

José Luiz Fiorin's Didactic Project for the Teaching of Reading and Text Production / *O projeto didático de José Luiz Fiorin para o ensino de leitura e de produção de texto*

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ABSTRACT

In September of 2014, a group of professors and researchers met to reflect on the contributions that the works published by José Luiz Fiorin bring to the study of discourse, text and to the progress of research in semiotics. This work, with which I joined in the Colloquium, aims to analyze how the didactic project established by this scholar of language's manifestations is relevant for the teaching and reading of text production. Besides, it also reflects the progress made by Brazilian and foreign semioticians concerning the improvement of the methodological project held by this theory, which investigates the constitution of the meaning of texts.

KEYWORDS: Fiorin; Reading; Didactic Work; Text Writing; Semiotics

RESUMO

Em setembro de 2014, um grupo de professores e de pesquisadores reuniu-se para refletir sobre as contribuições que os trabalhos publicados por José Luiz Fiorin trazem para os estudos do discurso, do texto e para os avanços das investigações em semiótica. Este trabalho, com o qual participei do colóquio, procura examinar como o projeto didático estabelecido por esse estudioso das manifestações da linguagem tem uma importância significativa para o ensino de leitura e de produção de textos, ao mesmo tempo em que reflete os avanços realizados pelos semioticistas brasileiros e estrangeiros em relação ao aprimoramento do projeto metodológico realizado por essa teoria que investiga a constituição do sentido do texto.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Fiorin; Leitura; Obra didática; Redação; Semiótica

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Fiorin: The Teacher and the Researcher

Based on the analysis of two books by Fiorin, this paper aims to focus on the importance of the written work¹ of professor and linguist José Luiz Fiorin, which is concerned with the teaching of reading of text production.

Fiorin has published several books whereby he discusses different issues related to language, discourse, and text. Although many important aspects could be highlighted, I have chosen to approach the production that addresses the teaching of reading and text production. Even if some might say that it is a less academic production, in which supposedly there is no deepening of theoretical issues related to text analysis, I consider it important for two main reasons. First, because it is a way to disseminate the methodological-theoretical proposal of semiotics in the study of text beyond academy and relate it to other theories; second, because his textbooks eventually provide high school students and their teachers with a chance to approach issues related to reading and text production very differently from those proposed by many other textbooks, released by the Brazilian publishing market, for they only repeat traditional approaches, without incorporating the advances in research on discourse and text.

By the time Fiorin wrote *Para entender o texto: leitura e redação* [To Understand Text: Reading and Writing] in partnership with Francisco Platão Savioli,² I was already his PhD advisee in the graduate program in Linguistics of Faculdade de

¹ During two days in the first half of September of 2014, the III Colóquio Cearense de Semiótica [3rd Colloquium on Semiotics in Ceará] was held in Fortaleza. Organized by the Semioce Study Group, it paid tribute to the semiotician and professor José Luiz Fiorin. I attended the scheduled sessions on those days as one of the lecturers.

² Francisco Platão Savioli has a bachelor's degree in Latin, Linguistics, and Portuguese, and a teacher education degree in Portuguese. Besides, he holds a master's degree in Linguistics and a PhD degree in Linguistics and Romanic Philology from the Faculty of Philosophy, Languages and Literature, and Human Sciences (FFLCH/USP [University of São Paulo]). Not only is he a teacher, but he is also an author and a supervisor of the Sistema Anglo de Ensino (Abril Educação) [Anglo Teaching System] in the area of Portuguese. He is the author of *Gramática em 44 lições: compêndio para o 2º grau e primeiros anos do curso superior* [Grammar in 44 Lessons: A Collection for Secondary Education and the First Years of Higher Education]; *Para entender o texto* [To Understand Texts – in co-authorship with Prof. Dr. José Luiz Fiorin]; *Lições de texto: leitura e redação* [Text Lessons: Reading and Writing – in co-authorship with Prof. Dr. José Luiz Fiorin]; *Gramática e texto* [Grammar and Text] (a textbook collection used by the Sistema Anglo de Ensino [Anglo Teaching System] for the three years of high school), and *Manual do Candidato ao Concurso de Admissão à Carreira de Diplomata* [Textbook for Foreign Service Entrance Exam – in co-authorship with Prof. Dr. José Luiz Fiorin]. He also developed a two-term Portuguese program entitled *Língua Portuguesa: revisão de texto I e II* [The Portuguese Language: Reviewing Texts I and II] for the Dept. de Jornalismo e Editoração [Department of Journalism and Editing] from the Escola de Comunicações e Artes [School of Communication and Arts] (ECA/USP). As an advisor at UNESCO in the area of Linguagens e Códigos [Languages and Codes], he develops curriculum prototypes for high schools: *Currículo Integrado para o Ensino Médio: das normas à prática transformadora* [Integrated Curriculum for High Schools: Form Norms to Transforming Practices]. Edited by Marilza Regattieri and Jane Margareth Castro. Brasília: UNESCO, 2013.

Filosofia, Letras e Ciências Humanas da Universidade de São Paulo [The College of Philosophy, Languages and Human Sciences of the University of São Paulo] and, from its inception, the book proposed to work the issue of discourse didactically by keeping the perspective of the semiotic treatment of the problem of teaching reading and text production. Since my Master's degree and Habilitation, my concern has always been to work on reading comprehension. Text production, in turn, must be understood as a consequence of the act of reading. There is no opposition between producing and reading texts. From the act of reading, a new text emerges. Therefore, one can say that the act of reading is an intertextual procedure. This is an issue that has always been associated with my research.

However, beyond this comprehension about reading and writing, what are the other reasons that lead me to highlight Fiorin's didactic production in partnership with Platão? One of them is the fact that I consider him a person who has a very rare ability to diffuse theoretical knowledge in a way that it reaches different audiences. As a result of his continuous reflection and his vast knowledge, Fiorin has a quite heterogeneous production.

