

# Experiences of (literary) readings in the process of becoming a teacher

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## Abstract

Originating from the doctoral dissertation entitled “Becoming a reader: Teachers’ paths,” this paper aims to explain and analyze the types of reading carried out by a group of teachers from São Domingos do Sul, state of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. The methodological procedure used to construct the data was the semi-structured interview with narrative openings, and, for the analysis, the Textual Discourse Analysis was used (Moraes; Galiazzi, 2016). *Readings*, in the plural, is one of the categories that emerges from the teachers’ narratives, as each one reads in her own way, at her own pace, in her own time, in her own space. The results of this paper highlight that the teachers show the different possible readings that happen throughout their lives, as well as the various understandings of reading. Life stages—childhood, youth, professional life, retirement—and the experiences that accompany each phase mark and set the rhythm to the readings undertaken: time-reading; lack-of-time reading; experience-reading; reading-practice; technical-reading; pastime-reading; world reading; life-embedded reading.

Keywords: Readings. Teachers. Lived reading experience. Reading experience.

## Experiências de leituras (literárias) no processo de tornar-se professora

### Resumo

Originado da tese de doutorado intitulada “Tornar-se leitora: Percursos de professoras”, este artigo tem como objetivo explicar e analisar tipos de leitura que um grupo de professoras de São Domingos do Sul, Rio Grande do Sul, realiza. O procedimento metodológico empregado para a construção de dados

foi a entrevista semiestruturada com aberturas narrativas e, para a análise, foi utilizada a Análise Textual Discursiva (Moraes; Galiazzi, 2016). *Leituras*, no plural, é uma das categorias que emerge das narrativas das professoras, pois cada qual lê à sua maneira, no seu ritmo, no seu tempo, no seu espaço. Destaca-se como resultados deste artigo que as professoras mostram as diferentes leituras possíveis, que acontecem ao longo da vida, assim como as várias compreensões de leitura. Os tempos de vida – infância, juventude, vida profissional, aposentadoria – e as experiências que acompanham cada fase marcam e dão compasso às leituras realizadas: leitura-tempo; leitura-falta-de-tempo; leitura-experiência; leitura-prática; leitura-técnica; leitura-passatempo; leitura de mundo; leitura inserida na vida.

Palavras-chave: Leituras. Professoras. Vivência de leitura. Experiência de leitura.

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## Experiencias de lecturas (literarias) en el proceso de convertirse en profesora

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### Resumen

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Originado de la tesis de doctorado titulada "Convertirse en lectora: Recorridos de profesoras", este artículo tiene como objetivo explicar y analizar los tipos de lectura que realizan un grupo de profesoras de São Domingos do Sul – Rio Grande do Sul, Brasil. El procedimiento metodológico empleado para la construcción de datos fue la entrevista semiestruturada con aperturas narrativas y para el análisis fue utilizado el Análisis Textual Discursivo (Moraes; Galiazzi, 2016). *Lecturas*, en plural, es una de las categorías que emerge de las narrativas de las profesoras, pues cada cual lee a su manera, a su ritmo, en su tiempo, en su espacio. Destacamos como resultado de este artículo, que las profesoras muestran las diferentes lecturas posibles que suceden a lo largo de la vida, así como las diferentes comprensiones de lectura. Los tiempos de la vida - infancia, juventud, vida profesional, jubilación - y las experiencias que acompañan cada etapa, marcan y dan ritmo a las lecturas realizadas: lectura-tiempo; lectura-falta-de-tiempo; lectura-experiencia; lectura-práctica; lectura-técnica; lectura-pasatiempo; lectura de mundo; lectura incluida en la vida. Palabras clave: Lecturas. Profesoras. Vivencia de lectura. Experiencia de lectura.

## Introduction

Life so close, so intimate, so ours – is strange to us  
(Eliana Yunes)

It is difficult to organize and translate our lives into words. They are so close, so much ours, but “they are strange to us” and we may not be able to organize them into words, as Yunes (2003) states in the epigraph of this paper. Something—such as reading a literary book—can affect us so deeply that it touches forgotten and hidden aspects of our being, and we are unable to speak about it with apparent passion. The experience can be internal, intangible. Identifying reading as an experience can be a challenge, because when we talk about literature, about individual experience—what touches us, affects us, passes through us, makes us uncomfortable (Larrosa, 2019)—perhaps this experience can be translated into something unsaid.

