

THE WRITING GROWTH AND THE LITERACY CONCEPT

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Abstract

The purpose of the text that led to this work was to investigate and analyze some aspects of the literacy process, considering the writing growth in the current cultural context. Affirming that our culture is growing is to understand it as a text which has been structured in dialogic, procedural systems, and has been constituted by languages of different encodings. Within this perspective – growth in writing – we have reconsidered the concept of literacy, in the identification of some of its constituent elements.

Keywords: Digital culture; Growth in writing; Semiotic literacy.

1.Introduction

For living many years inside the bush
bird fashion
The boy caught a bird's eye –
He contracted fountain vision.
The way he saw things
equally
how birds see.
All unnamed things.
Water was not yet the word water.
Stone was not yet the word stone.
And such.
Words were free of grammar and
could be in any position.
So that the boy could inaugurate.
He could give the stones flower customs.
He could give the corner the shape of a sun.
And if he wanted to fit in a bee, it was
just open the word bee and enter inside
of it.
As if it were the childhood of the language.

Manoel de Barros

Manoel Barros' poem leads us to reflect on language. Would it be possible to think of all things unnamed, wordless? Would it be possible to think of words as “free of grammar” and able to be in any connection? The ‘He’ who speaks in the poem, the boy, imagined and launched himself: he caught a bird's eye and contracted a fountain vision, that is a poetic vision.

Octavio Paz, in his book *Signs in Rotation* (2003), in the chapter “Consecration of the moment”, talks about the poetic construction:

What characterizes the poem is its essential dependence on the word as well as its struggle to transcend it. (...) The poem, being of words, goes beyond words and history does not exhaust the meaning of the poem; but the poem would have no meaning – or even existence – without the story, without the community that feeds it and which it feeds (p.52).

What seems noteworthy is that Octavio Paz, not only talks about poetic construction, but he also leads us to reflect on the context in which the poet lives, that is, the moment of poetic “creation”. This moment is our culture, our great text. A text is woven by language: by signs, by semiotic codes, by mediations, by connections. The word text, etymologically, means fabric; a set of intertwined threads, forming a weft. Text as the fabric is rather the action of combining, engendering, of building relationships.

Among the many studies on the concept of text - Barthes (1988), Lotman (1996), and Fiorin (2003) - we will highlight here Mikhail Bakhtin's contributions. In his book, *Aesthetics of Verbal Creation* (2003), the author states that all fields of human activity are related to the use of language. Speaking in text is to think in language, that is, “behind each text is the language system” (p.309). Every text presupposes a system of signs, a conventional language. The different uses of language vary according to the fields of human activity, and the use of language happens through statements that reflect the specific conditions of each field. According to the author, “each field of language elaborates its relatively stable types of utterances” (p.262)-, the speech genres, as he calls them, with their own thematic, compositional and stylistic characteristics.

The representative forms of the ordinary and prosaic world serve as a reference for the constitution of discursive genres. There is a huge assortment of speech genres (oral and written). Despite this assortment, it is important to realize the essential difference between primary (simple) and secondary (complex) genres. The primary genres - simple - refer to the immediate quotidian, used in interpersonal communication, in everyday dialogues. They refer to everyday situations, family, etc. Secondary genres – complex – are usually produced in written form and they keep distance from the immediate situation of production. They take hold of several primary genres and transform them; they are part of a more complex cultural context. They are scientific discourse, ideological discourse, novel, theater, etc. Secondary genres originate from primary genres and, in turn, influence them. They are both forms that mobilize dialogic relationships; they are given in culture, and they are interrelated.

As genres are related to several communication situations new discursive genres emerge due to the new situations of human interaction. Machado (2002a), in *Genres in the digital context*, shows the importance of returning to Bakhtin's idea of genre for the set of communication mediated by electronic-digital processes. In doing so, he rethinks the concept of genres amid the explosion of writing systems, without losing sight that electronic-digital media are also languages: they are forms of mediated communication. In this perspective, it is important to understand that transmissions are not made only with the oral or written

word, since “moving images and a complex field of artificial languages mobilize infinite interactions, communicative ones impressing an unusual hybridism on culture (...) this hybridism, which is the culture not only of means but of multiple mediations” (p.71).

As textuality has been conceived only as a verbal organization, little has been noticed about the expansion of writing and its products; the text is not understood as the combination of different codes: a hybrid product, an open product, growing, being woven. Therefore, a more attentive “look” at the movement of genres in contemporary culture is necessary (MACHADO, 1999).