In his work *Elementos de análise do discurso* [Elements of Discourse Analysis],³ the basic theoretical principles of semiotics from Algirdas Julien Greimas' works are taught in order to provide the reader with an understanding of discourse treatment. In other words, in a simple way the authors say what seems so complex to us, what we read in theory and imagine how it would be possible to say it without resorting to repeating the words of the authors who created the theory. It is also for this reason that this work is considered an introductory textbook to discursive semiotic studies. Fiorin has this ability, because he simply does not reproduce the semiotic theory; he recreates it. Therefore, it is in this context that I have chosen to discuss the didactic work produced by the author, without, however, failing to consider the importance of all his writing production. However, my task will be to briefly introduce the concept on which *Para entender o texto: leitura e redação* [To Understand Text: Reading and Writing] was written and to compare it to another work produced by the author, entitled *Lições de texto: leitura e redação* [Text Lessons: Reading and Writing], for there is a very close relationship between them.

³ Editor's Note. Cf. Jean Cristtus Portela's A Textbook of Textbooks: Elements of Discourse Analysis, published in this issue of *Bakhtiniana*.

In addition, it is worth mentioning something relevant in this introduction. The didactic work produced by Fiorin is not his sole authorship, because, as already stated above, the two books to which we will refer here were produced in partnership with Professor Francisco Platão Savioli. Since the person in focus is José Luiz Fiorin, because this text was produced at an event in his honor, I will try to show how his didactic production, made by four hands, reflects the making of his individual work, which means disseminating semiotic theory and reflecting on it. Thus, I also intend to justify the title given to this text: José Luiz Fiorin Didactic's Project for the Teaching of Reading and Text Production. Although the authors of the two books in question are Fiorin and Platão or Platão and Fiorin (the order does not establish hierarchies) and, recognizing that this didactic project is developed by both authors at the same time, I emphasize again that, because of the tribute to one of the authors, my eyes will be directed to the actions of one of them, namely, Fiorin, as a teacher, a researcher, an intellectual who reflects on questions of significance from semiotics perspective and who, in his reflections, was always concerned about teaching reading and text production.

***Para entender o texto: leitura e redação* [To Understand Text: Reading and Writing]**

To start writing about his didactic work, I emphasize that *Para entender o texto: leitura e redação* [To Understand Text: Reading and Writing]⁴ was first published in 1990 and reissued with a different cover in 2007. It was in its 17th edition. For this reason, it can be said that Fiorin and Platão reached the level of best-selling textbooks. I use the term 'best-selling,' because on my professorial research for Habilitation I worked with best-sellers edited in Brazil from the 1960s until the 2010s. However, this topic had absolutely nothing to do with didactic books, since the work was produced from another *corpus*. The reason for drawing attention to the fact that in 2007 the book reached its 17th edition is to recognize that it had a very positive reception by high schools Portuguese teachers, who adopted it. In order to check what the purpose of this work is, instead of presenting an overview on the contents of the entire book, I will highlight the preface from *Para entender o texto* [To Understand Text] to see how the subject of enunciation constructs the images of the enunciator, of the enunciatee and, at

⁴ TN. Henceforth, To Understand Text: Reading and Writing will be referred to as To Understand Text and Text Lessons: Reading and Writing as Text Lessons.

the same time, how it presents the proposal from which the book is designed. I will also examine the first lesson, as it establishes the notion of text and, finally, I will compare the first lesson of the book *Para entender o texto* [To Understand Text] with the introductory lesson of his other didactic work, *Lições de texto* [Text Lessons], because it is built from the same perspective although we can see differences in composition between them.

In first place, we will examine the preface of the book *Para entender o texto* [To Understand Text], (FIORIN; PLATÃO. 1990, pp.3-4), which is presented below:

Dear Professor,

Helping the student to become an autonomous reader and a competent producer of texts is the first commitment of our craft.

We all know, however, that this task is difficult. To overcome this difficulty, there is no shortage of pedagogical proposals that, when they do not appeal to easy solutions, get lost in generalities and vague advice that do not give any support to the teacher's daily practice and any indicator of the steps that the student should follow.

This book, a result of studies and practice of several years in the classroom, was written to risk a concrete response to the challenge of teaching students to interpret and produce texts.

It arises from the belief that, at least in the context of our social reality, the school cannot allow itself to be carried away by the illusion that the learning of reading and writing will result from a competence to be spontaneously acquired throughout school experience. This book is first based on the assumption that the explanation of the production mechanisms of text meaning decisively contributes to improve student's achievement in reading and writing.

The expertise to read and produce texts is divided in three levels: knowledge of the linguistic system; knowledge of the socio-historical context in which the text was produced; knowledge of the mechanisms for structuring the meaning. This book deals with the last two, since grammars deal with the first. Thus, it seeks to explain how a text relates to others (narrative structures, themes, expedient of cohesion and of argumentation, expressive resources...).

Each lesson tries to focus on a text-building mechanism. All of them, except the last four, which illustrate the work of reading different types of text, consist of four parts:

- a. theoretical exposition of a construction mechanism of a text meaning. There was an effort, as much as possible, to avoid the specialized terminology. When its use became indispensable, the care to define the terms and illustrate them was taken;
- b. a commented text in which the studied mechanism in the theoretical part is applied. This comment was always intent on exploring the functionality of the explicit mechanism for the purpose of understanding the overall meaning of the text under consideration. The suggested comment can always be extended by the teacher or the students. As it is known, no analysis is complete and finished;

- c. a text is followed by a questionnaire. By applying the learned concepts, this exercise aims to lead the student to understand the global meaning of the text;
- d. a proposal of writing to encourage the student to produce a text with the use of a procedure studied/approached in the lesson.

We do not disregard that reading and text production require sensitivity. We believe, however, that sensitivity is not an innate gift, but a quality that is developed. On the other hand, only recommending the student to read the text many times is not enough, but you need to show him where to direct his attention.

As all education projects can always be improved, we look forward to the contributions of those who will adopt this book.

The authors⁵

Let us examine how the subject of enunciation is shown in the preface of *Para entender o texto* [To Understand Text]. It is possible to immediately notice that on the preface's text, the enunciator is manifested through a directed address to the teacher, as we see in the opening expression "dear teacher."⁶ This is, therefore, the referent to the listener's image, which is progressively built and with which the speaker dialogues.

