


EDUCATION THAT INTERROGATES – THE ACT OF READING AS A LIBERATING PRACTICE AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE FORMATION OF THE SUBJECT FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF PAULO FREIRE

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ABSTRACT

This article proposes a critical reflection on the act of reading as a liberating practice, from the perspective of Paulo Freire and his defense of an education committed to the formation of critical consciousness. Because, for Freire, reading is not just decoding words, but interpreting the world in its complexity and contradictions. And it is precisely in this process of reading the world that space is opened for autonomy, listening and problematization of reality. Throughout the research, we discussed how critical reading can become a path of emancipation for historically silenced subjects. Because it is through dialogue and active listening that the word gains political and transformative meaning. That said, we ask: How can the act of reading, from Paulo Freire's perspective, be conceived as a liberating practice capable of promoting the construction of critical consciousness in the formation of the subject? For this, the theoretical centrality orbits around the works of Freire (1967; 1974; 1979; 1985; 2000; 2011), dialoguing with Piaget (1983), Faundez (1985), Vygotsky (1991; 2003; 2010), McLaren (1992; 1997; 2005), Cortella (1996; 2017), Gadotti (1996; 1998; 2018), Kohan (2005; 2020), hooks (2010; 2013), Giroux (2011; 2013; 2014; 2022), Romão (2008), Torres (2008), Gutiérrez (2008), Garcia (2008), Gramsci (1999; 2000; 2001), Bourdieu (n.d.), among others. The research is qualitative from Minayo (2007), descriptive and bibliographic according to Gil (2008) and using the comprehensive analytical perspective of Weber (1984). The findings of the research revealed that the act of reading, from Freire's perspective, is an exercise in unveiling the world that enables the subject to recognize himself as a historical agent in contexts of oppression. Critical reading promotes displacements of consciousness, breaks with passivity and strengthens intellectual autonomy. It was found that, when mediated in a dialogical and problematizing

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way, reading can generate emancipatory formative processes. Thus, the text ceases to be just an object to be deciphered to become a territory of dispute and transformation. Reading, therefore, constitutes an ethical, political and pedagogical practice of liberation.

Keywords: Critical Reading. Conscience. Liberating Education. Autonomy.

INTRODUCTION

READING AS AN ACT OF LIBERATION: THE FORMATION OF CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS FROM PAULO FREIRE'S PERSPECTIVE

Reading, more than a technical instrument, is a political act that reveals and transforms the world. In societies marked by historical oppressions, reading is a gesture of resistance, a movement of approximation between word and reality, between subject and context. For Paulo Freire, "[...] reading a text requires not only the reading of the words, but also the interpretative reading of the context" (2001, p. 158). In the same vein, bell hooks argues that "[...] school should not be a place where students are indoctrinated [...] but rather a place where they learn to open their minds and engage in rigorous study, and to think critically" (2013, p. 45). Therefore, it is at the intersection between text and world that the transformative power of the act of reading emerges.

If before adult literacy was treated and carried out in an authoritarian way, centered on the magical understanding of the word, a word donated by the educator to the illiterate; If before the texts generally offered as reading to students hid much more than they revealed reality, now, on the contrary, literacy as an act of knowledge, as a creative act and as a political act is an effort to read the world and the word. [...] Now it is no longer possible to text without context. [...] But the important thing, in renouncing 'innocence' and rejecting cleverness, is that in the new journey which begins towards the oppressed, he should throw off all authoritarian marks and begin to believe in the masses of the people. No longer just talk to them or about them, but listen to them, so that you can talk to them (Freire, 1982, p. 15-16).

However, it is common for the act of reading to be reduced to a mere functional skill, detached from the existential and collective experience of the subject. However, reading is not neutral: it implies choices, interpretations and ethical positions before the world. According to Vygotsky, "[...] language, the very medium through which reflection and the elaboration of experience occurs, is an extremely personal process and, at the same time, a profoundly social process" (1991, p. 84). Peter McLaren adds that "[...] Critical pedagogy invites us to see reading as an act of social transformation, not just as an act of consuming texts" (1992, p. 113). Thus, reading is a gesture of subjectivation and insurgency.

Therefore, when we understand reading as an act of listening and reinterpreting reality, its role in the constitution of critical consciousness becomes evident. Internalized language structures the higher processes of thought, as Vygotsky argues: "[...] words [...] are the basic units of human consciousness" (2010, p. 197). Freire, on the other hand, emphasizes that "[...] critical consciousness implies going beyond the spontaneous sphere

of the apprehension of reality to a critical position" (1996, p. 158). Thus, it is in contact with the word – written and spoken – that the subject is formed, recognized and mobilized.

Human consciousness, formed based on manipulative activity, naturally acquires a new character, radically different from the psychological processes of animals. [...] Words, as elements of speech, are correlative of consciousness, they are the basic units of human consciousness and not correlative of thought. It will be clear how the concept of consciousness, as formulated in modern psychology, differs radically from previous notions, which saw consciousness as a primary subjective state, devoid of concrete content and historical development (Vygotsky, 2010, p. 197).

Therefore, this research is justified by recognizing the urgency of rescuing the act of reading as a practice of emancipation in a context marked by pedagogies of training¹⁷ and neutralization of thought. Bell hooks states that "[...] education as a practice of freedom is a way of teaching that anyone can learn" (2013, p. 17). In a complementary way, Giroux warns us that "[...] without a critical pedagogy of reading, the school becomes an apparatus for the reproduction of¹⁸ inequalities" (2011, p. 24). To investigate reading as liberation is, therefore, to reposition the subject at the center of educational action.

The centrality of the act of reading as a liberating practice acquires special importance in the contemporary educational scenario, permeated by technocratic discourses and pedagogical practices aimed at performativity¹⁹. It is precisely in this

¹⁷ Rescuing the act of reading as a practice of emancipation is a necessary political and pedagogical gesture in the face of an educational scenario marked by pedagogies of training, which prioritize mechanical repetition, apparent neutrality and blind obedience to the detriment of critical reflection and the autonomy of the subjects. In this logic, reading is emptied of its transformative power and reduced to a technical, functional and decontextualized skill. Paulo Freire, however, breaks with this perspective by stating that "[...] reading a text requires not only the reading of the words, but also the interpretative reading of the context" (Freire, 2001, p. 158), emphasizing that reading is always situated, historical and loaded with meanings. In the same way, bell hooks argues that teaching to read critically is teaching how to think, that is, to disobey the hegemonic and naturalized logics of domination (Hooks, 2013). Thus, to recover reading as an emancipatory praxis is also to defend a school that forms subjects capable of interpreting, denouncing and transforming the world. See: FREIRE, Paulo. *The importance of the act of reading: in three articles that complement each other*. 23. ed. São Paulo: Cortez, 2001; HOOKS, bell. *Teaching to transgress: education as a practice of freedom*. São Paulo: WMF Martins Fontes, 2013.

¹⁸ When detached from a critical pedagogy, the school tends to become an apparatus for the reproduction of social, cultural, and economic inequalities, naturalizing hierarchies and silencing the experiences of historically marginalized subjects. From this perspective, the curriculum becomes an instrument for the conservation of the current order, and the act of reading is reduced to technical decoding, detached from the lived reality. Reading, instead of promoting critical awareness, becomes a mechanism of adjustment and conformism. Henry Giroux warns that, without a critical pedagogy of reading, "[...] the school becomes an apparatus for the reproduction of inequalities" (Giroux, 2011, p. 24), functioning as an instance of ideological control and symbolic exclusion. Therefore, rescuing the political dimension of reading is a condition for breaking with the cycle of reproduction and inaugurating liberating educational practices. See: GIROUX, Henry A. *On critical pedagogy*. New York: Continuum, 2011.

