985, as cited in Machado, 2000, p. 16, own translation).

Moreover, Canelo (2014, pp. 109-110, own translation) emphasizes that

> . . . the meaning that we attribute (and not that we "find") in the images is, as a rule, unstable. However, an informed spectator will always make a richer activation of his gaze by the way he contextualizes an image through the information or knowledge he already has. In addition, it is common for an image to acquire autonomy; that becomes a reality in itself – as an icon of a particular time, of a social type, of an idea. Although it begins by articulating the original that it represents, it may gain a meaning beyond this connection. The etching of Che Guevara's face in black on a red background, for example, means much more than the representation of the historical or individual subject. But, despite this capacity for autonomy, an image does not appear alone, naturally. There is always a human eye behind the machine; there are always intentions, desires, and personal motivations guiding the capture of a moment.

Thus, defining photography as a genre implies considering the conditions of a photograph's production, circulation and reception, as well as its compositional characteristics, thematic content and enunciative purposes. In addition, it is important to consider the textual support and the effects of meanings that are raised by the figuration of a photograph in the context of enunciation.

Discussing the process of producing meanings, Rose (2007) emphasizes that images are neither neutral nor innocent, as they imply the cultural meanings, social practices and power relations relatively to what is portrayed or made invisible or perceived/interpreted by an audience. The author suggests that these meanings/senses can be analyzed from three locations: the place of the production of an image, the place of the image itself and the place(s) where it is seen by various audiences. This covers the context of production (choices made by producers), the product itself (the compositional organization) and the subject-spectators (their ways of conceiving the world and relating it to the imagetic production). Furthermore, the author highlights three related analytical modalities: technological (technical/technological resources used for production), compositional (formal strategies, e.g., content, color and spatial organization) and social (range of economic and social policies, institutions and practices that surround an image and through which it is seen and used).

Cad. Pesqui. (Fund. Carlos Chagas), São Paulo, v. 54, e10073, 2024, e-ISSN 1980-5314

8

Complementing the above, Canelo (2014, p. 10, own translation) proposes that the reading of a photograph involves several issues:

> First, to take a photo is to select a photo. Who takes it, in what space and with what intentions are relevant pieces in the reading. Just as the thing in itself matters, the object photographed: the details, the frame, the pose of the subject, as well as the subject's gaze in front of the camera; equally important is the perspective of the photographer, as well as the other elements that contribute to the composition, such as visual strategies, in which we can include elements as basic as the use of color or light. In addition to these elements, which affect the representation strategies, we should not fail to look for the questions posed by the image.

Clearly, the interpretive trajectory of photographs is notably complex, since there are several issues involved. According to Silva (2010), it is important to provide the contextualization of a work, present a photographic statement that is selected for reading, and address the configuration of the social audience of the relevant interaction (photographers, photographed characters, and photograph readers) as well as the discursive-axiological framework of the photographic statement.

While interpretation does not depend on predefined methods, designing strategies to direct the reading of photographs in the classroom may favor a more systematic process for a discursive approach to imagetic production. As Brait (2004, p. 47, own translation) suggests,

> . . . the framing, the dimensioning of light and other resources of the photographic language work discursively, that is, they do not have a value in themselves as signs of a system of communication and signification but indicate the choices of a subject, taking into account the discourse to be constructed and the effects of meaning that must be produced in the enunciate.

To illustrate the issues previously presented, three photographs were selected for our analysis, as will be seen below.

Methodology and analysis

With the aim of presenting a possible multisemiotic analysis and providing subsides for pedagogical practices regarding the reading of photographs in the classroom, three images, taken from the platform Unsplash, were selected. Besides, it is important to highlight that these images are in the public domain, which allows their use for the purposes of this analysis.

It is important to point out that the discussion present in this article is directed towards the final arrangement of the photographs, thus, already edited and post-produced. Nevertheless, work in this genre can also be performed at different stages, i.e., capturing and editing, when there is a proposal for the production of these texts in the school space. Accordingly, our analysis follows.

Cad. Pesqui. (Fund. Carlos Chagas), São Paulo, v. 54, e10073, 2024, e-ISSN 1980-5314

9

Figure 1
Four women carrying bunches of bananas

Source: Zeyn Afuang, Unsplash (2017).