In addition to literary reading experiences, there are other types of reading; we live in a literate world and we read a lot, even if we do not always realize it: recipes, physical or digital newspapers, traffic signs, readings from our professional field, to name a few. Considering the above, this paper aims to explain and analyze the types of reading carried out by a group of teachers from São Domingos do Sul, in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. This writing originated from the doctoral dissertation entitled *Tornar-se leitora: Percursos de professoras* [Becoming a reader: Teachers’ paths] (Lusa, 2024), which carried out qualitative research that took the concept of *becoming*, drawn from Beauvoir (2019), to understand *becoming*—woman, mother, teacher, reader, professional—in the path of each interlocutor.<sup>1</sup>

Data construction occurred through semi-structured interviews with narrative openings. The interviews were recorded with an audio recorder, transcribed by us and then analyzed. For data analysis, we relied on the Discursive Textual Analysis (DTA), proposed by Moraes and Galiazzi (2016). The “storms of light” mentioned by scholars, which emerge from the constructed *corpus*, seem to approach the data analysis more flexibly, aiming at the construction of a sociology, albeit a local sociology, of a specific group, a “sociological portrait” of a specific “social landscape” (Pais, 2013, p. 119):

the reader-teachers of a particular time and geographical space. The empirical interlocutors of the research were ten teachers, who worked or work with the disciplines of Art or Portuguese language and teachers of the initial grades of Elementary School, in São Domingos do Sul/RS. From the *corpus* analyzed in the doctoral dissertation, four categories emerged; this paper will present one of them entitled *Leituras: "Nenhum livro nos deixa vazio, todo livro nos transforma"* [Readings: "No book leaves us empty, every book transforms us"]. To elucidate how the category was treated and present it in this paper, we bring the voices of four empirical interlocutors—fictitiously named Ivone, a teacher of the initial grades of Elementary School; Estela, an Art teacher; Noeli and Letícia, Portuguese language teachers. The experiences and lived realities of the interlocutors shed light, within the process of *becoming a reader*, on the readings carried out by them. After a theoretical explanation about reading, about the act of reading as an experience, we present the readings and narratives of the reader-teachers, primarily based on studies conducted by Larrosa (2003, 2019), Heidegger (2003), Yunes (2002, 2003) and Horellou-Lafarge and Sergé (2010).

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### Reading and the act of reading

Reading is now understood as a complex activity in which the readers produce meaning through the relationships established between the text and the knowledge they already possess. In the reading activity, "[...] the author and the reader are—at least in the vast majority of cases—distant from each other in space and time" (Jouve, 2002, p. 23). The relationship between sender and receiver is asymmetrical. The text presented to the reader is outside of its original context; the reference between writer and reader is not the same, thus, "[...] based on the structure of the text, that is, on the interplay of its internal relationships, the reader will reconstruct the context necessary to understand the work" (Jouve, 2002, p. 23). As stated, the readers will create their own reference system to understand the work. This is not an issue for aesthetic texts, whose function is to enable the readers to organize—or disorganize—feelings, to confirm—or confront—certainties, and improve themselves, their relationships with others and the world. The text opens itself to a

plurality of interpretations, as each reader brings their own experience and the values of their time. Even so, the material resists time and carries within it the desire for immortality.

Horellou-Lafarge and Sergé (2010) explain that readers have specific interests in reading and distinguish types of reading according to the content of what is read and the readers' educational and cultural level. We highlight, in italics, in the text below, the different readings that the authors mentioned in their study list. The "*common*" readings correspond to the interests and concerns of readers when faced with real situations in their lives at different times; they seek a narrative to understand and organize their own experiences. *Documentary* and *practical readings* have a more direct use, showing ways of doing things, knowledge of practices that were passed down within families or in the neighborhood. These are readings done in a specific way to address immediate need. *Practical book* readings are texts that are intended to be converted into practices—recipes, decoration, physical exercises. Their use is aimed at immediate practice, a "how-to" that does not require a deep level of interpretation. *Professional readings* are those of works or journals focused on technical or scientific dissemination. *Self-taught readings* are those practiced by people who seek, through their own interpretations, to appropriate the culture from which they were excluded for some reason. *Readings for distraction, for entertainment*, correspond to those undertaken with the purpose of distancing oneself from the concerns of everyday life. These are readings and uses mentioned by scholars, who also state that readers are distinguished by the content they read, but, due to dissemination or recommendations, the interests of different social categories may often converge, with the same text having different meanings for each audience. Reading, regardless of type, stems from the readers, from their needs, desires and aspirations.

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## Reading as an experience

In order to approach a text—be it a book, a city, or a film—we must be mobilized, as Yunes (2002) argues. To be mobilized, we need to know ourselves, our tastes, and to do so, we need to pause in order to understand our own emotions and reactions to each situation, to observe ourselves and

learn from our own lives, from our experiences—joys, pains, and all profound affections. In general, we dedicate little time to recalling what we have lived, to knowing it through our memory, our being, our thoughts. For Yunes (2002), recalling is one of the bases for constructing our identity, but, in contemporary times, we lack this time for recollection, for leisure, which is not empty; it is full of ourselves, of our sensations and affections. Yunes (2003, p. 9) states that “[...] knowing ourselves will not prevent certain outcomes, but we can at least suffer only the inevitable and make choices that are truly ours.” The author argues that in order to read, we need courage to reveal who we are. Knowing ourselves and having time for this idle task of self-knowledge are points associated with the possibility of living the experience, of envisioning reading as one of the means of living an experience.