Understanding the growth of writing requires a look at our culture as a set of semiotic systems. Such systems were constituted in a modeling process. Modeling “is building sign systems from the natural language model. Nevertheless, each system develops a peculiar language form, and in the decoding process of the modeling system, it does not turn to the language model, but to the system that was built from it” (MACHADO, 2003b, p.51). Thus, we consider our culture as a large network, woven by the systems that we are building. It is in this context that we “see” writing in a growing process.

In addition to the concepts of language and writing, this expansion process forces us to rethink the concept of literacy. What does it mean to be literate in the current context? To start this discussion, it is worth historicizing the communicational processes based on writing, that is, knowing/understanding the process of writing rising.

In this article, initially, we discuss the history of writing. Next, we discussed literacy processes and the concept of expanding writing. Finally, we present the conclusions.

2. The writing

Writing is extremely difficult, it is an enormous responsibility, you need only think of the exhausting work involved in setting out events in chronological order, first this one, then that, or, if more conducive to the the desired effect, today's event before yesterday's episode, and other no less risky acrobatics, presenting the past as if it were something new, or the present as a a continuous process with neither beginning nor end, but hard writers might try, there is one feat they cannot achieve, and that is to put into writing, in the same tense, two events have occurred simultaneously. Some believe the difficulty can be solved by dividing the page into two columns, side by side, but this proposal is too simple because the one will have been written first and the other afterward, nor may we forget that the reader will have to read this one first and then the other one, or vice versa. The people who come off best are the opera singers, each with his or her own part to sing, three, four, five, six in all among the tenors, basses, sopranos, and baritones, all singing different words, the cynic mocking, for example, the ingénue pleading, the gallant lover slow in coming to her aid, what interests the operagoer is the music, but the reader is not like this, he wants everything explained, syllable by syllable, one after the other, as they are shown here... (SARAMAGO, José. *The Stone Raft*. Rio de Janeiro, Record, 1980, p. 26).

In the first pages of the book *The Stone Raft*, Saramago's character-narrator confesses his difficulty in telling the facts and stories that have motivated the narrative that he begins. Saramago, through his character, discusses the near impossibility of arranging events in temporal order: first one, then the other... One fact

is placed before another. The use of punctuation in the text is presenting this difficulty. I share this feeling: How to write the history of writing?

When placing a certain system – writing – in the cultural context, we must consider how it was constituted, that is, what elements allowed its elaboration in the historical context.

Numerous recording devices – a notched stick, rows of pebbles, “winter count” calendars, etc. – were used by various societies to memorize facts, situations, etc. However, writing is more than a mnemonic aid: “a written record, in the sense of genuine writing, as understood here, does not consist in mere drawings, in representations of things, but it is the representation of an utterance, of words, that someone says or is imagined saying” (ONG, 1998, p. 99).

Writing understood as any semiotic, visible, perceptible mark, trivializes its meaning. According to Ong (1998), writing is the technology that shaped and enabled the intellectual activity of modern man. Saying that it is technology is to work with the idea that it has been constituted from consciously thought/planned and interrelated rules: a conventional system.

Writing - a technology that internalized potentiated our consciousness – has occurred late in the history of humanity. Homo sapiens has been on the planet for perhaps 50,000 years; the first written record we know of was developed among the Sumerians around 3500 BC (ONG, 1998).

How to remember certain facts for a long time? How to register that a certain number of oxen belonged to a certain family? A mnemonic signal could be used to tell the reader how many oxen were at stake or who owned them. The creator of the first written tablets must have realized the advantages that these pieces of clay provided: it was no longer necessary to memorize all the information; the presence of the person making the registration was no longer necessary. Therefore, information, a number, a piece of news could be obtained even without the informant being present (MANGUEL, 2002).

Writing systems “have complex antecedents” (ONG, 1998, p.101); according to the author, most or almost all of the writing systems directly or indirectly go back to some kind of pictorial writing or, in a more elementary way, to the use of signs.

The pictographic phase “is distinguished by writing through drawings or pictograms. They appear in ancient inscriptions but can be seen more elaborately in the Ojibwa songs of North America, in Aztec writing (...) and more recently in comic books” (CAGLIARI, 1990, p.106). Pictograms do not represent sounds, but the image of what are intended to represent.