⁵ In the original: "Prezado Professor, Auxiliar o aluno a tornar-se um leitor autônomo e um produtor competente de textos é o compromisso primeiro de nosso ofício. Todos sabemos, porém, que essa tarefa é difícil. Para contornar essa dificuldade, não têm faltado propostas pedagógicas que, quando não apelam para soluções fáceis, perdem-se em generalidades e conselhos vagos que não fornecem nenhum subsídio para a prática diária do professor e nenhum indicador dos passos que o aluno deve seguir. Este livro, resultado de estudos e da prática de vários anos em sala de aula, foi escrito para arriscar uma resposta concreta ao desafio de ensinar o aluno a interpretar e a produzir textos. Ele surge da crença de que, ao menos no âmbito de nossa realidade social, a escola não pode deixar-se levar pela ilusão de que o aprendizado da leitura e da escrita vá resultar de uma competência a ser espontaneamente adquirida ao longo da experiência escolar. Este livro baseia-se antes no pressuposto de que a explicitação dos mecanismos de produção de sentido do texto contribui decisivamente para melhorar o desempenho do aluno na leitura e na escrita. Os conhecimentos necessários para ler e produzir textos são de três níveis: conhecimento do sistema linguístico: conhecimento do contexto sócio-histórico em que o texto foi construído; conhecimento dos mecanismos de estruturação do significado. Este livro ocupa-se dos dois últimos, já que as gramáticas se ocupam do primeiro. Assim, ele procura explicar como um texto se relaciona com outros (estruturas narrativas, temas, expediente de coesão e de argumentação, recursos expressivos...). Cada lição procura enfocar um mecanismo de construção do texto. Todas elas, exceto as quatro últimas, que ilustram o trabalho de leitura de diferentes tipos de texto, constam de quatro partes: a) exposição teórica de um mecanismo de construção do sentido do texto. Procurou-se, o quanto possível, evitar a terminologia especializada. Quando seu uso se tornou indispensável, tomou-se o cuidado de definir os termos e ilustrá-los; b) um texto comentado em que se aplica mecanismo estudado na parte teórica. Esse comentário teve sempre a preocupação de explorar a funcionalidade do mecanismo explicitado para fins de compreensão do significado global do texto sob consideração. O comentário sugerido pode ser sempre ampliado pelo professor ou pelos alunos. Como se sabe, nenhuma análise é completa e acabada; c) um texto, acompanhado de um questionário. Este exercício tem por finalidade levar o aluno, por meio da aplicação dos conceitos apreendidos, a perceber o significado global do texto; d) uma proposta de redação para estimular o aluno a construir um texto, utilizando o procedimento estudado na lição. Não ignoramos que a leitura e a produção de texto exigem sensibilidade. Acreditamos, porém, que a sensibilidade não seja um dom inato, mas uma qualidade que se desenvolve. Por outro lado, não basta apenas recomendar ao aluno que leia o texto muitas vezes, é preciso mostrar-lhe para onde dirigir a atenção. Como todo projeto didático é sempre perfectível, aguardamos as contribuições dos que vierem a adotar este livro. Os autores."

⁶ In the original: "prezado professor."

In first paragraph, the enunciator is materialized in the form of a first person plural, through the pronoun ‘we,’ present in the expression “our craft,” which closes this paragraph. The use of this pronominal form is due to the fact that the authorship of the text preface is twofold, once the book is written by two authors, José Luiz Fiorin and Francisco Platão Savioli. And these two subjects are materialized in the expression “the authors,” which corresponds to the signature that finishes the text. In addition, in the first paragraph, the overall purpose of the book is presented. It aims at “helping the student to become an autonomous reader and a texts’ producer.” Thus, addressing the enunciatee-teacher, the enunciator makes explicit an action that will trigger the transformation of the being of the person whom this enunciatee teaches; in other words, this enunciator proposes to assist the enunciatee in making his student competent in reading and writing.

Assuming that the task of making students good readers and producers of proficient texts is not easy, the second paragraph of the preface introduces a central argument to prompt its enunciatee to believe that this book does not advocate a pedagogical proposal that calls for “easy solutions” or is lost in “generalities and vague advice.” Then, it is in this paragraph that the enunciator stands in polemic opposition to that kind of book that is aimed at teaching reading and text production. The explanation of the competence of the authors and their work will be decisively presented in the third paragraph, when it affirms that the work in focus is “the result of study and practice of several years in the classroom.” Thus, the proposal for the teaching of reading and text production results from scientific knowledge and the actual teaching practice, which means that this proposal ideally combines theory and practice, establishing itself as innovative. Thus, it establishes the process of seduction of the enunciator’s discourse in relation to the enunciatee-teacher at whom it is aimed.

In fact, before continuing the examination of the text presentation discussed so far, it is worth inquiring about the innovative character of the proposal submitted by the authors of *Para entender o texto* [To Understand the Text], regarding the teaching of reading and text production. It stems from the fact that the book is designed under the perspective of the Paris school of semiotics, and thus it does not simply repeat the same speech present in most textbooks with their common purpose. All the book lessons will be planned from the theoretical-methodological basis of semiotics. And this is precisely the fact that makes Fiorin a researcher and a scholar of language, someone who is committed to the dissemination of a specific theoretical conception in teaching practice.

By extending his horizons, his theoretical conceptions will contribute to the dissemination and transformation of Brazilian semiotics, which is originated from the studies of Greimas and his group.

In the fourth paragraph of the presentation, the enunciator refers to his affiliation in semiotics, when he affirms that his work is based on the “assumption that the explanation of the production mechanisms of text meaning decisively contributes to improve student’s achievement in reading and writing.” It is exactly the search for this explanation of the production mechanisms of text meaning that the enunciator will pursue throughout the different lessons of the book. In the fifth paragraph, the reason why the authors decided to use the discursive semiotics as a theoretical-methodological support to their work is presented. The enunciator states that his discourse defends that the knowledge required to read and produce texts corresponds to the observation of the “socio-historical context in which the text was built” and to the examination of the “meaning of the structuring mechanisms.”