6 Experience is what crosses through us, “[...] it is what passes through us, happens to us, touches us” (Larrosa, 2019, p. 18). When addressing the possibility of having an experience with language, Heidegger (2003, p. 121) states that “[...] having an experience with something, be it with a thing, with a human being, with a god, means that this something runs over us, comes to meet us, reaches us, overwhelms us and transforms us.” *Doing*, in the sense argued by Heidegger (2003), is not about producing experience, but about living through it, receiving it, allowing it to cross and articulate oneself. Larrosa (2019), in this sense, states that the world and everything around us is organized in such a way that nothing happens to us, so that we do not live the experience. It is not an “experience” that can be bought in stores or supplemented with a travel package—experience is internal and tied to the lived realities and stories of each individual.

Reading can be “[...] an experience of language, an experience of thought, it is also a sensitive, emotional experience, an experience in which our sensitivity is at stake, what we call ‘feelings’” (Larrosa, 2011, p. 10). When we read an author or text, from the point of view of experience, the important thing is not what the author says, but the way in which I, in relation to these words, to this text, can transform my own words, my way of saying; how this text helps me to say what I still do not know, what I still cannot say. The experience of reading transforms me so that I can speak for myself, with my own words.

Heidegger (2003) develops the concept of experience by relating it to language. For the philosopher, we, human beings, find in language the home of our own presence, whether we are aware of it or not. Thus, having an experience with language means “[...] allowing ourselves to be touched by the demand of language, surrendering ourselves to it and harmonizing with it” (Heidegger, 2003, p. 121). *Experience with language* differs from having knowledge about language. According to the author, we do not have the power to decide whether the attempt to have an experience with language will be successful and to what extent this experience will be able to reach us in a particular way.

Next, we will discuss the readings that emerged from the narratives of the group of teachers who were empirical interlocutors of this research.

## **Teachers’ readings: “No book leaves us empty; every book transforms us”**

Readings, in the plural, is a category that emerges from the teachers’ narratives. Each one reads in their own way, at their own pace, in their own time and space. Each empirical interlocutor has objectives—different among them—when seeking a particular reading. Some engage in technical readings related to their field of expertise, others read to stay informed, and still others read to experience the overwhelming impact that a reading *experience* provokes—even if they do not have this concept present—, to engage in the sea of the known and the unknown through literary reading. Even though the readings are distinct, probably all of them have gone through or are going through the different types of reading mentioned here, at different times in their past lives, and during different periods of their current lives. The look and analysis turn to the stories and individual reading experiences, to the relationship of each teacher with reading—especially, but not only, with literary reading—, to what, from what was read, passes through, runs over each interlocutor.

Not everything that is read is literature, but literature, when read, provokes, unsettles, introduces the new, reaffirms the known, suspends certainties. But what is literature for, after all? This question is posed and answered by Eliana Yunes, in a podcast, who states that literature serves none of the things

that the world has valued since its remote past; power, wealth, and so on. It represents desire, presents the magic of language that offers us ways to transcend concrete reality, in the words of Yunes: "Literature [...] springs from an inexhaustible narrative: the adventure of the human being, similar to the gods and, nevertheless, mortal. Faced with mystery, with emptiness, the useless word becomes powerful" (Ieda de Oliveira [...], 2021).

The literary word organized into text touches our being, which, when read, demands that we stop, *raise our heads* so that our gaze may turn to a place other than the text, shaping our body and mind for the experience of that encounter that offers the promise of other possible lives, of other certainties or more doubts, of an intensification of the sensations and feelings of life. Considering this humanizing function of literature, the empirical analysis of the narratives elucidates the act of reading in the trajectory of the interlocutors: Some teachers touch upon their experiences with reading in their narratives, referring to the intense contact with literature and the emotions it evoked. Others recount readings that have left a lasting impression on them, even if they were not literary.

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Thus, the possible readings that the teachers do and the reading experiences they have lived will be presented. The *readings* emerged from the narratives; they are marked and explained in sequence and, later, analyzed in the course of writing, within the speeches of the reader-teachers. The emerging readings are highlighted, in italics, throughout the analysis text, as they manifest themselves in the stories of the four interlocutors (from the group of 10) brought to the debate in this paper.