The ideographic phase is characterized by writing through drawings called ideograms. This system - the ideogram - is a kind of pictogram in which the meaning is a concept that results from the combination of figures represented by the drawing. The drawing of a tree, in the pictograms, represents a tree. In the Chinese pictogram, a stylized drawing of two trees does not represent “two trees”, but the word forest. As a rule, all pictographic systems, as in the case of Chinese ideograms, require an enormous number of symbols (ONG, 1998).

The oldest writing system that we know from the documentation is cuneiform writing. Cuneiforms are graphic signs traced on clay tablets using a metal instrument; for the most part, they are syllabic signs. For instance, the word discord, which was previously represented by two women fighting (ideographic representation of the idea), is now represented by a rope and, finally, by a disc and a rope (disc plus rope). The drawing comes from the sounds, the representation becomes of the sounds and no longer of the

meaning.

It is necessary to clarify that Sumerian writing was not born cuneiform; “it was progressively, over a long millenary period, that Sumerian writing evolved to become truly cuneiform in its external appearance, and half analytical, half phonetic in its internal mechanism” (HIGOUNET, 2003, p. 31).

The characters of the ideographic system can be used to represent syllables, acquiring in this way a phonographic character. Thus, these writing systems are called syllabic, as they aim to represent syllables. For Havelock (1994), the syllabic system started from the principle that each of the sounds effectively pronounceable separately, in a given language, could be symbolized.

Egyptian writing was one of the most important writing systems of the ancient world. “Under its most characteristic and oldest form, it is called hieroglyphic writing. Hieroglyphics were engraved signs (from the Greek hieros, “sacred”, and glyphein, “to engrave”) and considered by Egyptians the speech of the gods” (HIGOUNET, 2003, p. 37).

Hieroglyphics are commonly engraved in stone. However, there are records of characters, called linear hierographs, painted in ink on sarcophagi or papyrus. Despite its appearance having a decorative character – close to the drawing – its internal mechanism is quite complicated, as the signs sometimes expressed a word, sometimes a sound (HIGOUNET, 2003).

The alphabetic phase is characterized by the use of letters. The alphabet can be defined as a set of signs that represent the individual sounds of a language. The Greeks have developed the alphabet from the syllabic representation inherited from the West Semitic people. According to Higounet (2003), “the unquestionable link in the prehistory of the alphabet is the pseudo-hieroglyphic writing of the Byblos inscriptions, discovered by M. Dunnand and deciphered by E. Dhorne” (p.60). It is this record that contains the graphic rudiments of alphabetic writing that we still use currently.

Although the Phoenicians have drastically reduced the number of signs to twenty-two, “at the cost of linking a sign to several linguistic sounds and leaving to the reader the responsibility of the correct choice” (HAVELOCK, 1994, p.66), the Greeks were responsible for the decisive step for the modifications/creations that writing underwent: a system with fewer symbols, which made possible a greater combinatory in the system of characters in writing. For Havelock, the Greeks not only invented the alphabet, but also “literate culture and the literate basis of modern thought” (1994, p. 81).

The syllabic systems sought to represent the sounds of speech; they tried to give form to the phonic units. The Greeks realized that this empiricist practice could mean an impossible number of signs for a more differentiated reading. Facing such obstacles, they have considered the possibility of a sign representing a “mere consonant, a sound that, so to speak, does not exist in nature, but only in thought” (HAVELOCK, 1994: 94). They have borrowed the Phoenician syllabary and have decided to restrict the function of most signs to the symbolization of non-sounds.

Previous systems have sought to imitate speech; the Greeks went further, aiming to “analyze linguistic unity in two of its theoretical components, the vibration of the air column and the action of the mouth on this vibration”. The Greek system managed to isolate this non-sound and give it its own conceptual identity, in the form of what we call a “consonant” (1994: 80). For them, alphabetic writing requires an analysis of the linguistic form even more abstract, as it is necessary to detect, in the sound sequence of the word, each of these minimal units - the phonemes - and to associate them with the graphic unit - the letter - that

represents it, which is not as easy as it may seem.

3. The literacy processes

Oral language is completely natural to human beings. Any child, as long as he has adequate biological conditions, is capable of learning to speak, in any culture. The child who starts literacy is already a speaker capable of understanding and speaking the Portuguese language with ease and precision in the circumstances of his life in which he needs to use the language. The same is not true for writing.

Although we live in fully literate contexts in which writing is constantly placed before our eyes, its learning requires teaching. Writing constitutes a codification of oral language, the only “natural” form of language for its use, in the production of speech, does not require any instruction or education procedure. Analyzing the child's construction of writing, Vygotsky considers that he can develop spoken language by himself, but the written language requires artificial training. According to the author, “such training requires enormous attention and efforts by both teacher and student” (1994, p.140). In this learning process, “writing must have meaning for children, an intrinsic need must be awakened in them, and writing must be incorporated into a necessary and relevant task for life” (1994, p.156).