In the book *O regime de 1964: discurso e ideologia* [The regime of 1964: Discourse and Ideology],⁷ the view that for Fiorin a text always has a relationship with its socio-historical context is crucial in the way he sees discourse. However, it is important to note that the relationship of the text with its context should not be confused with the contraposition of text to a certain history to which it is aggregated. In fact, the socio-historical context is constituted of interdiscursivity and intertextuality. It is precisely because meaning obeys structuring mechanisms that it is possible to examine and demonstrate how the discourse that constitutes the text establishes a relation of repetition of other discourses or of opposition to them.

Thus, after saying what the book’s proposal is, contrasting it with that which is not and finally marking its theoretical-methodological position for the treatment of the issue of reading and text production, the enunciator begins to show how the book is organized, that is, the way each lesson is structured. Each lesson has a first moment of theoretical exposition; then a text analysis that focuses on the theoretical issue highlighted in the first part; an application of what was presented in the theoretical part by means of a questionnaire about a given text and, considering what was explained in the first part, observed in the second, and exercised in the third, a text production is proposed to encourage students to produce a written text.

⁷ Editor’s Note. Cf. Beth Brait’s *Between the Semiotic and the Ideological*, published in this issue of *Bakhtiniana*.

In the penultimate paragraph, what the enunciator states to his enunciatee-teacher is that writing well, conversely to what is often repeated by several people, does not depend solely on the amount of reading students do. Although reading is important, written is only improved if students exercise it. Writing well means reading, but it also means producing. The act of continued production is important because only when students produce a text do they realize how to behave in writing and how their performance is developed in order to defend a point of view that they adopt for building the text. What these considerations indicate is exactly the confirmation of the theoretical-methodological proposal of semiotics for the study of text.

In the last paragraph, the enunciator interacts again with his enunciatee, inviting those who adopt the book to contact the authors to discuss what they consider necessary to improve in the work so that its objectives are achieved more effectively.

When we look at the content of the book, which lists the 44 lessons that comprise it, it is possible to notice explicitly how the theoretical-methodological assumptions of semiotics support each of the planned activities. In order to show the architecture of this semiotic textbook and the extent it dialogues with other theoretical postulates for the study of text, I propose that we examine, from the observation of the content, how the lessons are organized. For this reason, I divide it into three parts. The first, reproduced below, which includes lessons 1 to 12, corresponds, as we can see from the title of each lesson, to the presentation of the generative course of meaning, which is a central tenet of standard semiotic theory.

- Lesson 1 – Considerations on the Concept of Text
- Lesson 2 – Relationships between Texts
- Lesson 3 - The Text and its Relation with History
- Lesson 4 - Reading Levels of a Text
- Lesson 5 - Deep Structure of the Text
- Lesson 6 - Narrative Structure (I)
- Lesson 7 - Narrative Structure (II)
- Lesson 8 - Themes and Figures: The Apprehension of the Theme
- Lesson 9 - Themes and Figures: The Concatenation of Figures
- Lesson 10 - Themes and Figures: The Concatenation of Themes
- Lesson 11 - Themes and Figures: The Lexical Selection
- Lesson 12 - The Various Possibilities of Reading a Text⁸

⁸ In the original: “Lição 1 – Considerações sobre a noção de texto; Lição 2 – As relações entre textos; Lição 3 – O texto e suas relações com a História; Lição 4 – Níveis de leitura de um texto; Lição 5 – Estrutura profunda do texto; Lição 6 – Estrutura narrativa (I); Lição 7 – Estrutura narrativa (II); Lição 8 – Temas e figuras: a apreensão do tema; Lição 9 – Temas e figuras: o encadeamento das figuras; Lição 10 – Temas e figuras: o encadeamento de temas; Lição 11 – Temas e figuras: a seleção lexical; Lição 12 – As várias possibilidades de leitura de um texto.”

The second part of the division proposed to the book content, also shown below, comprehends lessons 13 to 31; in it the discursive level of the generative course of meaning is further explored. Starting, then, from a distinction between denotation and connotation in lesson 13, the book proposes, in the next lesson, the examination of the difference between metaphor and metonymy. Returning to the specific semiotic terminology that defines the theme and the figure as instances of discourse, lesson 14 examines how the combination of the themes and the figures produce distinct meaning effects that provide specific discursive organizations. To demonstrate that, the lesson examines four discourse procedures: antithesis, oxymoron, prosopopoeia, and synesthesia. This way, we observe that the book dissociates the concept of “figure of speech,” characteristic of school grammars, from the semiotic theory’s concept of “figure.” These considerations concerning the rhetoric of the text are followed by a discussion on argumentation, and subsequently by the exam of the concept of linguistic norm. They end with the explanation of the concepts of coherence and cohesion, always explained from the semiotic perspective for the treatment of each of these discourse aspects.

- Lesson 13 – Denotation and Connotation
- Lesson 14 – Metaphor and Metonymy
- Lesson 15 – Ways to Combine Figures and Themes
- Lesson 16 – Ways to Narrate
- Lesson 17 – Ways of Ordering Time
- Lesson 18 – Text Segmentation (I)
- Lesson 19 – Text Segmentation (II)
- Lesson 20 – Argumentation
- Lesson 21 – Ways of Quoting the Speech of Others
- Lesson 22 – Saying One Thing to Mean Another
- Lesson 23 – Argumentation Defects (I)
- Lesson 24 – Argumentation Defects (II)
- Lesson 25 – Standard Linguistic and Argumentation (I)
- Lesson 26 – Standard Linguistic and Argumentation (II)
- Lesson 27 – Implicit Information
- Lesson 28 – Bias
- Lesson 29 – Coherence
- Lesson 30 – Textual Cohesion (I)
- Lesson 31 – Textual Cohesion (II)⁹

⁹In the original: “Lição 13 – Denotação e conotação; Lição 14 – Metáfora e metonímia; Lição 15 – Modos de combinar figuras e temas; Lição 16 – Modos de narrar; Lição 17 – Modos de ordenar o tempo; Lição 18 – Segmentação do texto (I); Lição 19 – Segmentação do texto (II); Lição 20 – Argumentação; Lição 21 – Modos de citação do discurso alheio; Lição 22 – Dizer uma coisa para significar outra; Lição 23 – Defeitos de argumentação (I); Lição 24 – Defeitos de argumentação (II); Lição 25 – Norma linguística e argumentação (I); Lição 26 – Norma linguística e argumentação (II); Lição 27 – As informações implícitas; Lição 28 – Viés; Lição 29 – Coerência; Lição 30 – Coesão textual (I); Lição 31 – Coesão textual (II).”