### Emerging readings from the narratives

- *Time-Reading* – Particularly associated with retired teachers, who mention how much more they were able to read after this phase. The time, scarce before when the children were young, when there was a whole family to care for, when there were classes to teach and school activities to manage, is no longer limited. Now, with retirement, there is time to sit on the couch in the morning or afternoon, or when in bed at night, according to each teacher's preferred reading location and time, and read. There is time. Now, there is time.



- *Lack-of-time reading* – The lack of time to read represents the active teachers. Besides their full-time school activities, they also have small children and an entire family waiting at home after work. The time to sit quietly and read is limited. Still, it is possible; this time is created by their passion, habit, and the necessity of this art in their lives.
- *Reading as a possibility of the local-global, inside-outside, self-other* – This perspective represents the reading experiences narrated by some teachers. Experiences of being overwhelmed, of being involved, of something passing, happening, touching, affecting. Experiences of different emotions provoked by the art of literature and literary reading.
- *Reading-practice* – An action for learning to think, to have one's own arguments, to form ideas, and to develop concepts based on the experiences of others, as described by some of the interlocutors. Reading that helps in good writing. Its goal is to communicate better, to write better, and to engage more successfully in the literate society we live in.
- *Technical-reading* – Related to the professional field. Readings that teachers engage in within their areas of expertise: literacy, languages, arts, methodologies, and so on. Often, this is the only possible reading for long periods, the most necessary, which needs to be immediate to address the current practical-professional context.
- *Pastime-reading* – Reading to pass the time. Also seen as a hobby, especially in cases where other activities, such as crocheting, are not pursued. For some retired teachers, it is regarded as a way to spend time.
- *World reading* – A concept that emerged particularly from the remarks of one of the interlocutors, a teacher in the early grades of elementary education, highlighting the significance she saw in the relationship between reading books and reading her surroundings, the context. It involves relating what is read to what is experienced. Understanding the reading. Understanding the lived experience. Rewriting the read and the lived—for this, it is first necessary to understand.
- *Life-embedded reading* – Represents the intentional time created amidst the daily hustle, allowing for moments of reading, whether individually or shared with family.

## Analysis of narratives from empirical interlocutors: Emerging readings

In her adolescence, teacher Ivone read several literary books. She reported that, starting in the fifth grade, she read books by Erico Verissimo and Jorge Amado—the entire collection. Nowadays, after retirement, it is easier for the teacher to read; there is more time [*Time-reading*]. She likes literature and has also been reading other types of books: spiritualist and other themes. She reads to learn, to get to know herself, to deepen, understand what she does not understand. “I have always read, throughout my history of teaching practice. I have always read. I would sometimes fall asleep at 1:00 a.m. I would start reading a book, put the children to sleep, you know...” (Ivone, 2022). After putting the children to bed, there was time for reading, in the period of her life when time was scarcer [*Life-embedded reading*].

Reading, in the teacher’s life, is marked by pauses, interruptions, returns:

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And there was a time when I stopped reading. Because sometimes you get so involved with things, right? And after I left school, I started reading. [...]. It’s been three years since I left. [...]. Then I took a break, you know? But it wasn’t good for me. So I’m going back. [...]. I have four books that I’m reading. Then you think, ‘oh, this book is kind of tiring me’, so I move on to another one. And so it goes. But it’s good to read, it’s good (Ivone, 2022).

The teacher-reader’s statement also reveals the reader’s right to get tired of a book—not to give up on it, but to *set it aside for later*, while engaging with another, more enjoyable reading, and then return to the book that she had previously felt tired of when the time is right. Or, not to return, as Daniel Pennac (1993, p. 150) argues when he lists the Reader’s Indispensable Rights: “The Right not to finish a book.” For Pennac (1993, p. 150), “[...] there are thirty-six thousand reasons to abandon a book before the end,” among so many, the writer reports that even if there is a feeling that the book deserves to be read, when there is a strangeness in the book-reader relationship that does not engage the reader, it is difficult to continue. And the book is kept on the

shelf with “[...] the vague project of returning one day” to reading (Pennac, 1993, p. 150-151).

When we talked and talked all over again about reading issues, about important facts involving the act of reading, Ivone would recount and revisit classroom events, school experiences as a teacher, bringing to light her teaching skills, highlighting this aspect of her life. The being-a-teacher-intertwined-with-being-a-person was present in her narrative [*Reading as a possibility of local-global, inside-outside, self-other*]. It was possible to sense, in the teacher's words (and in her silences), her relationship with reading that went beyond the basic, beyond the trivial. She speaks of silences, also recalling another right of the reader, according to Pennac (1993), the right to remain silent. For the author:

Man builds houses because he is alive but writes books because he knows himself mortal. He lives in groups because he is gregarious, but he reads because he knows himself alone. Reading is a companionship for him that takes the place of no other, but which no other could replace. It offers him no definitive explanation of his fate but weaves a dense web of connivance between life and him. [...]. In such a way that our reasons for reading are as strange as our reasons for living. And no one is given the power to demand an account of this intimacy (Pennac, 1993, p. 167).