Reflecting on writing, Vygotsky took a genetic approach, that is, he became interested in the process of writing acquisition, which begins long before the child starts his school life. This process involves understanding that writing is a system of signs that has no meaning in itself. For the author, learning written language is not a matter of memorizing a code, but understanding that writing is a representation system of reality.

From Vygotsky's group, Luria was one of his collaborators who developed experimental studies on the development of writing. Examining how children construct writing, before starting their literacy process at school, Luria (1986) stated that, initially, the child uses writing in a purely external, intuitive way, not as an instrument to remember, to represent some meaning. There is no writing, but simple scribbles. “The connection between the child's scribbles and the idea they are intended to represent is purely external” (1986, p.150).

According to this author, the period in which the child begins to sketch his first strokes at school does not correspond to the first stage of writing development. Upon entering school, the child already has a list of skills and abilities that will allow him to learn to write. The genesis of this process goes back to earlier moments which he calls “prehistory of the development of higher forms of child development”.

At a later stage, the child begins to arrange his scribbles in a pattern with which he associates sentences or words that are suggested to him. His scribbles come to mean something and fulfill a mnemonic function, to aid memory. Luria showed that the act precedes understanding, that is, before the child understood the meaning and mechanism of writing, he had already made numerous attempts to develop primitive methods. These are, for her, the prehistory of her writing, that is, the gradual journey differentiated from the symbols used by her.

For both Luria and Vygotsky, writing is a fundamental socio-cultural activity that, once assimilated,

transforms higher psychic functions¹. It is a tool that works as a support for some psychological actions; writing enables the expansion of memory capacity, transmission, and retrieval of ideas, concepts, and information. It is a symbolic system that has a mediating role in the relationship between subject and object of knowledge.

Emilia Ferreiro and Ana Teberosky, in the light of constructivist theory – analyzing the interpretations that children give to writing – have reached some conclusions regarding the process through which literacy takes place. This theory sees the child as the subject of their learning, that is, someone who actively seeks to understand the world around them and tries to solve the issues of that world. The language learner absorbs it by inserting himself into the real world of the writing of his social context.

The psychogenesis² of written language has shown that the literacy process begins before the child's contact with the 1st grade. Through magazines, newspapers, posters, labels, television, etc., written language has already caught the child's attention, to a greater or lesser extent. These contacts with written material led her to formulate hypotheses about writing and reading. This process evolves and changes with age, making it difficult to establish a direct relationship between systematic teaching (school) and this evolution. According to Ferreiro (1991),

writing systems are cultural products of society” and literacy represents the process of the student appropriation of specific knowledge, that is, it represents the reconstruction of the linguistic code, by means of understanding how this code works. This understanding is something more comprehensive than the simple encoding and decoding of language. Not just “the individual possession of skills and knowledge; it also implies, and perhaps mainly, a set of social practices associated with reading and writing, effectively exercised by people in a specific social context (SOARES, 2003, p. 33).

In this conception of literacy, reading is seen as a process of discovery, attribution of senses and meanings, which must be socially built, while establishing a dialogue not only with the text but also with the author and with other readers. It is an activity that allows the subject to have access to cultural goods produced by society and, at the same time, expands their understanding of reality. Therefore, it is an essential action for conscious participation of the subject in the historical-social reality. The theoretical approach that guides the concept of literacy that is defended in this work is based on a constructivist vision .

Thus, literacy is not a state, but a process. It starts from the moment we are born, and it never ends. The child, during his first years of life, is in interaction with different subjects – adults and other children – which allows him to attribute meanings to different actions, dialogues, and experiences. He doesn't get the language ready to use; he builds it into use; it is in and through it, that language itself is communicated, constituted, altered, and transformed. According to Bakhtin (1995), “individuals do not receive the language ready to be used; they enter the stream of verbal communication; or rather, it is only when they dive into this current that their consciousness awakens and begins to operate” (p. 108).

¹ Consciously controlled actions, voluntary attention, active memorization, abstract thinking, intentional behavior are typically human actions and are considered higher psychological functions. These functions differ from more elementary mechanisms such as reflexes, automatic reactions, and simple associations. Higher mental functions are built throughout man's social history and necessarily involve relationships between the individual and the world, which are not direct, but mediated by culture.