¹⁹ Pedagogical practices aimed at performativity have reduced education to a set of measurable techniques, submitted to the logic of performance, efficiency and productivity, to the detriment of the ethical, critical and humanizing formation of the subjects. In this logic, the act of reading is instrumentalized as a mere evaluable

context that the rescue of reading as a construction of meaning and consciousness becomes a political gesture of resistance. For Giroux, "[...] education should empower students to become cultural and political agents who can transform the conditions that shape their lives" (2014, p. 39). In the same vein, McLaren points out that "[...] critical reading, instead of training, incites the desire for intervention and contestation" (2005, p. 79). Therefore, to discuss the act of reading is to discuss the very direction of school and democracy.

In this sense, it is urgent to train subjects who, when reading the world, are capable of denouncing and reinventing it. Critical reading breaks with silencing and establishes the possibility of reexistence. According to bell hooks: "[...] teaching to think critically is the most subversive act that a teacher can practice within a system that only wants conformism" (2013, p. 89). In addition, Gramsci warns that "[...] every human being is a philosopher, because every human being thinks and interprets the world around him" (1999, p. 12). Reading, then, is the instrument through which this thought is cultivated, shared, and politicized.

The critical reading of the world is a *pedagogical-political what-to-do* [emphasis added] that is inseparable from the political-pedagogical what-to-do, that is, from the political action that involves the organization of popular groups and classes to intervene in the reinvention of society. The denunciation and proclamation critically made in the process of reading the world give rise to the dream for which we fight. This dream or project that is being profiled in the process of critical analysis of reality that we denounce is to the transformative practice of society what the design of the piece that the worker is going to produce and that he has in his head before making it is to the production of the piece (Freire, 2000, p. 21).

The discussion about reading as a practice of emancipation is supported by a broad critical theoretical field that articulates language, culture and power. Paulo Freire inaugurates this debate by stating that "[...] the reading of the world precedes the reading of the word" (1982, p. 11). Vygotsky, on the other hand, contributes by understanding that "[...] thought is realized in language [...] and consciousness is built within verbal interaction"

competence, detached from its formative and political dimension. The school, in this model, becomes a space of control and training, molding bodies and minds to meet the demands of the market, and not the needs of emancipation. Henry Giroux criticizes this logic when he states that "[...] education should empower students to become cultural and political agents who can transform the conditions that shape their lives" (Giroux, 2014, p. 39). Thus, breaking with the pedagogy of performativity is a fundamental step to rescue the transformative power of the act of reading. See: GIROUX, Henry A. *Neoliberalism's war on higher education*. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2014.

(2003, p. 123). These contributions support a dialectical and contextual understanding of reading as a space for the production of meanings and subjectivities.

In Freire's pedagogy, the act of reading goes beyond the limits of the classroom and grammar. It is, above all, an ethical attitude towards life, which is inaugurated in attentive listening to the other and the context. Freire states that "[...] there is no reading of the text without reading the context" (2000, p. 35). This reading of the world is, according to him, what makes it possible to read the word with density and meaning. As Gateotti reinforces, "[...] Freire teaches us that the act of reading is an act of love for the world, as it implies a look committed to its transformation" (1996, p. 27). Thus, reading is an exercise in active listening and social responsibility.

Reading as an instrument of critical emancipation is not a concept restricted to Paulo Freire, although it finds its most radical and ethical expression in him. Other thinkers dialogue with this conception, strengthening a critical and plural view of the act of reading. Vygotsky, for example, observes that "[...] learning awakens a series of internal development processes that can operate only when the child interacts with people in his environment" (1991, p. 61). Gramsci, on the other hand, states that "[...] each relationship of hegemony is necessarily a pedagogical relationship" (2001, p. 25), pointing to the political role of education and reading in the dispute of meanings and power.

For the world of education, this area of hegemony dispute is essential, as it implies understanding or not the real mechanisms of functioning of society. [...] Education needs to ensure a space for critical reflection and analysis of cultural dynamics. Today, the struggle of corporate interests to have a diversified reading of the world, including corporate interests themselves, is wide open. The attacks on Paulo Freire's legacy and the prohibition of the discussion of social dynamics in school under the pretext of being a political one, are part of this clash (Gadotti & Carnoy, 2018, p. 336).

Given this, this research has as its main objective to investigate how the act of reading, according to the Freirean perspective and related authors, can be understood as a liberating and formative practice of critical consciousness. Such a proposal implies a critical review of the traditional models of teaching reading, centered on technical skills and emptied of political meaning. According to Giroux, "[...] critical reading is a necessary condition for the exercise of democratic citizenship and moral imagination" (2011, p. 58). McLaren adds that "[...] to read critically means to rewrite the text of reality, to reconfigure the power relations that the text hides" (1992, p. 117). Thus, the objective of this reflection is to contribute to educational practices that put reading at the service of liberation.

In this sense, the act of reading is configured as praxis, that is, an action that reflects and transforms the world. Critical pedagogy, in its different aspects, is based on the idea that reading not only reflects reality, but reconfigures it from the perspective of the historical subject. Bell hooks argues that "[...] teaching is always a form of intervention in the world" (2013, p. 43), and reading is one of the most powerful forms of this intervention. Freire complements by saying that "[...] no one educates anyone, no one educates himself, men educate each other, mediated by the world" (1974, p. 68). Therefore, reading is an act of encounter with the other and with oneself, a gesture of rupture with passivity.

It is in the directivity of education, this vocation that it has, as a specifically human action, of 'addressing' itself to dreams, ideals, utopias and objectives, that what I have been calling the politicized education is found. [...] It is impossible, in fact, the neutrality of education. [...] Education does not become political because of the decision of this or that educator. It is political. [...] There is a total incompatibility between the human world of speech, perception, intelligibility, communicability, action, observation, comparison, verification, search, choice, decision, rupture, ethics and the possibility of its transgression and neutrality no matter what (Freire, 2011, p. 74).

From what has been exposed, the need to reposition reading as a political right emerges, as a practice that forms subjects capable of understanding and transforming reality. It is not only about teaching how to read, but about creating conditions for the subjects who read to also be authors of their stories. As Cortella points out: "[...] it is not enough to transmit information, it is necessary to provoke understanding" (1996, p. 33). And, according to Freire, "[...] no one is the subject of the autonomy of others" (2011, p. 26). Given this, the present research is guided by the following question: how can the act of reading, from Paulo Freire's perspective, be conceived as a liberating practice capable of promoting the construction of critical consciousness in the formation of the subject?

BETWEEN MEANINGS AND CONTRADICTIONS: THE QUALITATIVE AND COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH AS A PATH TO READING AS A LIBERATING PRAXIS

The present research took a qualitative approach, as outlined by Minayo (2007), as it seeks to understand the meanings attributed to reading as a liberating practice and formative of critical consciousness. This methodological choice is justified by the centrality of the subject in the production of knowledge, since the act of reading is understood as a cultural, symbolic and historically situated practice. As Minayo explains: "[...] scientificity has to be thought of as a regulative idea of high abstraction and not as a synonym for

models and norms to be followed" (2007, p. 12). In addition, the author argues that "[...] social research is done by approximation, but, as it progresses, it elaborates increasingly precise orientation criteria" (2007, p. 12), reinforcing the rigor of qualitative research.

Qualitative research answers very particular questions. In the social sciences, it is concerned with a level of reality that cannot or should not be quantified. That is, it works with the universe of meanings, motives, aspirations, beliefs, values and attitudes. This set of human phenomena is understood here as part of social reality, as human beings are distinguished not only by acting, but by thinking about what they do and by interpreting their actions within and from the reality lived and shared with their peers (Minayo, 2006, p. 21).

Therefore, the research focused on the interpretation of the meanings produced around the act of reading as a practice of resistance, autonomy and transformation. Weber's (1949) comprehensive approach served as the basis for this understanding, since, for him, "[...] every social action is a behavior to which the subject attributes meaning" (1949, p. 110). Thus, the objective was not the generalization of data, but the apprehension of the intentionality behind the discursive practices about reading. As Weber states: "[...] to understand means to capture the evidence of the meaning of an activity" (1949, p. 90), which is in line with Freire's proposal of reading the world as a reading loaded with historical and political meanings.