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The teacher lit up when talking about memorable books, especially those read during adolescence. “Oh, I like any book. I read *O tempo e o vento* [Time and the Wind], you know? It really left an impression on me! Wow!!! I read a lot, almost all of his books. I read everything by [...] Jorge Amado. I was in... fifth grade, I think [...]. I read a lot” (Ivone, 2022).

The books read over the course of a lifetime, with a moment of reflection, gradually come to mind and are remembered. However, those read in childhood and adolescence require no time or effort to resurface in memory: they are readily available for the narrative—as is the case for all the interlocutors—, these memories are always ready to *be recalled*. It is possible to talk a lot about these titles, naming the color and art of the cover, the size, details of the story that affected the reader. They are the first to be remembered. “Oh,

Erico Verissimo, all of them. My God! Jorge Amado too. I read a lot!" (Ivone, 2022), works that the teacher remembers with emotion.

To give herself over to reading, to live the book, to get into the plot, to feel, to be the characters. This is how Estela described her readings: "I have read many books. I love reading! [...]. I try to read the book more than once. [...]. And I put myself in that place, in that character" (Estela, 2022). Estela's words echo Pennac's (1993, p. 81) assertion: "A well-read book saves us from everything, including ourselves." The interlocutor's passionate account reveals many 'well-conducted' readings throughout her life [*Reading as a possibility of the local-global, inside-outside, self-other*].

Estela likes silence; so she reads at night, before going to sleep. Now, after retirement, there is more time to read [*Time-reading*]. "I like to concentrate well on reading. And if I can't manage it, if I went a little further, I go back because I want to get a good grasp of the idea, the scene... I like to read like this, every day, a little bit" (Estela, 2022).

For the teacher, it is not enough to read in quantity; Estela wants to savor the reading, read slowly, read without rushing, be fully present in the plot that develops through the literary narrative. All the emotions of the literary reading experience need to be felt without rushing. In this sense, Petit highlights that:

Reading should not be valued solely based on the time dedicated to it or the number of books read or borrowed. Some words, a sentence, or a story can resonate for a lifetime. Reading time isn't just about turning pages; it involves a conscious or unconscious process and a lasting effect, a psychological evolution of certain narratives or phrases, sometimes long after they've been read (Petit, 2013, p. 48).

Estela's time to read literature, in line with Petit's words, is to savor each passage, returning to previously read paragraphs if necessary, and feeling the intense flavor of the parts—which can be small parts—read daily [*Reading as a possibility of the local-global, inside-outside, self-other*]. This interlocutor also engages in other types of reading; from the newspapers she subscribes to, she particularly reads the columns: "The newspaper arrives at my house in the

morning and then I read some parts. [...]. I like the columns, to grasp ideas [of other's experiences]" (Estela, 2022) [Reading-practice].

In addition to having her own reading time, Estela used to read to her children when they were young and now reads to her grandchildren [Life-embedded reading]. She experiences reading with the children in the family:

And one of the things I loved most was reading stories, reading to my children when they were very young. Because then I wouldn't read as it was. I would emphasize the phrase, the gestures, the voices...[...]. And the story would be so beautiful! So beautiful! (Estela, 2022).

In Estela's life, reading was and is permeated by emotions, affections, memories. It is knowledge from experience that has become aesthetic knowledge. According to Larrosa (2003, p. 117), "[...] knowledge from experience teaches 'how to live humanly... [...]' and is not to be confused with the experiment of objective truths that remain external to man." This experience that overwhelms us, that takes over our being, does not allow us to interpret the text only through reason, but also to feel it with our emotions.

Many of Noeli's readings are reading experiences that she carries out [*Reading as a possibility of the local-global, inside-outside, self-other*]: "I used to read a lot of our writers. Erico Verissimo, José de Alencar, Jorge Amado... And I like the romanticist line better. [...]. They are all like that, romantic, aren't they? I like this line better" (Noeli, 2022).

The teacher-reader identifies with a genre of reading and a type of narrative. In her adult life, the family subscribed to several magazines and newspapers. Many of the magazines dealt with political issues, but Noeli preferred readings with themes that touched her in some way. She liked reading *Capricho* magazine and other texts that dealt with the feminine universe. "I liked 'Capricho,' those more feminine things, you know? More feminine magazines" (Noeli, 2022). Based on Noeli's narrative, the question we posed: Why do we read what we read?