The last part of the division, proposed for the examination of the content shown below, corresponds to lessons 32 to 44. It resumes the classical description of text typology, which distinguishes narration, description, and dissertation. After that, a distinction between the plane of content and the plane of text expression and between the literary and the non-literary text is established. Then, an approach to the notion of non-verbal text is shown. To end the list of lessons, from 41 on, samples of analysis of four distinct texts are proposed: poetic, narrative, didactic, and journalistic. Thus, from the typological distinction between narration, description and dissertation, which is related to procedures of discourse structuring, the book will limit itself to the examination of different textual settings, when addressing the distinction between literary and non-literary text, the verbal and the non-verbal, abstract and review.

- Lesson 32 - Narration
- Lesson 33 – Description and Dissertation
- Lesson 34 – The Argumentative Discourse of Scientific Nature
- Lesson 35 – Discursive Progression
- Lesson 36 – The Sonorous Text Plan
- Lesson 37 – Grammatical Resources and Arrangement of Words in the Text
- Lesson 38 – Literary and Non-Literary Text
- Lesson 39 – Originality
- Lesson 40 – Non-verbal Text
- Lesson 41 – Analysis of a Poem: Tecendo a manhã [Weaving the Morning – João Cabral]
- Lesson 42 – Analysis of a Narration: O corvo e a raposa [The Crow and the Fox – La Fontaine]
- Lesson 43 – A Didactic Text Analysis: Domínio de validade [Domain of Validity] (H. Moysés Nussenzveig)
- Lesson 44 – Analysis of a Newspaper Text: Astrônomos e astrólogos mantêm divergência [Astronomers and Astrologers Keep the Divergence – Folha de S. Paulo]
- Appendix –Abstract and Review¹⁰

What can be seen from the examination of the preface and the content is that the book is organized from the semiotician point of view that works a certain notion of text

¹⁰ In the original: “Lição 32 – Narração; Lição 33 – Descrição e dissertação; Lição 34 – O discurso dissertativo de caráter científico; Lição 35 – Progressão discursiva; Lição 36 – O plano sonoro do texto; Lição 37 – Recursos gramaticais e disposição das palavras no texto; Lição 38 – Texto literário e texto não-literário; Lição 39 – Originalidade; Lição 40 – Texto não-verbal; Lição 41 – Análise de um poema: Tecendo a manhã (João Cabral); Lição 42 – Análise de uma narração: O corvo e a raposa (La Fontaine); Lição 43 – Análise de um texto didático: Domínio de validade (H. Moysés Nussenzveig); Lição 44 – Análise de um texto de jornal: Astrônomos e astrólogos mantêm divergência (Folha de S. Paulo); Apêndice – Resumo e resenha.”

and adds, to the didactic language, a specific proposal for the treatment of certain contents. What is meant, then, is that the book, by inserting itself in the textbook market, should provide students with the skills they need to produce texts in Portuguese and to read proficiently, according to the requirements of high school syllabi. Therefore, the importance of Fiorin's work in partnership with Platão, referring to this work, consists precisely in presenting high school content in an innovative way, which is based on a theoretical perspective that obeys a scientific coherence, unlike what is done in other didactic books used in Brazilian high schools.

Not to limit myself only to the examination of the general aspects of the proposal of Florin's didactic work, as it has been done until now when I covered his preface and the items in the content, I propose a more specific examination of the treatment of the notion of text, central to the semiotics perspective, as presented in the first lesson of the book.