² I am referring to the work carried out by Emilia Ferreiro and Ana Teberosky

We are not equally literate for any situation of written language use. We find it easier to read some texts and avoid others. The concept also changes according to times, cultures, and the arrival of technology. The contemporary world, permeated by different languages, has demanded a literacy that does not only consider reading of the writing. Currently, it is necessary to look for ways, elements, strategies that make it possible to read different texts: verbal, visual, audiovisual...

We know that writing and reading are cultural objects that are highly valued in today's society and that the school proposes to work with them since much of the information, reflections, and discussions about reality are conveyed through writing. However, we also know that a lot of information is being transmitted by other systems and that, unlike what happens with writing and reading the word, they are little worked/known.

As instruments of a symbolic nature, writing and the means of communication and information are potential mediators of the relationship between subject and object of knowledge and, "therefore, possible constitutive elements of the modalities of psychological functioning" (OLIVEIRA, 1998, p.80) of the subject.

4. Growing writing: the concept of literacy

To understand that writing undergoes a process of growth, it is necessary to see that this fact is a consequence of how our culture has been constituted. Understood as a great text, culture is constituted by several semiotic systems, interconnected, in constant dialogue, in a growing process of experimentation, transformation and enlargement. Therefore, culture is something alive: an eternal happening. For researcher Geertz (1989), culture is seen as a text that carries meanings and must be rescued through interpretation. For him, "man is an animal tied to webs of meaning that he himself has spun. I assume culture to be these webs and its analysis; therefore, not as an experimental science in search of laws, but as an interpretive science, in search of meaning" (p.15).

It is within this open structure – large text –, woven by the action of man, that written culture has taken on different features: handwritten, printed, electronic. We can say that growing writing runs along two dimensions: the field of coverage and the field of meanings. The growth of writing by coverage field - typographic, electronic writing - has been, in recent years, much greater than the growth by field of meaning, that is, writing is spread in many supports and being disseminated to different places, even that we are unable to attribute more consistent meanings to it: we do not know how it has been organizing or structuring itself. Still, as an example, we can see writing growing when it is broadcast in the media (television, Internet, etc.) that allow its diffusion by coverage. As we know, the speed of displacements is overwhelming. Therefore, if we intend to have some influence on our next step, it is good to advance in the field of the senses.

On the other hand, growth by meaning would occur both at the moment of interpretation of what is communicated/divulged, and in the process of issuing what is intended to be communicated. Thus, growing by meaning can be defined as the very act of communication. It is important to highlight that communication must be understood as a process in which people aim at the construction of shared meanings; it is not just information transmission but a process of interpretation.

These two dimensions – meaning and coverage – have shown disproportionate growth, that is, the growth

by directions cannot keep up with the growth by coverage.

Irene Machado (1996), discussing the expansion of writing in the confrontation of multiple scriptures, already pointed out the need to rethink the concept of literacy, considering the development of electronic writing. It seems to me that the researcher was previously aware of the advance in coverage that technologies provided and of the importance of improving our textual competence in the field of meanings. For Machado (1996), the child, before going to school, has already witnessed on the street or television “words in movement, progressing in several and with several infinite graphic patterns, words and phrases, growing texts. Therefore, the literacy process “is not mere alphabet soup, but the assimilation and development of textual skills” (p.52). The development of competencies for the construction of shared meanings/senses presupposes the development of the metalinguistic capacity of language production, that is, the perception of possible translations between semiotic systems. When systems come into connection, they do not cancel each other out, but re-elaborate themselves, they grow, they co-evolve.

Understanding cultural dynamics presupposes knowledge of such connections, translations, of the experimentation process. It is through this competence/textual knowledge that we will advance in the field of the senses.

It seems to me that we are still far from teaching that considers the growth of writing. Although the school proposes to teach literacy, it does so by privileging a type of writing: alphabetic. This writing is a fundamental part of the text – our culture – but it is not the text. Therefore, the understanding of alphabetic writing will only happen effectively if we consider the other semiotic systems and their possible connections. It is through the understanding of cultural dynamics that we will advance in the development of the field of the senses. Thus, the review of the literacy concept is a basic requirement for the development not only of contemporary-electronic writing but also for alphabetic writing, that is, growing writing (MACHADO, 1996).

One of the important points in understanding the concept of literacy is to understand the process of culturalization. As we have seen, culture has been undergoing changes resulting from sign processes. Therefore, it is necessary to understand “the world as a language, which manifests itself in various forms of communication and in equally diverse domains” (MACHADO, 2003b, p. 26).