The reader produces gardens that miniaturize and collate a world, [...] like a hunter in the forest, he spots the written quarry, follows a trail, laughs, plays tricks, or else like a gambler, lets himself be

taken in by it. Sometimes he loses the fictive securities of reality when he reads: his escapades exile him from the assurances that give the self its location on the social checkerboard. Who reads, in fact? Is it I, or some part of me? (Certeau, 2014, p. 245).

According to Certeau (2014), when reading, we seek a little of the world, a little of ourselves, and this little of each, as it mixes, is also lost, being neither one nor the other, and, furthermore, helping us in our internal organization through the words read, the organized text. For Antonio Candido (2004, p. 177), “[...] the nature of the organized thing of the literary work becomes a factor that makes us more capable of ordering our own mind and feelings” and, with that, we organize our perception of the world. In this sense, literature is not good or bad, it is not pedagogical or salvific; it comes to account for our humanity through the reading experiences we have and the aesthetic experience we develop. “It does not corrupt or edify, therefore; but, freely bringing within itself what we call good and what we call evil, it humanizes in a profound sense, because it makes us live” (Candido, 2004, p. 176).

14 The choice of what to read—in Noeli’s case, *Capricho* magazine, romance novels, and texts that address the feminine universe—provides an opportunity, as Certeau (2014) points out, to mingle with the text, so that one’s own life becomes part of what is read and so that the text becomes part of one’s life, the way one sees and feels about everyday life. Reading provides the ability to be “inside and outside,” to travel to other lands of other possible feminine universes—close, distant, similar, opposite. The “lost paradise” that can be constantly recovered.

Noeli is made up of several *readings*. The teacher reported that she also seeks to read to learn how to think, to have her own arguments, to form ideas [*Reading-practice*]. The act of reading as *having something to do* also appears in the teacher’s statements [*Pastime-reading*]. Reading to pass the time, a hobby. As she does not do other activities, such as crochet, for example, reading is seen as a way to pass the time. “I like reading, so it seems to me that if I don’t do anything, I can’t stand it! I’m not really into crocheting, I’m not really into knitting, so...” (Noeli, 2022). In this last sentence, she expresses her perception of reading as a pastime, because she reads to pass the time, to have something to do. At the same time, it is possible to notice that her

preference in literature is for novels and, in magazines, for “women’s topics,” in the words of the interlocutor.

There is something that touches her in these texts, there is an identification with a genre, with a type of subject. For Petit (2019, p. 51), reading and remembering her “[...] cultural escapades serve to project a bit of beauty into everyday life, to give a poetic background to life, to sketch out stories that may never come true, but that are a part of the self.” It is more likely that the experience—the process of *being crossed*—occurs with texts that touch us in some way.

Letícia’s narrative also reveals the process of reading experience in many moments. The first encounters with reading happened at her home. In addition to telling stories and singing children’s songs, her mother also subscribed to comic books and a children’s magazine [*Life-embedded reading*]. “Studies show that great readers often had a mother who told them stories from an early age” (Horellou-Lafarge; Sergé, 2010, p. 81). In the same vein as the authors, Petit (2013, p. 35) points out that, in France, “[...] those to whom their mother told a story every night are twice as likely to become great readers than those who practically never had this experience.” Mothers have a great influence on each individual’s future relationship with the act of reading; for Letícia, her mother’s presence in her childhood has repercussions in her current days, as an adult reader.

Even though she had her first encounters with reading at home, school was very important in Letícia’s journey, when she remembered reading literary books. She recalls the Reading Room—a space designed and created to be a welcoming reading space at that school—and the way she would immerse herself in the stories she read. The school reading spaces left their mark and are remembered fondly.

There were some cushions, there were books, there were some big cushions. And there was a very big cushion [...], it was huge! [...]. The joy was being able to sit on the big cushion. [...]. And I remember that I would sit there in the classroom, like that, and I would read a lot. I remember one day, the teacher came and told me, it was teacher Noeli. And she came and said: ‘You were very focused! Because I was calling you...’ And I didn’t hear her calling (Letícia, 2023).

In addition to the joy of being on the cushion to read, Letícia described the day when she was so absorbed in reading that she did not hear the teacher call her [*Reading as a possibility of the local-global, inside-outside, self-other*]. She was living the reading, the story, the emotions, the affect; the internal experience of that moment was so intense that the external world was *turned off*. Even though the moment is intense, it does not end there, with the end of the work. For Petit (2019, p. 50), “[...] the daydreaming and memories of a reading are part of it.” The author points out that the act is not consummated only in the moment: what happens afterwards is profound. Even though we do not remember most of what we read, what we remember is accessed by us in a particular way, it is revisited, to protect us when the materiality of life is not enough. It is the possibility of being someone else without ceasing to be materially who we are.