The research is also descriptive, according to Gil's (2008) classification, as it sought to map and interpret how different authors understand the act of reading in its political-formative dimension. The description was based on theoretical works that critically discuss the links between language, consciousness and ideology. According to Gil, "[...] descriptive research is that which aims to study the characteristics of a group [...] and offer a new view of the problem" (2008, p. 29). Also according to the author, "[...] some descriptive research [...] intends to determine the nature of the relationship between variables, approaching explanatory research" (p. 29), which demonstrates the interpretative power of this approach.

The choice of a bibliographic methodology was also intentional, given the objective of articulating classic and contemporary authors in a critical reflection. According to Gil (2008), "[...] bibliographic research fundamentally uses the contributions of several authors on a given subject" (p. 50). Minayo (2007) adds that "[...] theory is an integral part of the research process, it is not only at the beginning or at the end, but permeates the entire

investigative path" (p. 17). Thus, the analyzed texts were treated as symbolic objects that express worldviews, serving as sources of critical and emancipatory understanding.

Of disciplined, critical and broad bibliographic research: a) Disciplined because we must have a systematic practice – a clear criterion for choosing texts and authors. b) Critical because we need to establish a reflective dialogue between theories and other studies with the object of investigation chosen by us – a review cannot be dilettante, but needs to be attentive to the correlation between the proposed methods and the results found by other researchers. c) Broad because it must account for the current 'state' of knowledge about the problem – it is expected that the researcher knows how to say what is the consensus on the subject under debate and what is controversial; what is already known and what is still little known (Minayo, 2006, p. 36).

The analytical procedure followed a comprehensive orientation, in which the focus fell on the meanings attributed to reading in the works of the selected authors. The understanding was given by the articulation between context, discourse and intention. Weber (1949) already pointed out that "[...] current comprehension refers to the meaning directly aimed at by a subject in a concrete situation" (p. 110), which allows us to apprehend the situated and ideological character of reading. According to the author, "[...] actions are understandable to the extent that they reveal their subjective intentionality" (Weber, 1949, p. 90), reinforcing the centrality of the reading subject in the production of meanings.

The analysis was not restricted to the description of the contents, but aimed to understand the act of reading as a pedagogical and political praxis, according to Paulo Freire. For this reason, the selection of the theoretical corpus was intentional, aimed at critical and progressive authors such as Freire, Vygotsky, Gramsci, hooks, Giroux and McLaren, among others. Freire stated that "[...] there is no reading of the world that is neutral, every reading is a political act" (2000, p. 46). And, according to Gramsci, "[...] every educational act is always a relationship of hegemony, that is, of the formation of a new consciousness" (2001, p. 120). These premises guided the analysis of the central categories of the study.

The analytical categories of the research revolved around four axes: reading the world versus reading the word; critical awareness and autonomy; banking education versus problem-solving education; and the act of reading as resistance and liberation. These categories were extracted from the works studied and articulated with the objectives of the research. As Minayao points out: "[...] social research is carried out by successive approximations, in a construction that articulates empirical and theoretical categories"

(2007, p. 13). Therefore, the methodology sought to capture the dialectical movement between the concepts and the processes of subjectivation promoted by reading.

The dialogical articulation between theory and reality constituted the methodological axis of the analysis. Although the research did not carry out fieldwork or directly involve school actors, it sought to interpret discourses and practices through theoretical mediation. Paulo Freire emphasized that "[...] the critical reading of reality must be part of the educational process, and not an appendix" (1979, p. 34). And Gadotti adds: "[...] reading is, at the same time, a cognitive act and an act of militancy" (1996, p. 85), showing that the analysis of the act of reading must always start from concrete life.

The dialectical method, although not formally named, permeated the entire course of the research, since the critical look at social contradictions was central. As Gramsci recalls, "[...] education is the terrain where the struggle between the dominant and subaltern classes is fought" (1999, p. 112). And Paulo Freire teaches us that "[...] education as a practice of freedom is carried out in overcoming the contradictions that oppress the subject" (1967, p. 67). Thus, the analysis sought not only to interpret reading as an educational act, but to understand it as a counter-hegemonic action.

In summary, the dialectical method starts from the premise that, in nature, everything is related, transformed, and there is always a contradiction inherent in each phenomenon. In this type of method, in order to know a certain phenomenon or object, the researcher needs to study it in all its aspects, its relations and connections, without treating knowledge as something rigid, since everything in the world is always in constant change. [...] Dialectics provides the basis for a dynamic and totalizing interpretation of reality, since it establishes that social facts cannot be understood when considered in isolation, abstracted from their political, economic, cultural influences, etc. (Gil, 2008, p. 14).

Thus, it is important to highlight that the ethical-political commitment of the research is aligned with the proposal of social transformation and human emancipation. In this sense, reading was treated as a right and power, and not as a neutral technique. As Giroux summarizes: "[...] critical pedagogy requires that we see knowledge as a form of intervention in reality" (2011, p. 91). And bell hooks reinforces: "[...] teaching to read is teaching to dream of other possible worlds" (2010, p. 55). Therefore, the methodology adopted expresses not only a technical choice, but a position taken before the world.

THE ACT OF READING AS A LIBERATING PRACTICE AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE FORMATION OF THE SUBJECT FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF PAULO FREIRE AND INTERLOCUTORS

Reading, conceived as a social, ethical and political practice, assumes centrality in critical pedagogy by overcoming the technical reductionism that has historically imprisoned it. Freire states that "[...] the best way we have to make possible tomorrow something that is not possible to be done today, is to do today what can be done today" (2017, p. 9), emphasizing the power of the present as a space for transformative action. In addition to the decoding of signs, it is inscribed as a process of active construction of meanings and resignification of the lived world. As Gateotti emphasizes: "[...] reading is, therefore, more than deciphering the written code, it is understanding, interpreting, criticizing and transforming the world" (1996, p. 14). Likewise, McLaren states that "[...] reading should be understood as an insurgent act, an act that questions what is naturalized in texts and social practices" (2005, p. 83). Thus, the act of reading becomes an exercise in critical reflection and intervention in reality.

I am referring to the fact that the reading of the world always precedes the reading of the word and the reading of the latter implies the continuity of the reading of the former. [...] We can go further and say that the reading of the word is not only preceded by the reading of the world but by a certain way of 'writing' or 'rewriting' it, that is, of transforming it through our conscious practice. [...] They came to us through the reading of the world that popular groups made. Then, they returned to them, inserted in what I called and still call codifications, which are representations of reality (Freire, 1982, p. 22).

Consequently, critical reading is profoundly different from mechanical reading, which only reproduces the content without mobilizing consciousness. Freire warns that "[...] teaching democracy and, at the same time, considering popular participation as 'absurd and immoral' is contradictory" (1967, p. 19), evidencing the abyss between discourse and practice that critical reading helps to overcome. The latter limits the subject to passivity, while critical reading stimulates autonomous thinking. Giroux points out that "[...] reading critically is one of the fundamental tasks to resist cultural domestication and produce new meanings" (2011, p. 29). Cortella, on the other hand, warns us that "[...] the student who only reads to memorize, repeats, but does not understand; he becomes incapable of applying what he has learned in unprecedented situations" (1996, p. 33). Therefore, to form critical readers is to form subjects capable of understanding and transforming their own circumstances.

In this sense, critical pedagogy proposes an epistemological break with the traditional teaching of reading. Freire proposes "[...] to write history as a biography of man, so that it allows us to form an opinion about his future" (1967, p. 47), reinforcing that teaching to read is also teaching to dream collectively. Literacy, as advocated by critical authors, must be articulated with the historical awareness of the subjects and listening to their experiences. For Carnoy, "[...] teaching to read requires recognizing the student's everyday language as a legitimate starting point for the learning process" (2008, p. 19). McLaren, for his part, notes that "[...] the texts must be anchored in the student's world, because it is from this that reading becomes meaningful" (1992, p. 101). In this way, the reading process is rooted in the daily life and culture of the subjects.