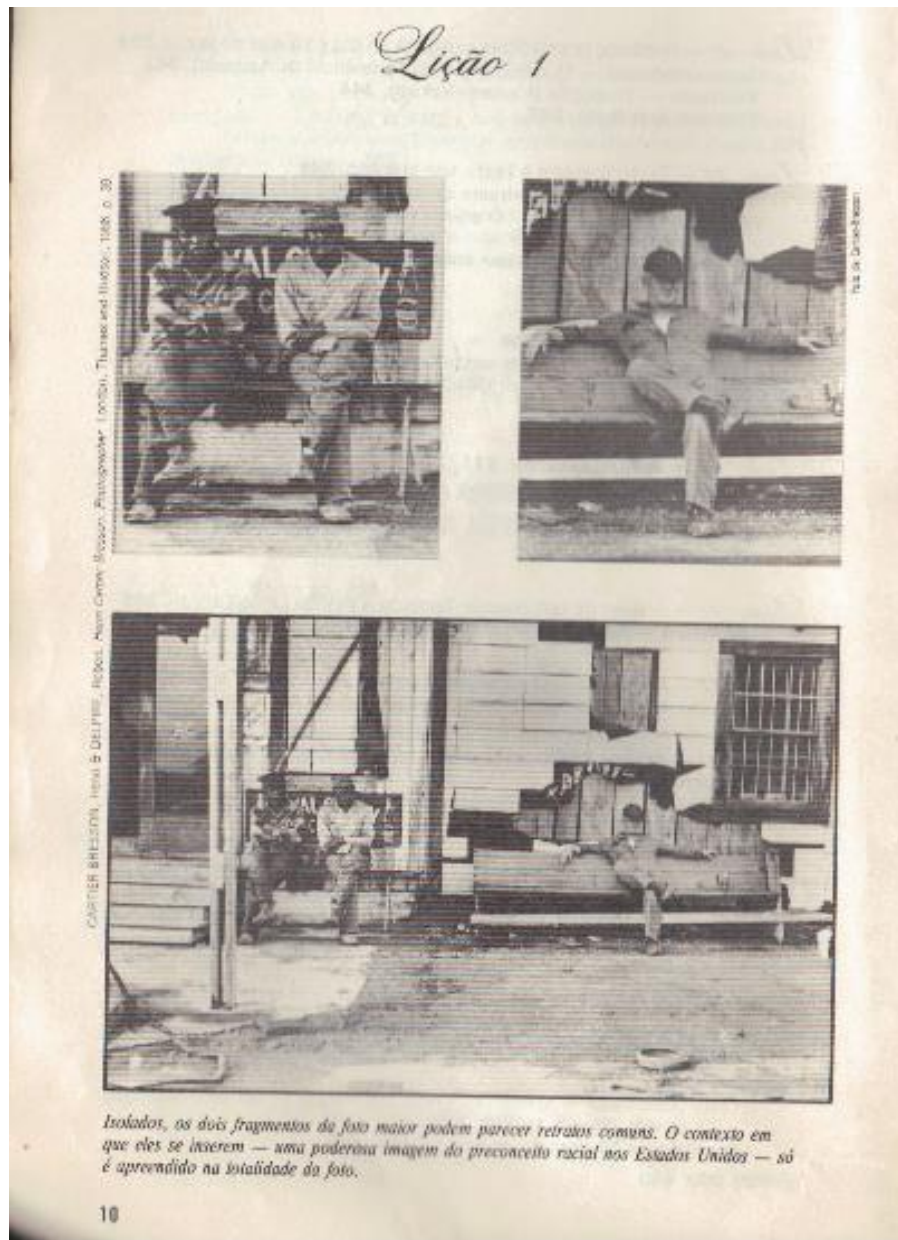


Figure 1 – Fiorin; Platão (1990, p.10)

Initially, it is important to note that the book *Para entender o texto* [To Understand the Text], although presenting images, is entirely monochromatic, i.e., all illustrations are reproduced in black and white. It is important to notice that, in the very first lesson of *Para entender o texto* [To Understand Text], the notion of text is explored from visuality, from image. When opening the book to page 10, where the first lesson begins, at the top of the page, (Fig.1) on the left side, the reader comes across a photo of two black men sitting on a bench, side by side. The proxemic configuration points to constriction. Since they do not have much space to accommodate themselves on the bench, their legs and their arms are crossed and the distance between them (so they do

not touch each other) is minimal. On the other hand, beside this photo, at the top right of the same page, another photo is shown. It is a photo of a white man, also sitting on a bench, in a proxemic configuration that denotes expansion. His arms are wide open under the back of the bench, and his right leg crosses over the left knee. Immediately below these two pictures, there is one more, where it is possible to notice the prospect of a greater distance of the camera, whereby one realizes that what was exposed above corresponds to two fragments of this third picture. Now it is possible to identify the two black men and the white man seated, each in a separate bank, in a typical landscape of the US countryside, where the constriction and expansion categories previously identified make sense in the overall composition of the image. It is the materialization of racial prejudice. And that is marked by the text that appears immediately below these pictures: “Isolated, the two largest photo fragments may seem ordinary pictures. The context in which they are placed – a powerful image of racial prejudice in the United States – is only apprehended in the totality of the picture” (FIORIN; PLATÃO, 1990, p.10).¹¹

The defense of the principle pointed out above – that a text to be interpreted depends on the context in which it is produced – is already present in the reproduction of the visual text that opens the book’s first lesson. In other words, it does not match a pile of parts isolated from each other that dispense with the principles of cohesion and coherence. At the same time its ‘saying’ action reproduces or refutes other discourses with which it establishes relationships. It will be from this initial placement that the lesson discusses the notion of text, pointing out that the nature of text can only be understood if two fundamental considerations are observed: text “is not a cluster of sentences” and “every text contains a statement within a debate of a broader scale.”

To attend to the first consideration on the notion of text, which means, that it does not correspond to a cluster of sentences without any logical relations of implication between them, the lesson evokes an example. It refers to the declaration by the secretary of Industry and Commerce of the State of São Paulo, Mr. Otávio Ceccato. At the time, he was one of the suspects in the corruption case involving the proposal of creating a game lottery called *Raspadinha* [Scratch Card]. According to a report in *Veja* magazine published in June 1988, in order to defend his innocence, the secretary reaffirmed that

¹¹ In the original: “Isolados, os dois fragmentos da foto maior podem parecer retratos comuns. O contexto em que eles se inserem – uma poderosa imagem do preconceito racial nos Estados Unidos – só é apreendido na totalidade da foto.”

he had no relation with the corruption scheme. He invoked a phrase said by St. Peter in the New Testament in which he denied to know Jesus Christ three times before Jesus was arrested and sentenced to crucifixion. Ceccato said, “Like St. Peter, I deny, I deny, I deny.”¹² What the *Veja* reporter highlighted, however, was the fact that when invoking that phrase to plead his innocence, the secretary had forgotten that, in the New Testament context, it perhaps represented the only lie that St. Peter had pronounced throughout his life. That is exactly what the lesson emphasizes, that a repeated phrase in isolation from its context has its meaning distorted.

To defend the second argument, the lesson introduces a text that narrates how the young John Hinckley Jr. bought a gun to a store in Texas with which he shot Ronald Reagan, the president at that time. The reference to this event shows how, behind the way the story is reported, there is a position taken by the enunciator on the risk that the US legislation takes to allow the action of selling firearms to anyone indiscriminately. Therefore, it is thus that a reference is made to the premise that “every text contains a statement within a debate of a broader scale.”

As it has been pointed out previously, what comes after the understanding of the theoretical premises from which the word “text” is used in the book is the presentation of a text of Mário de Andrade, a questionnaire that allows the student to understand a text of Clarice Lispector and, finally, a production proposal that suggests a new writing for the initial paragraph of Clarice’s text presented in the previous section. This activity has students write the continuation of the narrative so that it may maintain cohesion with the introduction and thematic-figurative coherence. This four-stage disposition will be repeated along the 44 lessons of the book.