Letícia described her readings as unique and individual experiences. She was a child and a teenager who read a lot, who had access to books and materials at home and, later, at school. Today, as an adult and a teacher, she continues to be an intense reader, including rereading works she has already read when she suggests that her students read them. Through her description of what she understands by reading, she revealed the many experiences that she has had:

In fact, reading opens up knowledge about the world, right? Knowledge even for yourself. So, I think that reading actually transforms people. It transforms human beings. [...]. When we start reading a book, we don't imagine that, by the end of that book, we'll be different. And, in fact, that's what happens, right? Every reading transforms us in some way. It's a unique, incredible experience and it can be different for me, for you, with the same book, right? [...]. No book leaves us empty, every book transforms us. So, the knowledge I have today, my worldview, my vision... my reading of the world, right, is very much based on the things I read and that I experienced through reading. [...]. These are experiences (Letícia, 2023).

Letícia shared an *experience*, the one that Larrosa (2019) and Heidegger (2003) conceptually address. The teacher's experience allows her to broaden her understanding of the real world [*World reading*]. Literary



literature allows her to experience literature, the art that is literature. The aesthetic experience [*Reading as a possibility of the local-global, inside-outside, self-other*]. The way in which the aesthetic experience touches—each being in a unique way, because whoever reads is traversed in a different way, according to who they are, with their experiences, of life, of readings, prior to the experience of reading a given literary text—allows for a deeper understanding of oneself, of others and of the world, even though it is an individual experience.

In addition to the aesthetic experiences possible with reading, Letícia also understands that reading helps improve writing and speaking skills, as well as expand one's vocabulary [*Reading-practice*]: "And not to mention that reading [...] expands your vocabulary. Reading helps you produce text, right? Only good things. There are only good things" (Letícia, 2023). In the words and the intense way in which the teacher refers to reading, her intimate relationship with the act of reading from a very early age is clear. Reading was and continues to be her companion; a companion that helps her look at herself, at others and at the world, feeling and living them through the lens of literary art.

Childhood and adolescence are times of profound changes, of growth—physical, emotional, psychic, of knowledge—, of transformations. What we experience on the journey through childhood and adolescence stays with us, shaping who we are. Even though we have other experiences with reading at different times in life, what we went through in childhood and adolescence remains deeply ingrained, despite the brain's plasticity and its ability to be in constant transformation. The books that Letícia experienced during this early stage of life come easily to her memory and are recited in sequence.

In addition to remembering specific books that were important in her career, Letícia recalls the types of stories that most caught her attention and were her favorite subjects, according to the moment in life she was living. The experience happened according to the moment the interlocutor was living.

They are periods, really. [...]. In college, I read all the books they asked me to read. I read them all. So, I read a lot, you know. When I was in the classroom [in 2022, when the interview took place, she worked in management], I would ask someone to read

a book, so I would try to go back to that reading so I could work on the book. But now that I'm not in the classroom, I don't have to do that, so I'm busier reading the books I need, right? The technical ones (Letícia, 2023).

Letícia's current phase of life is marked by the daily hustle and bustle (Lusa; Marangoni; Santos, 2023), working full time and having children at home to take care of. Even though she really enjoys reading and is living in a moment in her life that includes a preference for readings based on real stories, in the free time she has, she ends up prioritizing technical books to improve her professional performance [*Technical reading*] [*Lack-of-time reading*].

And I read for pleasure, right? This is pleasurable for me, I read because I like it. Because I want to. It's not an obligation. And then, when I can't... because then, like, [...] I have forty hours here, I'm taking a course every Tuesday night, I have three children, right? And I have [an older] father and mother. So, I mean, time is short. So, people say, 'ah, but we make time,' yes, but sometimes... it's different. So you make time because you like it, so we create that moment. But there are times when I can't do it like I used to (Letícia, 2023).

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Letícia has three daughters, ranging in age from early childhood to adolescence. At home, she seeks to create moments where she and her three daughters are each engaged with their own books [*Life-embedded reading*].

At home, we have a moment to read [...] because I try to influence the girls to read too. So, for that to happen, they need to see me reading, otherwise there's no point, right? [...]. We have a moment to read. And each one takes a book and that moment is for reading (Letícia, 2023).

The interlocutor narrated in detail her relationship with reading. Almost all possible readings—which emerged from the narratives of the group of teachers—can be identified in her account, with the exception of *pastime-reading*, because the readings carried out by the teacher are to nourish her being or have some objective—practical or technical. For her, readings have not been to pass the time, but time has been sought so that moments of reading continue to exist, even in times of rush. Many elements emerge from the narrative: The

choice of the type of literary book according to the reader's moment: moments to read love stories, moments to read action books... Reading experiences that converged with the desires of that type of literary experience, at that moment in the reader's life. Literature was and is for this teacher a possibility of transformation—internal, external—, an individual experience.