The literacy method, created by Paulo Freire, is based on a set of dialogical pedagogical strategies that favor the development of critical awareness, interpretation and deep understanding of social problems, through collective dialogue, articulated with social and political praxis. [...] The *generating themes*²⁰ [emphasis added] are codifications of complex experiences with political meaning that can generate discussion and critical reflection. [...] By learning to read and write words, people also learn to 'read and write their world', that is, to develop a critical understanding of their context (Gadotti & Carnoy, 2018, p. 25).

One of the main foundations of Freire's pedagogy lies in the idea that the reading of the world precedes the reading of the word. Freire describes that "[...] He freed himself from the external ties that prevented him from working and thinking according to what he had considered appropriate. Now [...] he adopts an 'I' that does not belong to him" (1967, p. 50), denouncing the pitfalls of uncritical adaptation. This means that subjects, even before they learn to read formally, already interpret the meanings of the world from their experiences. Gadotti adds: "[...] Freire teaches us that the act of reading is an act of love for the world, as it implies a look committed to its transformation" (1996, p. 27). Thus, reading becomes an existential gesture of belonging and criticism.

²⁰ The generating themes constitute one of the fundamental pillars of Paulo Freire's pedagogical proposal, as they start from the active listening of the subjects to the construction of a curriculum that dialogues with the concrete reality and with the daily knowledge of the communities. Instead of imposing ready-made and decontextualized content, the Freirean educator investigates the themes that emerge from the lives of students – such as work, housing, health, violence, food, among others – and transforms them into starting points for the problematization of the world. These themes are not neutral: they carry contradictions and reveal the structures of oppression that permeate the experience of the oppressed. As Freire explains, "[...] the generating themes must be extracted from the investigation of the existential reality of the groups with which one works" (Freire, 1974, p. 97). In this way, the generating themes function as bridges between the reading of the world and the reading of the word, allowing education to be constituted as a practice of freedom. See: FREIRE, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. 17. ed. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1974.

Therefore, the act of reading is also an act of listening. Freire writes that "[...] it was not our security guards who shot the invaders, but hunters who walked around" (2000, p. 17), revealing how much the narratives are crossed by ethical and political tensions. By interpreting the world, subjects narrate their stories and affirm their voices. This requires from the educator a commitment to dialogue and sensitive listening. Cortella observes that "[...] those who do not listen are not taught; there is no reading without a willingness to listen to what the text, the world and the other have to say" (1996, p. 48). And Giroux emphasizes that "[...] critical reading requires a type of ethical listening, capable of welcoming silences and giving meaning to marginalized voices" (2011, p. 43). Thus, reading takes place in the relationship with the other, in the living exchange between experiences.

It is listening that makes it possible to know the knowledge that students already have, the opinions and experiences they bring to the teaching-learning situation, providing elements for the educator to know and work from the reading of the student's world. [...] Only from listening can knowledge be built that makes sense to the learner (Gadotti & Carnoy, 2018, p. 401).

In addition, it is necessary to understand the political dimension of reading. Freire narrates that "[...] if I speak again, said the determined boy, master of the situation, I'll kill the dick" (2000, p. 18), a symbolic metaphor of the repression of speech and expression. When invited to read critically, the subject is faced with the conflicts and contradictions of his reality, being able to position himself in front of them. Gramsci states that "[...] every relationship of hegemony is necessarily a pedagogical relationship" (2001, p. 25). And McLaren goes on to say that "[...] reading, when understood as an ideological process, allows the denaturalization of dominant discourses and the rearticulation of counter-hegemonic meanings" (1992, p. 98). Therefore, reading is also resisting, disputing meanings and affirming other forms of existence.

In this process, language is fundamental as a mediation between thought and reality. Freire reflects that "[...] reality is just like that and that it is not only me who will save the world" (2000, p. 22), indicating the ethical challenge of intervening in the world with critical awareness, without succumbing to fatalism. Vygotsky argues that "[...] thought is realized in language [...] and consciousness is built within verbal interaction" (2003, p. 123). Piaget, on the other hand, observes that "[...] the mastery of language allows the child not only to communicate, but also to organize his internal experience in a more elaborate way"

(1983, p. 67). Thus, reading acquires a structuring dimension of human development, favoring the elaboration of increasingly complex meanings.

Later the child expands the limits of his understanding through the integration of socially elaborated symbols (such as: social values and beliefs, cumulative knowledge of his culture and scientific concepts of reality) into his own consciousness. [...] In the book *Thought and Language*²¹, Vygotsky presents an elaborate argument demonstrating that language, the very medium through which reflection and the elaboration of experience occurs, is an extremely personal process and, at the same time, a profoundly social process. He sees the relationship between the individual and society as a dialectical process that, like a river and its tributaries, combines and separates the different elements of human life (Vygotsky, 1991, p. 84).

That said, reading is also closely linked to the notion of autonomy. Freire questions that "[...] the reality is just like that, that injustices are a fatality against which nothing can be done" (2000, p. 23), challenging the subjects to overcome conformism. It is not a matter of forming repeaters of texts, but subjects who read with independence and critical sense. According to Gadotti, "[...] critical reading implies intellectual autonomy, as it requires the reader to have an active attitude towards the text and reality" (1996, p. 31). In addition, Giroux states that "[...] critical literacy is linked to projects of emancipation and democratic participation" (2014, p. 71). Therefore, the more critical the reading, the greater the subject's ability to position himself in the world.

It is evident, therefore, that reading is a process that articulates language, subjectivity and historical context. Freire states that "[...] It is a shame that there are so many hungry people among us, but the reality is just like that" (2000, p. 28), warning about the discourses that try to naturalize inequality. In turn, hooks maintains that "[...] Critical reading helps us to imagine possible worlds, to transcend the limits imposed by dominant structures" (2013, p. 52). From this perspective, reading emerges as a practice of hope and reinvention.

The critical reading of the world is a pedagogical-political what-to-do that is inseparable from the political-pedagogical what-to-do, that is, from the political action that involves the organization of popular groups and classes to intervene in the reinvention of society. [...] The denunciation and proclamation critically made in the process of reading the world give rise to the dream for which we fight. [...] This dream or project that is being profiled in the process of critical analysis of reality that we denounce is to the transformative practice of society what the design of the piece that the worker is going to produce and that he has in his head before making it is to the production of the piece (Freire, 2000, p. 21).

²¹ See reference.

Although critical reading involves rationality, it also summons sensitivity. Freire declares that "[...] the idea of a liberating education that contributes to forming critical consciousness and stimulating the responsible participation of the individual takes shape" (1979, p. 7), reaffirming that reading is also feeling and acting. Imagination, desire and affectivity are essential dimensions in the construction of the meanings of the text and reality. McLaren argues that "[...] critical pedagogy does not separate reason and emotion, because it knows that both are necessary to read the world in depth" (2005, p. 88). And Piaget states that "[...] affectivity directs the subject's action and drives the assimilation of symbolic contents" (1983, p. 91). Thus, reading is crossed by affects that mobilize consciousness and action.

The school, in this context, needs to assume reading as a cultural and political practice, and not only as a literacy technique. Freire maintains that "[...] education at all its levels must become creative, because we must anticipate the new type of society we seek" (1979, p. 7). Cortella points out that "[...] reading is a fundamental human right; more than a skill, it is a form of citizen participation" (1996, p. 59). Carnoy points out that "[...] education that does not teach to read critically is at the service of maintaining inequalities" (2008, p. 25). Therefore, reading needs to be defended as a constitutive element of democracy.

It is not possible, says Paulo Freire, 'to give lessons in democracy and, at the same time, consider the participation of the people in power as absurd and immoral'. Democracy is, like knowledge, an achievement of all. Any separation between those who know and those who do not, as well as the separation between the elites and the people, is only the result of historical circumstances that can and must be transformed. [...] The state and words are equally expressions of men's practice, and to become aware is to assume awareness of this fact (Freire, 1967, p. 13).