Figure 1 shows a family made of five people: allegedly, a mother and four children (three looking straight at the camera and one in the back). Taking into consideration the scenario, it can be inferred that the location of the photo is the production/working space of this family. The publication date of the photograph is May 15, 2017, and the keywords associated with this photograph, which were annexed by Zeyn Afuang, responsible for the image, are: "family photos", "Vietnamese family", "work". In general, after a preliminary analysis, it is possible to observe that the family belongs to a lower economic class due to the physical space and clothes portrayed as well as the lack of an appropriate tool for the transportation of the fruits. The photograph allows the problematization of child labor since the children are performing some manual work in order to help the mother. Such issues refer to the conditions of production of the image itself: we have a photograph captured not only to depict the reality of families in this region, but also to help pondering about the spaces and conditions in which they live. The semiosis explored hereupon also act in this context of reception of the photograph.

Considering the semiosis, contextualization and illumination, in particular, stand out. Contextualization is observed in a scale that ranges from the presence of a background to the complete absence of one (Kress & Leeuwen, 1996/2006). Thus, it can be said that there is a low degree of contextualization in the aforementioned image since the background is built after the shadow of the room depicted, in which there is no illumination. Therefore, the proposal highlights the participants of the female sex.

Illumination is also based on a similar scale, from the maximum presence of light to its absence (Kress & Leeuwen, 1996/2006). In Figure 1, the presence of illumination is only observed in the place in which the women in the foreground are located. Meanwhile, the rest of the room is in a penumbra. It can be understood that the light has its origin in the door or in the window that leads to the room. As a result, the following question emerges, which can even be asked in the classroom: why was the photograph taken in this environment without the proper illumination? In order to answer such question, it is necessary to bring back both semiosis, contextualization and illumination, once they are combined, here, in a totality that constitutes meaning.

Cad. Pesqui. (Fund. Carlos Chagas), São Paulo, v. 54, e10073, 2024, e-ISSN 1980-5314

10

According to Kress and Leeuwen (1996/2006), the way in which illumination is used in images represents different meanings. Often, it can be used to create shadows and shapes in the "objects" shown. In this case, illumination allows the family represented to stand out, assuming the focus of the image. Unlike the enunciative purpose of memorial record, characteristic of the photography genre, the discussion, here, can be directed to themes connected to social issues, such as: child labor, conditions of householder women in situation of social vulnerability, effectiveness of public policies directed at children, fundamental rights to housing, etc. Besides, other questions might be asked regarding topics such as housing conditions (access to electricity, piped water, etc.).

According to Barbosa (2007), photography has the potential to expand the cognitive universe of subjects who are used to observing photographs in more detail, whether in an informative or artistic context. For this author, "photography, then, would go beyond the aesthetic function and would be the object of information, collection, and historical and cultural heritage of a society" (2007, p. 1, own translation).

Analyses such as this allow us to infer that the choice of recording a given image is vastly influenced by a great deal of subjectivity of the one who produces it: "Every photograph has its origin in the desire of an individual who was motivated to freeze in an image a given aspect of the real at a certain place and time" (Kossoy, 2001, p. 36, own translation). Thus, even if it seems to be a mere photograph that focuses on a particular reality or event, such a production emerges from the purposes and choices of its author. Although this issue is subject to the author, it is also influenced by the viewer, by the cultural background and by the sensitivity of the subject who interacts with the photograph; that is, the meanings are produced from the perspective of the one who sees/reads.

Figure 2
Homeless man and his wheelchair

Source: Jon Tyson, Unsplash (2020).

Figure 2, published in September 21, 2020, depicts the situation of a worker. The photograph, produced under the responsibility of Jon Tyson, can be described with the following keywords: "homeless", "wheelchair", "vehicle", "transportation".

Regarding the physical context of the photo, there are no further information. However, it can be inferred that it is a public space or any other external environment, once glass doors can

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11

be seen in the background of the image. In order to obtain a deeper analysis of this message, it is important to highlight the following semiosis: illumination and color differentiation. Illumination contributes to the construction of meanings, as the clarity makes it possible to highlight a person lying on the ground and a wheelchair, with a blurred background.

The photo was taken in a partially diagonal position, allowing the identification of paraphernalia (bags) of the character depicted. The choices made by the producer are notably relevant to the process of producing meanings. Unlike other choices made – pieces of dirty clothing – in the aforementioned photograph, the blanket shows a clear appearance. The illumination allows us to see that in the "black leather bag", which appears in the middle of the photo, there is a camping tent, which is linked to the descriptor "homeless".

Beyond that, the colors – of orangish shades – differ from the colors usually used in this kind of production once earthy, grayish, and black shades are chosen.