In culture, different systems of signs interact (literature, religion, myth and folklore, cinema, etc.) that are conjugated in a certain hierarchy: a text. It would not be a disordered accumulation of small texts, but a complex organism in which the codes are hierarchically organized. Sound, image, movement, texture, smell, taste are not mere extensions of the sense organs. They are:

Complex elements consequential from a semiotic process, resulting from the action producing the transformation of signs (...) audiovisual texts are exemplary in this sense since their exemplars are semiotic systems (MACHADO, 2003b, p.156).

All culture text is encoded by at least two different systems. Irene (2003) reminds us that “cultural systems are texts not because they are reduced to language but because their structurality comes from modeling based on natural language” (p.39).

Natural language is a primary modeling system. From it, it is possible to understand other systems of culture: the secondary modeling systems. Therefore, modeling is building systems of signs from a model of natural language. “However, each system develops a peculiar form of language and, in the process of

decoding the modeling system, it does not turn to the language model, but to the system that was built from it” (MACHADO, 2003b, p. 50).

In this sense, we cannot conceive of systems of culture as isolated, independent, finished. A text of culture can only exist in its relation to other texts; one depends on the other for the organization. The concept of literacy currently involves understanding this dynamic, that is, how codes are connected, entangled.

The ability to understand semiotic systems depends on knowledge of the cultural codes that are part of these systems. According to Machado (2003b), to be literate in the current context, it is necessary to know the cultural codes. As cultural codes are not isolated systems, distinguishing and reading them is a difficult task. This is what modern literacy sets out to do: firstly, to see that culture is constituted by the intertwining of codes and, secondly, to understand semiotic systems as products of culturalization.

Although Pedagogy courses provide readings by authors such as Vygotsky, Luria, Ferreiro, the language conceptions present in the school still do not allow a discussion that helps the construction of literacy nowadays. We know that these authors bet on a vision of a man who is not only constituted by/in language but by constituting himself, producing and modifying language: “Man appropriates the world by studying language, deciphering the relative text and translating it in a language that is accessible to himself” (MACHADO, 2002b, p.168). We are cultural beings who appropriate the world and transform it into text. As a mechanism that combines various codes, “capable of transforming received messages and generating new messages. This means that a text is not a passive recipient of everything that comes from outside” (MACHADO, 2003b, p.169).

Languages cannot be exhausted in the oral and written, in the same way, that the concept of “text” is not exhausted in the oral and written. All this reinforces the idea that the written word is part of the multiplicity of languages that we have today. Therefore, the concept of literacy is grown, because we read not only the words, but also the images, the sounds that often accompany the images, in short, the different languages. Although the concepts of reading have changed, in recent times, the act of reading remains even more linked to the written word. When we think of a “good” reader, we consider their ability to read verbal texts. Reading is more than that, it is a “process of understanding formal and symbolic expressions, no matter what language” (MARTINS, 1996, p. 30). Thus, the act of reading refers both to something written and to other types of expression of human activity, characterizing itself as a historical event and establishing an equally historical relationship between the reader and what is read. This work involves both prior knowledge of the signs and their functioning, as well as the reader's knowledge of the subject addressed in the text.

5. Final considerations

Thinking of a single literacy concept, suitable for anyone, anywhere, at any time is impossible. Depending on beliefs, values, social context, we will have different concepts. Thus, the definition of what it means to be literate depends on the needs and social conditions present in a given historical moment of society and culture. In addition, in each social environment, reading and writing practices are different, that is, depending on the social roles assumed by people, we will have very different functional reading and writing demands. Therefore, it becomes difficult to define a single set of skills and knowledge that constitutes what

it is to be literate these days. (SOARES, 2003).

It doesn't seem to me that we can come to a single conclusion about what it is to be literate nowadays. However, some aspects that are part of this process must be evoked:

- Awareness that writing is a growing system.
- Identification of the semiotic systems that make up the cultural text.
- Recognition of differences between codes – language distinction.
- Production of verbal and audiovisual texts.
- Familiarization of technologies that produce audiovisual texts: how they work and how they organize their codes.
- Recognition that this process requires systematic learning – someone has to teach.
- Perception of culture as a great text, woven by semiotic systems, and that alphabetic writing is just one of those systems.
- Perception that the semiotic systems that make up our culture are connected, entangled.
- Perception that orality, printed writing, and electronic writing are not distinct moments of an evolving process.

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