In view of this, the importance of thinking about reading as praxis is reaffirmed. Freire writes that "[...] the references are our imagination and our love, so that Paulo Freire continues to exercise his magisterium through all those who believe in his ideal" (2008, p. 16), reaffirming reading as a loving and engaged action. Gadotti concludes that "[...] to read critically is, in the end, an act of loving rebellion before the world" (1996, p. 34). McLaren, for his part, states that "[...] every reading is a rewriting, a reconstruction of reality from the perspective of the historically situated reader" (1997, p. 109). Therefore, to form critical readers is to form historical subjects, capable of reinventing their collective destinies.

In this way, reading, when understood as a practice of awareness, acquires a deep meaning in the human experience, as it is linked to the recognition of the subject as a

historical²² and unfinished being. Freire emphasizes that "[...] increasing popular participation in the development of the entire community [...] is an urgent task of committed education" (1979, p. 12). When reading, the individual not only deciphers signs, but also crosses structures of meaning that question him and position him before the world. As hooks states: "[...] the act of reading can be a ritual of resistance, a way of refusing the oppression of silence" (2010, p. 25). In addition, Kohan observes that "[...] to read is to give back to childhood the right to ask, to imagine, to find the world strange" (2020, p. 67). Therefore, reading becomes a space for invention and critical inquiry.

In this way, authentic dialogue is only possible when there is a renunciation of the logic of imposition and domination. In the daily life of the school, this is revealed in practices such as the participatory class council, conversation circles or moments of active listening to the students' demands. Freire emphasizes that "[...] that of coordinating, never influencing or imposing" (1967, p. 11), revealing the ethical character of dialogue as a shared construction, and not as a vertical imposition. Thus, authentic dialogue becomes a path to democratic and humanizing formation. Piaget argues that "[...] cooperation is an indispensable condition for moral development, because in it the other's point of view becomes necessary" (1983, p. 151). In addition, Vygotsky emphasizes that "[...] signs only become meaningful to the extent that they are socially shared" (2003, p. 46).

Dialogue in Freire's work appears as a driver of critical thinking in relation to the human condition in the world. Through dialogue, the student has space to talk, to question how things are and develop their inventiveness, to think about how things could be. Dialoguing, the student perceives the world and existence in society as something in process, as an unfinished reality in constant transformation, problematizing the way things are. [...] It exercises critical communication about our condition in the world and builds knowledge from the interaction of different worlds seeking to be more (Gadotti & Carnoy, 2018, p. 115).

In the school experience, reading is also an act of listening. When interpreting a text, the reader listens to the author and dialogues with him, negotiating meanings, agreeing or

²² For Paulo Freire, the subject is a historical being, unfinished and in a constant process of construction, whose existence takes place in the dialogical relationship with the world and with others. Reading, in this context, is not a simple technical skill, but a practice of meaning that enables the subject to critically interpret his reality, to recognize himself as part of it and, above all, to act on it. The act of reading, for Freire, contributes directly to the process of humanization, as it allows the individual to leave the condition of object of social structures to become the subject of his own history. As the author states, "[...] reading is an act of knowledge, a creative process, it requires a critical, reflective and transformative posture of the subject before the world" (Freire, 1982, p. 11). Thus, reading benefits the subject by expanding their awareness of themselves, others and the context, promoting autonomy, ethical indignation and political engagement. See: FREIRE, Paulo. *The importance of the act of reading: in three articles that complement each other*. 23. ed. São Paulo: Cortez, 1982.

disagreeing. Freire recalls that "[...] the reading of the word is always preceded by the reading of the world" (1982, p. 3), indicating that all reading is crossed by experiences and social relations. McLaren maintains that "[...] critical reading is a process of radical listening to the language and intentions of the text" (1992, p. 58). Gadotti adds: "[...] it is necessary to read the world as if listening to its multiple voices, with attention to silences and noises" (1996, p. 87). Thus, reading is no longer just decoding and becomes an encounter with otherness.

Therefore, in contexts of inequality, active listening is a political instrument of resistance. A school that welcomes the voice of the marginalized practices a critical pedagogy²³, which questions absolute truths and builds new meanings with the subjects. Freire observes that "[...] the idea of a liberating education that contributes to forming critical consciousness and stimulating the responsible participation of the individual takes shape" (1979, p. 7). Kohan adds: "[...] Listening is the openness to the unexpected that springs from the other" (2005, p. 61).

Furthermore, active listening is closely linked to the ethical formation of the subject, because listening is welcoming difference without neutralizing it. In activities such as the shared reading of poems that deal with racial, gender or social themes, students learn to listen to the text and to themselves. Freire states that "[...] significant themes should not be proposed arbitrarily, but extracted from the reality experienced by the students" (1985, p. 43). Cortella adds: "[...] the knowledge that is formed in dialogue is that which is recognized in movement and incompleteness" (2017, p. 112).

In addition, listening is also done between the lines of silence. Not every student verbalizes their pains or anxieties with direct words; some do it with gestures, looks, refusals. Knowing how to listen to these silences is the ethical responsibility of the educator. Freire declares that "[...] the oppressed, by being listened to, also learn to listen to themselves" (1970, p. 27). McLaren highlights: "[...] to educate is to learn to listen to the

²³ Critical pedagogy is an educational approach that understands teaching as a political practice and the school as a space for the dispute of meanings, where hegemonies are built or contested. Unlike neutral or technicist pedagogical models, critical pedagogy proposes that knowledge is not only transmitted, but problematized, in dialogue with the reality experienced by the students. It seeks to form autonomous, ethical subjects committed to social transformation. According to Henry Giroux, "[...] critical pedagogy provides the means for educators and students to question the relations between knowledge and power, and for them to recognize the role of the school in the production of identities and forms of agency" (Giroux, 2011, p. 91). In this way, critical pedagogy is established as a path of resistance to the reproduction of inequalities and the trivialization of education. See: GIROUX, Henry A. *On critical pedagogy*. New York: Continuum, 2011.

silences that school systems produce" (2005, p. 93). Kohan states: "[...] listening to childhood is accepting that it tells us things that we do not expect to hear" (2020, p. 104).

In this way, the critical reading of reality, mediated by listening, enables the subject to situate himself historically and act in a transformative way. In pedagogical projects in which students map problems in their community, dialogue is the path that leads from observation to action. Freire argues that "[...] the reading of reality must be done from a collective epistemological curiosity" (2000, p. 54). Gadotti recalls that "[...] the reading of reality must be done collectively, based on voices that dialogue with each other" (1998, p. 66). Piaget points out that "[...] decentralization is a condition for the individual to understand perspectives different from his own" (1983, p. 123).

The 'reading' of reality, centered on the critical understanding of social practice, provides them with this clarification. [...] The fundamental thing in his speech, at the time he did so, was the general affirmation around the real possibility of knowing more. [...] By discovering, engaged in the production of a collective character, that they knew, they correctly infer 'that they can now know more', even if they do not delimit the object to be known (Freire & Faundez, 1998, p. 42).

As a result, the school environment that values dialogue becomes more sensitive to the needs of students. This is seen, for example, when a class collectively builds rules of coexistence, sharing experiences and expectations. Freire explains that "[...] dialogue is the loving encounter of those who seek the truth" (1974, p. 47). Faundez states: "[...] the pedagogy of dialogue requires that we listen not only to what is said, but to what is lived" (1985, p. 49). Vygotsky adds: "[...] the higher mental functions are first formed in social relations" (2003, p. 31).

In the curriculum, active listening allows the contents to be meaningful, because they start from the reality experienced. Freire declares that "[...] one cannot speak of education without love, without listening, without humility" (1996, p. 23). Cortella stresses: "[...] there is no knowledge without a link to experience" (2017, p. 102). And Gadotti reinforces that "[...] listening is a condition for a curriculum that respects the culture of the learner" (2018, p. 401). In interdisciplinary projects that involve the critical reading of the city or the school territory, students perceive themselves as subjects of knowledge.