In the analysis of Figure 2, it is possible to problematize issues connected to the conditions of the homeless population and the people with disabilities, as well as the use of public places and the access to the rights provided for in legislation. Besides, some questions may be raised: what does the presence of the wheelchair suggest? Why would the person be in the place depicted? Usually, pictures of homeless people are depicted with the use of unhealthy spaces with deplorable appearances. Why is the described situation different? In the image, there is a bag with a tent; what can it indicate?

This interpretation does not measure the exact meaning to the photographer at the time of capturing the photograph, but rather seeks to explore possible readings of the observed semioses and how these can be used in the classroom for reflection on current social structures. According to Nascimento et al. (2012, p. 547, own translation), this kind of analysis does not apply only to photographs but also to work with any imagetic text because the awareness process that is performed during the reading of these texts "applies both to the analysis of texts with wide reach, such as pamphlets of political campaigns . . . or news of scientific popularization, and texts with a more restricted audience, such as photos in family albums or photos on virtual social networks", since these multisemiotic texts have semioses/elements that are "powerful tools of meaning and construction of reality".

Furthermore, Barbosa (2007, p. 6, own translation) points out that:

Photograph brings with it a plurality of meanings, and from this different interpretations are born. For these interpretations, attention should be paid to elements that are internal and external to an image. Some elements concern the image producer, such as his motivation to capture the image, his cultural background, the social and historical context in which he is inserted, as well as the techniques used and the technology available at the time. Other elements are linked to the receiver, his social and cultural context, sensitivity, and ability to analyze photographs in a coherent way from the practice and familiarity with the study of images.

Thus, in the context of the teaching and learning process, it is important to include photo reading practices to allow opportunities for students to move from perception to interpretation. Perception occurs in the capture of the image through the senses, the observation of shapes, colors and contents; interpretation is of analytical nature, entailing that the imagetic content is problematized, translated, contextualized, i.e., the technical and conceptual aspects are considered

Cad. Pesqui. (Fund. Carlos Chagas), São Paulo, v. 54, e10073, 2024, e-ISSN 1980-5314

12

in/for the process of producing meanings. In this process, cultural issues, conceptions, life stories and subjectivities influence the analyses and interpretative trajectories of photographic records. Reading a photograph therefore implies a series of knowledge (technical, linguistic-semiotic, cultural, historical, etc.).

Figure 3
Child with part of the face hidden by cloth

Source: Muhammad-taha Ibrahim, Unsplash (2018).

Figure 3 was published in the platform by Muhammad-taha Ibrahim, in November 27, 2018, with the following keywords: "child", "monochromatic", "laundry", "portrait". In this scene, it can be observed the image of a child smiling, with their face partially covered by a piece of patterned fabric, causing a shadowy effect on the left side of the character depicted. For Barbosa (2007), despite the similarities of a photograph with the original situation registered, a register can never be an exact copy of the situation: "The photograph alone is unique in its existence, and has new dimensions and new characteristics that differentiates it in shape, time, and space from the object photographed" (p. 22, own translation).

Here, Figure 3 is in black and white, indicating that the photographer opted for the total desaturation of the image (Kress & Leeuwen, 1996/2006). In this scale, mixing shades of gray, black, and white, the contrast that comes from this variation stands out among the elements that form the scene, with no color saturation nor brightness/lighting increase. The absence of colors in this type of image is quite common since it is possible to achieve a sensory effect that induces emotions. According to Vitor (2012), the choice of black and white generates an effect that focus on the representation of ideas, once it differs from the natural way of perceiving reality. This choice suggests a capacity of investment with the situation represented because the use of different colors may compromise the information intended to be proposed, distracting the attention of the person observing the image and diluting the essence of the message.

The scenario chosen for this register presents characteristics of a culture typical to specific communities in which pieces of clothes are dried in clotheslines in the yard. In the background, one observes a house that seems to be located in a rural environment or that comprises an area free

of building, in which the presence of plants can be noted. The context might suggest housework, once the house in the back looks big, possibly indicating the residence of employers.

Since the background is not presented in details but has some elements that do not allow it to be a completely black or white background, the contextualization (Kress & Leeuwen, 1996/2006) of this photograph is medium. However, this reading requires technical knowledge from the reader-viewer. For Machado (2000, p. 10, own translation),

> A photograph only exists when there is an explicit intention to produce it by one or more operators and holders of specific know-how, and when there is an immense technical apparatus to produce it (camera, lens, film, lighting, photometer – whether built-in or separate from the camera –, darkroom, chemical baths, various chronometers for time recording, etc.), an apparatus developed after several centuries of scientific research and produced on an industrial scale by a specific segment of the market.