***Lições de texto: leitura e redação* [Text Lessons: Reading and Writing]**

Unlike *Para entender o texto* [To Understand the Text], *Lições de texto* [Text Lessons], published six years after the first, in 1996, is polychromatic, that is, all the images reproduced in it are not in black and white anymore, but always in color. This is already an indication that the visual text acquires greater evidence, because it is increasingly explored by textbooks that focus on communication. Another reason is

¹² In the original: “Como São Pedro, nego, nego, nego.”

that, in the center of semiotic studies, the examination of the visual texts and, consequently, of verb-visual ones, gains greater importance. It thus establishes the basic proposal of semiotics: to explain the process of producing meaning of any kind of text, not only written texts, as it was in the beginning of its research.

Besides its attention to chromaticism, one of the constitutional categories of the plane of expression of the plastic text, it is possible to notice that, in *Lições de texto* [Text Lessons], there is a change in the *ethos* configuration of the enunciation. The book no longer begins with a “preface,” as it could be examined in the previous item, when I discussed about the book *Para entender o texto* [To Understand the Text], but by a “presentation.” The presentation is not formally addressed to the “dear teacher” as in the other book, although it is still signed by “the authors.” This introductory text is characterized by greater effacement of the manifestation of the enunciator’s voice, which, while is still expressed in the form of a “we” (Platão and Fiorin), is more formal, almost reproducing the tone of a scientific text.

Keeping the same format of the previous book, that is, each lesson is divided into four distinct parts – theoretical discussion; text analysis with theoretical exploration seen in the first part; textual interpretation exercises, focusing on what has been seen and exemplified in the previous two parts, and a proposal for text production – the presentation contrasts with the particular practice of teaching writing that turns exclusively to the exploitation of grammatical aspects of language. At the same time, it introduces the perspective from which the text is set, which is better developed in the first lesson. This can be observed in the following paragraph, from the presentation:

The responsibility for the teaching of reading and text production is not exclusive of the Portuguese language teacher, but it is his major commitment. And for the success of this project, it is not enough to provide students with a grammatical knowledge stock or to enable them to analyze and produce isolated sentences: it is necessary to take a step further, since the text construction involves more complex mechanisms than the mere juxtaposition of a sentence next to another. The ‘step further’ consists of describing the mechanisms of textual construction and empowering students to operate them (FIORIN; PLATÃO,1996, p.3).¹³

¹³ In the original: “A responsabilidade pelo ensino da leitura e produção de textos não é exclusiva do professor de Língua Portuguesa, mas é seu compromisso prioritário. E para o sucesso desse projeto não é suficiente prover o aluno de um estoque de conhecimentos gramaticais, nem habilitá-lo a analisar e produzir frases isoladas: é necessário dar um passo além, já que a construção de um texto envolve mecanismos mais complexos do que a mera justaposição de uma frase ao lado de outra. O passo além consiste em descrever os mecanismos de construção textual e capacitar o aluno a operar com eles.”

As it can be seen in the excerpt above, the notion that the text is not a disordered jumble of phrases and that it obeys construction mechanisms is already mentioned in the introduction. And it is thus that the authors distinguish the approach of the analyzed book from the textuality of other textbooks.

The 44 lessons of the previous book are reduced to 25. However, in the same way as the previous ones, these new lessons can be grouped into distinct parts. Instead of three, I propose a division into five parts, according to a principle that unites them. The first establishes what text is. Then it discusses the principle of constitutive heterogeneity of discourse through the presentation of the concept of voice and of the two ways that show it in texts, i.e., marked and unmarked forms.

- Lesson 1 – Considerations on the Notion of Text
- Lesson 2 – Voices Present in the Text
- Lesson 3 – Voices Shown and Demarcated in the Text
- Lesson 4 – Voices Not Shown and Not Demarcated in the Text¹⁴

Part two includes lessons 5 to 14 and its purpose. Such as part one of the previous book, it consists of discussing the procedure of meaning production through the generative course of meaning proposed by semiotics. What can be seen in the exhibition of the steps of this path is that the semio-narrative level is less prominent than the discursive level, for the focus of most lessons centers on discourse materiality.

- Lesson 5 – Fundamental Organization
- Lesson 6 – Themed Texts and Figurative Texts
- Lesson 7 – Concatenation of Figures or Themes
- Lesson 8 – Figuration and Linguistic Variation
- Lesson 9 – The Various Possibilities of Reading a Text
- Lesson 10 – Ways to Combine Figures and Themes
- Lesson 11 – Changing the Meaning of Words
- Lesson 12 – Narrator's Presence in the Text
- Lesson 13 – Characters and Space
- Lesson 14 – Time¹⁵

¹⁴ In the original: “Lição 1 – Considerações sobre a noção de texto; Lição 2 – Vozes presentes no texto; Lição 3 – Vozes mostradas e demarcadas no texto; Lição 4 – Vozes mostradas e não demarcadas no texto.”

¹⁵ In the original: “Lição 5 – Organização fundamental; Lição 6 – Textos temáticos e textos figurativos; Lição 7 – O encadeamento de figuras ou de temas; Lição 8 – Figuratividade e variação linguística; Lição 9 – As várias possibilidades de leitura de um texto; Lição 10 – Modos de combinar figuras e temas; Lição 11 – Alteração do sentido das palavras; Lição 12 – Presença do narrador no texto; Lição 13 – Personagens e espaço; Lição 14 – Tempo.”

In the third part, there is the resumption of the classical typology of textual structures, defined by narrative, descriptive, and argumentative procedures. This was explored in the latter part of the previous book.