In pedagogical relationships, active listening also transforms the role of the teacher. He ceases to be the holder of knowledge and becomes a mediator of knowledge. Freire states that "[...] teaching requires sensitive and critical listening from the educator in the face of the student's speeches" (1996, p. 58). Kohan says: "[...] teaching is listening to

questions that we were not prepared to answer" (2020, p. 138). And McLaren teases: "[...] insurgent listening is that which destabilizes authority and opens space for rebellion" (1997, p. 66). Thus, the educator also becomes a learner.

The teacher must be like the rails along which the wagons advance freely and independently, receiving from them only the direction of their own movement. [...] The previous pedagogy reinforced and exaggerated the first moment of perception in an excessive way, transforming the student into a sponge that fulfilled its mission more faithfully the more eagerly and fully impregnated it with the knowledge of others. But knowledge that does not pass through personal experience is not knowledge. Psychology requires students to learn not only how to perceive but also how to react. Above all, educating means establishing new reactions, elaborating new forms of conduct (Vygotski, 2003, p. 76).

Thus, from the perspective of reading as listening, it is essential to teach students to interpret the discourses that surround them, whether in the media, at school or in the family. Critical reading is, then, an act of resistance against ideological manipulation. Freire warns that "[...] the word is a political act of transformation and denunciation" (1987, p. 39). Vygotsky states: "[...] the word is a microcosm of social consciousness" (1991, p. 220). Cortella maintains: "[...] those who do not listen, do not learn; those who do not learn, repeat the world as it is" (1996, p. 82).

Therefore, it is urgent to train subjects who listen to the world with critical and ethical attention. The school must be this space of dialogical formation, in which reading, speaking and listening are intertwined to produce new meanings. Freire continues: "[...] dialogue is the cement that unites pedagogical practice to the transformation of the world" (1985, p. 94). Kohan corroborates by saying: "[...] to dialogue is to put oneself at risk of transformation" (2005, p. 99). And Piaget stresses: "[...] true learning is that which forces us to change our minds" (1983, p. 184).

In this way, reading, when understood as a social practice, becomes a powerful instrument of resistance in the face of subtle forms of domination. Freire already warned that "[...] it was the world that helped me to understand and understand my country better" (1985, p. 13), indicating that critical reading is born from the experience and confrontation of social contradictions. In schools, by encouraging the critical reading of news, song lyrics or life stories, teachers offer students the possibility of analyzing the structures that sustain inequalities. As Gramsci states: "[...] each new critical reading of the world corresponds to a new historical consciousness" (1999, p. 54). Hooks, on the other hand, warns that "[...] Reading as a practice of freedom begins when we are taught to read carefully, listening to

voices that are normally silenced" (HOOKS, 2010, p. 27). Thus, reading is also a way of not consenting.

It is necessary, however, that the act of reading be understood as a form of rupture with conformism. As Freire reinforces, "[...] more and more intellectual functions and less and less purely instinctive and emotional functions" are required in critical reading (1967, p. 51), which requires training and mediation. In everyday school life, practices such as reading circles that discuss racism or child labor instigate students to problematize their own experiences. McLaren emphasises that "[...] critical reading has the potential to subvert the forms of knowledge imposed by the dominant culture" (1992, p. 61). Gramsci completes by stating that "[...] the act of interpreting texts is an exercise in deconstructing hegemonized common sense" (2000, p. 78). Therefore, reading emancipates as it questions what seems natural to us.

It is in this sense that the critical reading of reality, whether it takes place in a process of literacy or not and associated above all with certain clearly political practices of mobilization and organization, can constitute an instrument for what Gramsci would call counter-hegemonic action. Concluding these reflections on the importance of the act of reading, which always implies critical perception, interpretation and 're-writing' of what is read, I would like to say that, after hesitating a little, I decided to adopt the procedure I used in dealing with the theme, in line with my way of being and with what I can do (Freire, 2001, p. 42).

However, this process is not spontaneous: it requires critical mediation. As Freire points out, "[...] education is not a valid instrument if it does not establish a dialectical relationship with the context of the society to which man is rooted" (1979, p. 19). The role of the educator is central in the construction of spaces for dialogic reading, in which the student recognizes himself as the subject of his own history. hooks points out that "[...] teaching to read critically is to allow the student to claim his humanity" (2013, p. 56). McLaren, for his part, maintains that "[...] the classroom should be an insurgent space where words gain political strength" (2005, p. 89). Thus, critical reading is inseparable from the pedagogy that sustains it.

In public schools, often located in territories of vulnerability, reading can be the only way to understand the oppressions that structure daily life. Freire reminds us that "[...] increasing popular participation in the development of the whole community [...] in the real expressions of our current life: work, local and regional life, the needs of the family, the basic culture and the economic-social organization" (1979, p. 12) is also an educational task. By reading texts about evictions, hunger or police violence, students can identify with

these realities and resignify them. Gramsci explains that "[...] culture is always the place where hegemony becomes visible" (2001, p. 113). hooks adds that "[...] reading helps us to name pain, and this is already a form of resistance" (2013, p. 74). Therefore, the reading becomes a complaint.

The only way to help man to realize his ontological vocation, to insert himself into the construction of society and the direction of social change, is to replace this mainly magical grasp of reality with a more and more critical grasping. [...] They considered it indispensable, in order to bring about this essential transformation, to make the simple man follow a whole path through which he would discover and become aware of: – the existence of two worlds, that of nature and that of culture; – the active role of man in reality and with it; – culture as a result of their work, of their creative and recreative effort; – culture as incorporation – critical and creative – and not as a juxtaposition of information [...] (Freire, 1979, p. 33).

In addition to denunciation, critical reading allows the construction of alternatives. Freire emphasizes that "[...] universe of themes in dialectical contradiction [...] establishes a climate of irrationality and sectarianism. This climate threatens to strip the themes of their deep meaning" (1979, p. 17), pointing out the need for critical reading to reveal hidden meanings. In projects in which students write and publish their own stories, there is an inversion in the traditional logic: the student ceases to be a receiver and becomes a producer of meaning. McLaren notes that "[...] reading as a counter-hegemonic practice requires a writing that also subverts the norms of the dominant language" (1997, p. 106). Gramsci points out that "[...] hegemony is fought with the creation of new narratives, new social grammars" (2000, p. 94). Thus, reading and writing are inseparable gestures in the struggle for emancipation.

The school routine also offers numerous moments in which reading can be mobilized as a critical tool. As Freire points out: "[...] lamplighter [...] giving light to the street. [...] I remember the nights when, surrounded by my fear, I waited for time to pass [...] my fears were diminishing" (1982, p. 7), suggesting that reading illuminates areas of shadow of experience. When discussing fake news in the classroom, for example, the teacher not only teaches how to check sources, but helps students to realize how information can be used as a control mechanism. hooks states: "[...] teaching to read is teaching to doubt" (2010, p. 41). McLaren reinforces: "[...] resistance begins with the ability to unmask the ideologies hidden in the texts" (1992, p. 84). In this way, the text becomes a field of dispute.

Studying, for Freire, is also a political act, in addition to being a cognitive act. [...] Freire criticizes the phenomena of depoliticization, or naturalization, of education, as in a text dated April 26, 1996, published posthumously, in the year 2000, in *the book Pedagogy of Indignation*: 'Never has perhaps so much been done for the depoliticization of education as today' (FREIRE, 2000: 95). [...] That is why he defends an educational practice as a critical exercise, capable of counteracting the 'opaqueness of reality': seeing beyond appearances, of ideology as 'false consciousness' (in the Marxian sense) that does not allow a critical reading of reality, which is limited to doxa, to superficial visions of common sense and dominant ideas [...] Freire insists on the concept of 'unveiling reality'. To unveil means to take off the veil, to lift the superficial layer that covers social reality, to go beyond the appearance of things, or, in popular language, to 'open the eyes' (Gadotti & Carnoy, 2018, p. 30-31).