In the school context, the purpose is not to train students to be professionals in photography but to be readers who can understand that the choices made by professionals are indicative of meaning.

In Figure 3, it is possible to propose discussions related to child housework, access to education as a right, guarantees of opportunities to the black population, etc. It is interesting to raise discussion regarding the choices made by the photographer: what are the discursive intentions of the photographer when making the photo in black and white? What would be the motivation behind the choice of a black child? What feelings and reflections did she aim at after this choice? Why part of the face of the child was covered by a piece of fabric? What are the messages that can be formed after this composition? It is possible to ponder about social classes, once the scenario might indicate a lower socioeconomic condition, and about race, since the participant represented is not white and the world is pervaded by racial issues.

Finally, the images analyzed here have great potential for both multisemiotic analysis of their composition and for discussions that can be fostered by such material. Indeed, official documents, such as that of the BNCC, underscore working with multimodal genres:

> Identify and analyze the effects of meaning resulting from the choices and formatting of images (framing, angle/vector, color, brightness, contrast), their sequencing (arrangement and transition, camera movements, remix) and performance – body movements, gesture, occupation of scenic space and sound elements (intonation, soundtrack, sampling, etc.) that relate in it. (Ministério da Educação, 2018, p. 73, own translation).

This document also draws attention to the need for schools to work on Temas Contemporâneos Transversais [Transversal Contemporary Themes] (TCT), i.e., the themes that have social relevance and should be addressed to develop a more conscious and critical training of students by dealing with subjects such as health, family and social life, the rights of children and adolescents, food and nutrition education, etc. Thus, in addition to promoting the reading and critical analysis of texts composed of elements that move beyond the verbal, the use of photographs also contributes to a discussion of important topics for the development of student citizenship.

Cad. Pesqui. (Fund. Carlos Chagas), São Paulo, v. 54, e10073, 2024, e-ISSN 1980-5314

14

Final considerations

Based on our discussions throughout this article, there is an increasing importance of and need for schools to systematize their work with multimodal and multisemiotic texts, since the circulation of these texts has increased exponentially in recent years. Therefore, it is no longer sufficient for schools to offer training based only on the reading and production of verbal and/or printed texts because the hybridization of textual genres and the emergence of new genres in digital media have re-signified social interactions, requiring new reading and textual production skills.

Thus, it is necessary to design new pedagogical strategies that can cope with the new demands of reading and text production. For example, a teacher can develop work with genres that do not require the use of so many tools or in an advanced domain of digital technologies, such as the photographic analysis that we have suggested. Nevertheless, while the proposal presented has contemplated a textual genre with wide social circulation, this genre has not always been subject to a didactic approach that could adequately address the complexity of photographic production.

Evaluating photographs from the perspectives of textual genre and of an interactionist, theoretical proposal of language presupposes that one considers the context of production and circulation, the reception of discourses, and how interlocutors dialog with other texts. Exploring photographs as a didactic resource thus implies considering the semiotic resources that make up their production and contribute to the construction of their enunciative purpose.

In addition, important discussions about the thematic content explored by photographs and their cultural and ideological dimensions can be fostered in classes. Considering photography in the classroom therefore enables articulation with the social contexts of students, helping their citizen formation. In this sense, we hope that this study can contribute to a discussion on the subject, either to elicit educational practices that are better aligned with the demands of information society or to enhance studies on multisemiotic productions and their modes of organization and functioning.

Based on the issues addressed in this article, we reiterate that work with photography in the classroom must include dimensions that extend beyond the explicit (person or object photographed), since the discursive choices by a photographer suggest interpretive cues, reveal value judgments about a photographed object and impel the subject-reader to a responsive attitude. Reading a photograph as a statement implies considering its dialog with other texts, the semiotic cues left by its producer for the construction of the discursive project, the reception by its readers, the support in which this production circulates, and its thematic content.

Our analysis is based on our selection of analytical categories that illustrate the process of semiotic constitution in the chosen photographs to problematize the compositional organization of this textual genre, thereby demonstrating that the choices made by a photographer are not neutral. That is, we have shown how photographs integrate a discursive context and cannot be read in a way that is dissociated from that context, i.e., readers' knowledge of the world is relevant to the process of producing meanings.

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Cad. Pesqui. (Fund. Carlos Chagas), São Paulo, v. 54, e10073, 2024, e-ISSN 1980-5314

15

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16

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The data underlying the research text are reported in the article.

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17