Lesson 15 – Narration
Lesson 16 – Description
Lesson 17 – Dissertation¹⁶

The fourth part of the content introduces an aspect of the constitution of meaning that was not explicitly explored in the previous book. It is about examining the preconditions of meaning, or rather, that which establishes the argumentative procedure of text and can take the most different configurations. Starting from the concepts of passion, in a clear incorporation of theoretical principles developed by the semiotics of passions, this fourth sequence of lessons also discusses the difference between the plane of content and the plane of expression in order to show how the second plane can express the first and what relationship they maintain so they can determine what is characterized as a literary text and as a non-literary text.

Lesson 18 – The Characters’ States of Soul
Lesson 19 – Argumentation
Lesson 20 – Implicit Information
Lesson 21 – Saying One Thing to Mean Another
Lesson 22 – The Sound Plan and the Arrangement of Words in the Text
Lesson 23 – Literary Text and Non-Literary Text¹⁷

The last two lessons correspond to the fifth part of the themes developed by the different lessons listed in the content. Resuming, in a way, the initial lesson, which presented the notion of text, the last two focus on the concepts of cohesion and textual coherence, disseminated by the chain of textual linguistics in order to show their functioning through the perspective of discursive semiotics.

Lesson 24 – Textual Cohesion
Lesson 25 – Textual Coherence and Progression¹⁸

¹⁶ In the original: “Lição 15 – Narração; Lição 16 – Descrição; Lição 17 – Dissertação.”

¹⁷ In the original: “Lição 18 – Os estados de alma das personagens; Lição 19 – Argumentação; Lição 20 – Informações implícitas; Lição 21 – Dizer uma coisa para significar outra; Lição 22 – O plano sonoro e a disposição das palavras no texto; Lição 23 – Texto literário e texto não-literário.”

¹⁸ In the original: “Lição 24 – Coesão textual; Lição 25 – Coerência e progressão textual.”

What can be noticed by examining the titles of each of the 25 textbook lessons, released in 1996, is that the proposals to work with reading and textual production elaborated by Fiorin and Platão follow the developments of the research produced by scholars in semiotics. At the same time that they produce this movement within semiotic investigations, they also maintain a dialogue with other theories that produce certain explanations of or reflections on text and discourse problems that may contribute to improve their didactic project for the teaching of reading and writing.

To finish this assessment about the didactic works written by José Luiz Fiorin in partnership with Francisco Platão Savioli, I propose to verify how the first lesson of the *Lições de texto* [Text Lessons], compared to the first lesson highlighted above from *Para entender o texto* [To Understand Text], reflects what has been demonstrated so far, that is, that the authors' teaching project concerning reading and textual production is the work of a researcher and a thinker of language.

As seen previously in the first lesson of Fiorin and Platão's book (1990), the concept of text was established from two fundamental considerations about its nature, namely, "the text is not a cluster of sentences" and "every text contains a statement within a debate of a broader scale."¹⁹ On the other hand, in Fiorin and Platão's book (1996), although this first lesson is also introduced by the visual resource of comparison between the detail of a photographic image and its whole as in the previous book, and although it performs this comparison with a different image from the previous one, the text design expands; as demonstrated above, when the themes of each of their lessons were examined, the incorporation of the concept of meaning's preconditions will change the understanding of what the text exactly is. Therefore, in the second work, *Lições de texto* [Text Lessons], the authors will state that the text is defined by three properties. First, they ensure that it should have consistency of meaning; in other words, "it is not a cluster of sentences, that is, the phrases are not simply arranged one after the other, but they are related to each other" (FIORIN; PLATÃO, 1996, p.14).²⁰ The second property is the one that points to the preconditions of meaning, since it establishes that any kind of text, whether verbal, visual or verbal-visual, is always "delimited by two white no-meaning spaces, one before the text starts and one after the text" (FIORIN; PLATÃO,

¹⁹ In the original: "o texto não é um aglomerado de frases"; "todo texto contém um pronunciamento dentro de um debate de escala mais ampla."

²⁰ In the original: "não é um amontoado de frases, ou seja, nele as frases não estão pura e simplesmente dispostas umas após as outras, mas estão relacionadas entre si."

1996, p.17).²¹ The third property of the text is the one that states that it is produced by a person who is part of a particular time and a particular space. This asserts its historical nature in the “sense that it reveals the ideals and concepts of a social group in a given time” (FIORIN; PLATÃO, 1996, p.7).²²

Thus, what is verified by comparing *Para entender o texto* [To Understand Text], published in 1990, and *Lições de texto* [Text Lessons], in 1996, is that the progress of research either in semiotics’s theoretical-methodological proposal or in other text theories determine the didactic project designed by José Luiz Fiorin in partnership with Platão Savioli with regard to the processing of reading and textual production. Unlike some textbook authors, who continually repeat their lessons in the course of time, producing only formal changes in the composition of the books, what could be examined in Fiorin and Platão’s didactic books is that they reflect the attitude of the researcher, who is attentive to the evolution of studies on language and who deals with his interlocutor’s intellectual development, that is, with the subjects whom they address.

In conclusion, this text intended to show the importance of José Luiz Fiorin’s didactic work, in partnership with Francisco Platão Savioli, not only to the study of language, but also to the dissemination of and reflection on advances in the theoretical-methodological perspective of discursive semiotics, derived from Greimas’s works. Dialoguing with other theories, the work either incorporates some of their principles or examines the problems focused by them under the semiotic perspective. Moreover, I must emphasize how important it was for my professional and personal development to have met him and to be able to count on him as a mentor and friend.

Fiorin’s ability to explain and teach stems from his assumed position as a researcher and thinker, as someone who reflects upon his time and is, simultaneously, still a teacher. These characteristics are all crucial to the way he can communicate with different audiences in different situations. In turn, the great knowledge that he possesses is still the engine that makes him continually reflect on and retrace his own work. That is exactly what I tried to show when *Para entender o texto* [To Understand Text] and *Lições de texto* [Text Lessons] were compared, making it possible to envision this path,

²¹ In the original: “delimitado por dois espaços de não-sentido, dois brancos, um antes de começar o texto e outro depois.”

²² In the original: “sentido de que revela os ideais e as concepções de um grupo social numa determinada época.”

this transformation of the continuous reflection on the object of his study, viz., language and text.

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