It is important to highlight that critical reading is socially and collectively constructed. Freire states that "[...] I had no intention of offending you, I am Brazilian... But you are a Brazilian who is in Chile, and in Chile you don't do that" (1985, p. 14), showing how the other's gaze can change our cultural positioning. In reading groups or school book clubs, students confront their experiences with those of authors and colleagues, producing new knowledge. Gramsci argues that "[...] authentic knowledge is born from the confrontation between different experiences that recognize each other" (1999, p. 61). hooks adds: "[...] to read in a group is to create bonds of intellectual and affective solidarity" (2010, p. 65). Thus, the act of reading goes beyond the individual and becomes collective and political.

Often, reading is one of the few spaces in which the student finds a voice to talk about himself. Freire recalls that "[...] if it weren't for the marks of our culture, present, alive in me, marks that I take care of with affection [...] my wandering [...] would become a pure wandering through the world, with almost no reason to exist" (1985, p. 17), emphasizing the importance of symbolic belonging. This is evident when it is reflected in peripheral, black, indigenous or LGBTQIA+ narratives that circulate in the proposed readings. McLaren says that "[...] the reading of marginalized authors serves as a mirror and as a weapon" (2005, p. 93). Gramsci writes that "[...] popular education must begin with the recognition of voices excluded from the dominant culture" (2001, p. 88). Therefore, choosing the texts one reads is also choosing which worlds are legitimized.

Resistance to reading, however, does not only happen among students. As Freire recalls, "[...] Antonio, we should record all this, because this dialogue should not be a dialogue exclusively between you and me" (1985, p. 7), pointing to the importance of the collective circulation of ideas. Teachers who refuse to follow decontextualized teaching materials or who propose critical readings of the BNCC also practice the pedagogy of

resistance²⁴. Hooks points out: "[...] teachers need to ask themselves who what they teach serves" (2013, p. 103). McLaren states that "[...] critical educators must be organic intellectuals committed to the struggles of their students" (1992, p. 71). Thus, to read critically is also to teach critically.

Freirean-inspired critical pedagogies in North America were elaborated based on a series of new theoretical developments, such as Latin American philosophies of liberation, critical literacy, sociology of knowledge, Frankfurt critical theory, feminist theory, bilingual and bicultural education, and teacher education. [...] In Freire's conception, schools are places where spaces for interaction can be created without any type of coercion, as they are part of civil society. [...] The critical, dialogical and democratic educational practice proposed by Freire implies recognizing 'the other' as a subject of knowledge and culture, recognizing in the 'other' the right to say his or her word and establishing concrete actions with 'the other', allowing his or her participation in the educational process (Freire et. al., 2001, p. 85-86).

In school, reading also needs to be about the physical space, the practices, the curricula, the structure. Freire warns that "[...] he freed himself from external bonds [...] now he would be free to act according to his own will, if he knew what he wants, thinks and feels [...] he adopts an 'I' (1967, p. 50), criticizing alienation disguised as autonomy. A student who realizes that his body is constantly watched, that his speech is interrupted or that his knowledge is delegitimized is already, in some way, reading oppression. Gramsci recognizes that "[...] The school is one of the most efficient hegemonic apparatuses²⁵ " (2000, p. 109). hooks concludes that "[...] banking education²⁶ is an accomplice of

²⁴ The pedagogy of resistance is an educational response to the forms of oppression, silencing and conformism that permeate school institutions and society. She affirms education as a political and ethical practice aimed at the formation of subjects capable of contesting the structures of domination and claiming new modes of existence. By promoting listening, dialogue, and problematization of reality, this pedagogy values historically marginalized knowledge and creates spaces for critical thinking and transformative action. As Giroux states, "[...] the pedagogy of resistance not only contests hegemonic forms of knowledge, but also seeks to create new forms of subjectivity and political agency" (Giroux, 2022, p. 46). Thus, educating from the perspective of resistance is to open possibilities for the construction of a more just, plural and democratic world. See: GIROUX, Henry A. *Pedagogy of resistance: against manufactured ignorance*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022.

²⁵ The school, in Antonio Gramsci's perspective, is one of the main apparatuses of hegemony in society, as it acts in the production and reproduction of consensuses that legitimize the current social order. Through curriculum, language and pedagogical practices, the school naturalizes values, behaviors and hierarchies that favor dominant groups, presenting them as universal and neutral. However, this hegemony is not absolute: it can be contested and transformed through a critical education that destabilizes normative discourses and enables the formation of subjects aware of their historical insertion. As Gramsci states, "[...] the school is one of the most efficient hegemonic apparatuses, as it acts in the formation of consensus and in the reproduction of dominant ideologies" (Gramsci, 2000, p. 109). Thus, to rethink the school is to rethink its role in the dispute for meanings and social emancipation. See: GRAMSCI, Antonio. *Prison Notebooks*. Vol. 2. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2000.

²⁶ Banking education, a concept widely criticized by Paulo Freire, refers to an authoritarian and verticalized teaching model, in which the teacher deposits information on students considered empty containers. This type of education denies the dialogicity and active participation of the student, treating him as an object and not as a subject of the formative process. By disregarding the social, historical, and cultural context of students,

domination because it teaches to obey, not to question" (2010, p. 39). Therefore, reading school is also transforming it.

In the 'banking' conception that we are criticizing, for which education is the act of depositing, transferring and transmitting values and knowledge, this overcoming is not and cannot be verified. On the contrary, reflecting the oppressive society, being a dimension of the 'culture of silence', 'banking education' maintains and stimulates contradiction. [...] The more students exercise themselves in archiving the deposits made to them, the less they will develop in themselves the critical awareness that would result from their insertion in the world, as its transformers. As subjects. [...] To the extent that this 'banking' vision annuls the creative power of the learners or minimizes it, it satisfies the interests of the oppressors: for them, the fundamental thing is not the denudation of the world, its transformation (Freire, 1974, p. 68).

Therefore, working with critical reading requires planning. To this end, Freire argues that "[...] writing history as a biography of man, in a way that allows us to form an opinion about his future" (1967, p. 47) is a fundamental part of pedagogical praxis²⁷. Teachers who build didactic sequences based on generative themes²⁸, as Freire suggested, make it possible to read reality and take transformative action. McLaren maintains: "[...] reading should provoke the desire to intervene, not just to understand" (1997, p. 119). Gramsci reinforces: "[...] it is not enough to know that hegemony exists, it is necessary to build another one" (1999, p. 91). Therefore, every critical reading points to praxis.

banking education reinforces passivity, obedience, and the reproduction of the current order. For Freire, this model is at the service of oppression, because "[...] the more alienated the students are in this 'banking' view of education, the easier they adapt to the world as it is and to the fragmentation of reality" (Freire, 1974, p. 68). In opposition, he proposes a liberating education, which recognizes the student as a co-author of knowledge and promotes critical consciousness. See: FREIRE, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. 17. ed. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1974.

²⁷ Pedagogical praxis, in Freire's perspective, is understood as the inseparable union between action and reflection, aimed at the transformation of reality. It is not just about applying methods or transmitting content, but about building an educational process in which educator and student reflect critically on the world and act to transform it. Praxis breaks with the dichotomy between theory and practice, as it presupposes a conscious, intentional and situated action. As Paulo Freire states, "[...] praxis is the action and reflection of men on the world to transform it" (FREIRE, 1974, p. 40). Thus, every pedagogical practice committed to human emancipation must necessarily be a praxis, capable of mobilizing critical, historical and engaged subjects. See: FREIRE, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. 17. Ed. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1974.

²⁸ Generative themes are one of the central concepts of Freire's pedagogy, conceived as significant contents extracted from the reality experienced by the students and that serve as a starting point for the educational process. Instead of imposing a ready-made and decontextualized curriculum, Paulo Freire proposes that the educator investigate the concrete lives of students, identify the themes that emerge from their daily experiences and transform them into objects of problematization. These themes carry social contradictions and reveal the structures of oppression that cross the subjects, and are therefore essential to the formation of critical consciousness. As Freire states, "[...] the generating themes must be investigated in the concrete existential situation of the students and, once found, they must be codified in problematizing situations" (Freire, 1974, p. 97). Thus, the generating themes enable a dialogical, contextualized and transformative education. See: FREIRE, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. 17. Ed. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1974.

Thus, it is essential to recognize that the right to critical reading is a political right. As Freire recalls, "[...] giving classes on democracy and, at the same time, considering popular participation as 'absurd and immoral' is contradictory" (1967, p. 19). To deny it is to deny the possibility of understanding the world with autonomy. Therefore, defending access to diverse, complex and provocative texts is an ethical task of educators. hooks states: "[...] to deny critical reading is to deny the possibility of freedom" (2013, p. 122). And McLaren concludes: "[...] the pedagogy of resistance begins with the reading of the world as a territory of struggle" (2005, p. 101). Thus, reading is an act of emancipation.

Moreover, the school must act as a space for listening and dialogue, allowing students to express their readings of the world. Freire argues that "[...] 'culture circle'²⁹, where we feel we are participating, as subjects, in a real experience [...] learning to read is, first and foremost, learning to read the world" (1982, p. 3). A teacher who proposes a field diary about the school community is mediating this listening. Kohan highlights: "[...] to read is to listen to what has not yet been said" (2005, p. 88). And Gadotti adds: "[...] listening is the first step towards a mediation that respects the experience of the learner" (1996, p. 77). Thus, the educator who listens teaches the student to read himself.

The educator's mediation also involves the choice of texts that circulate in the school. As Freire recalls, "[...] lamplighter giving light to the street [...] my fears were diminishing. [...] the 'reading' that I was making of it" (1982, p. 7), reading illuminates experiences and fears. By including works by black, indigenous and peripheral authors, the educator expands the repertoire and decentralizes the canon. McLaren states: "[...] resistance begins with the rewriting of curricula" (1997, p. 113). hooks reinforces: "[...] the curriculum that denies diversity also denies the possibility of freedom" (2013, p. 71). Therefore, the act of selecting what one reads is also a political act.

In addition, the educator needs to work on the content in a way that generates implication. Freire criticizes: "[...] Adult Literacy – Criticism of their naïve view, understanding of their critical view" (1982, p. 13), indicating that mediation must go beyond

²⁹ The Culture Circle, conceived by Paulo Freire, is a pedagogical proposal based on dialogue, active listening and horizontality between educator and students, as opposed to the traditional structure of the classroom. In this space, everyone is invited to share experiences, critically reflect on reality and collectively build knowledge, based on significant themes taken from the participants' daily lives. More than a method, the Culture Circle represents an ethical and political attitude towards the educational process, valuing the word as an instrument of awareness and social transformation. As Freire states, "[...] the Culture Circle is a space in which subjects come together to dialogue about reality, with the aim of critically understanding and transforming it" (Freire, 1982, p. 22). Thus, the Circle becomes a territory of emancipation and reexistence. See: FREIRE, Paulo. *The importance of the act of reading: in three articles that complement each other*. 23. ed. São Paulo: Cortez, 1982.

neutrality. A good example is to transform theoretical texts into debates, dramatizations or audiovisual productions. Cortella points out: "[...] it is not enough to know the content, it is necessary to know what to do with it" (2017, p. 112). Giroux highlights: "[...] critical mediation transforms content into living experience" (2014, p. 79). With this, the student ceases to be a spectator and becomes the author of his learning.

The type of alternative education that Freire suggests involves the construction of knowledge through a constant dialogue between students and the teacher. [...] The students – no longer docile listeners – are now critical co-researchers in dialogue with the teacher. The teacher presents the material to the students for their consideration and reconsiders their previous considerations as the students express their own. Problem-solving education affirms men and women in the process of becoming, as unfinished and incomplete beings within and with an equally unfinished reality (Freire, 2018, p. 96).

However, the educator faces resistance. Many students arrive at school discredited by the value of reading or writing, as they have never seen themselves represented in the materials. Freire observes: "[...] astute people consciously assume this ideology as their own [...] naivety is pure tactics" (1982, p. 17), denouncing political intentionality in the formation of consciences. This is where mediation needs to be affective. Romão recalls that "[...] there is no critical reading without an affective bond with the educator" (2008, p. 44). And Torres states: "[...] it is necessary to reconstruct the desire to read from the marks of exclusion" (2008, p. 93). Therefore, mediating is also welcoming and insisting.

Despite the limits imposed by the neoliberal logic on the contemporary school, there are still spaces of resistance. Freire plays with the inversion of meanings when he states: "[...] it is decreed that, on Tuesdays, one begins to say good night from two o'clock in the afternoon" (1982, p. 25), revealing the symbolic power of the word to break with normality. Interdisciplinary projects, meetings with local authors and the collective construction of zines are possible strategies. Gutiérrez argues: "[...] critical reading is born at the moment when the student realizes that he can also narrate" (2008, p. 117). Garcia adds: "[...] to teach how to read is to teach to look differently at what has already been seen" (2008, p. 131). Thus, the educator can create cracks in the structure so that criticism flourishes.

In this way, the critical educator is the one who recognizes that teaching to read is teaching to resist. Freire points out that "[...] the Brazilian man would have to earn this social and political responsibility, if this responsibility exists" (1967, p. 19), pointing to the ethical commitment of critical reading. Gramsci warns: "[...] whoever controls the meaning of words controls common sense" (1999, p. 81). And Bourdieu reinforces: "[...] reading is a

field of symbolic dispute where it is decided what is legitimate to think" (n.d., p. 88).

Therefore, the school has a decisive role in the formation of subjects who not only decipher texts, but also challenge discourses.

CONCLUSION

It is in this horizon that the act of reading, articulated with active listening and dialogical practice, is transformed into a space for the symbolic reconstruction of the subject. By reading critically, the student not only interprets the signs of written language, but also elaborates meanings about his reality, reconfiguring his position in the world. Reading ceases to be a solitary act and becomes collective, shared, woven into the web of experiences and narratives that inhabit the daily life of schools and communities.

Moreover, to read is to produce subjectivity. This means that the reading subject, when encountering the text and the context, reinterprets himself, destabilizes certainties, recognizes absences and updates memories. As Vygotsky taught us, language is the mediator of consciousness; therefore, the text read – when problematized – becomes a tool for development and internal displacement. And it is in this movement between the internal and external worlds that the emergence of a critical and inventive consciousness is enhanced.

However, this engaged reading does not occur spontaneously. It requires pedagogical, political and affective conditions to happen. Therefore, it is up to the school – and, more specifically, to the educator – to create the means for reading to be provocative, questioning and connected to the realities experienced by the students. The educator, in this perspective, does not act as the owner of knowledge, but as someone who also reads the world with the students, in a horizontal process of exchange and mutual recognition.

Although the contemporary educational context is crossed by policies of control, standardization and performativity, reading remains a territory of freedom and reinvention. Even in the face of attempts to silence, censor and empty critical content, it insists on emerging as an act of resistance. To read, in this sense, is also to refuse what has been imposed as the only truth, it is to cultivate doubt as a pedagogical power, and it is, above all, to defend the right to imagine and project new possible worlds.

That said, it can be said that the act of reading, from Paulo Freire's perspective, is radically committed to the transformation of reality and the dignity of the human being. It requires sensitivity, listening, and courage to confront the structures that produce inequality

and exclusion. By giving back to the subject the right to interpret his existence and to write his history, reading reveals itself as one of the most powerful expressions of the pedagogy of liberation. And, in this gesture, educating ceases to be an act of adaptation to become, definitively, an act of liberation.

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