As readers, we interpret the world, we read the world—the physical world around us, the world of family recipes, the world governed by legislation, the world of literary art, and so on—from the most technical and practical to the world of feelings and imagination. Reading, depending on the type, allows us to create what does not exist, understand what does exist, organize what is disorganized or disorganize what is—supposedly—organized. Regarding the habit of reading, Horellou-Lafarge and Sergé share:

The love for reading is not a gift that fell from the sky; it is discovered as one practices it; the non-reader, the one who has not become accustomed to reading, does not feel the need for it, does not have the sensation of a lack. Sometimes the discovery of reading, the progressive awakening of the taste for reading, transforms the existence of someone who was unaware of the 'pain of life without books' (Horellou-Lafarge; Sergé, 2010, p. 122).

Letícia's journey, as revealed through her narrative, shows the construction of the reading habit since the early years of the teacher-child, who grew up, became a reading teenager and, now, as an adult, reads daily and is aware that books are missed if they are not available. She recognizes the "pain of life without books," because the practice of reading is a lifelong habit.

## Reading encounters and experiences: final considerations

Aesthetic appreciation allows us—if we allow ourselves—to experience our daily lives by being touched by art in its various forms. Art reaches each person differently, because each of us has our own personal references, temperament and personality, even if we live in the same culture. We educate ourselves aesthetically to sharpen our social perspective, to live harmoniously in society, seeing the world and others. Before that, however, it is essential to feel, see, and experience oneself. To know what affects us and

allows experiences to happen. When there is the possibility of expanding experiences and aesthetic education that touches us, there is the possibility of perceiving others and the world. Literature is an art, and through it we sharpen our aesthetic sense. Readers travel through worlds that they did not create, that are not theirs, but that, through individual reading, by each reader, are uniquely interpreted, lived, and experienced.

Aesthetic education provides us with a more sensitive social perspective; in social life, it helps us see ourselves, others in their multiplicities and the world. Through literary reading, aesthetic experience can happen. The narratives of the empirical interlocutors show how some live their aesthetic experiences and how literature touches them. The teachers showed the different possible readings that occur throughout life and the different understandings of reading.

Even though one or another understanding of what reading is and why we read prevails, the teachers reported the difficulty of maintaining a reading routine at the same time as their work and raising their children when they are young. If there is time, the option is not always to read, but to engage in other daily, practical activities, or other leisure activities, or other *experiences* or encounters. We are not always able to read and, often, reading will not be the option for moments of leisure, for that time between tasks. Reading—technical, practical—is a duty, an obligation in many professional moments; thus, free time is not always filled with reading as a pastime or literary reading that can trigger a reading experience. And this is, according to Pennac (1993), the first of the readers' rights: the right not to read.

In this sense, reading, among so many other duties, can represent just another task to be done, when there is no habit of reading and no need for books. Pennac (1993) talks about the ease of watching a film before opting to read. In Brazil, for approximately a few decades, we had the predominance of television soap operas, broadcast on open channels, which could be watched at night, after a day's work and while doing household chores—there was a break between episodes, which made it easier to watch without paying full attention to the television. The human need for a narrative beyond one's own life was, in a certain way, fulfilled by soap operas. Today, soap operas continue to be broadcast on open channels and compete for attention

with films and series that can be watched at any time, through streaming platforms, with subscriptions at low prices—less than the cost of an electricity bill in a home with only one person, for example. Reading, unlike soap operas, requires time solely for itself; it is not possible to read while washing the dishes or changing the clothes of a child.

Literary reading is directly linked to the teachers' life stages, being more present in late childhood, adolescence and after retirement. Late childhood and early adolescence proved to be an intense period of reading, while there is a shift away from literary reading during undergraduate studies, which gives way to more technical reading, in the areas of activity. *Lack-of-time reading* and the desire to read more accompany teachers as they raise their children and occupy themselves with the teaching profession—professional activity involves and is involved with reading. Time is a gift after retirement and after children are no longer children or adolescents: *time-reading*.

The time of maturity allows one to do what they enjoy, without so much haste. It allows for lingering, for spending an entire afternoon reading if that is the desire. The *readings* that emerge from the narratives are found within the different stages of life. As Horellou-Lafarge and Sergé (2010, p. 123) state, the reader changes their reading habits according to lived experiences. The interest in reading can be discovered or rediscovered at various stages of life. Those who were non-readers can become readers, while readers can move away from books, lose interest, or become familiar with the subject in a different way. The stages of our lives change; starting a family or entering a new profession affects or changes the habit of reading. The narratives of the empirical interlocutors align with the data presented by the French scholars: each teacher, with her own particularities, encounters and experiences, has interacted and continues to interact with the literate world, engaging with reading in distinct ways.

Finally, we affirm, based on Petit (2013), that all interlocutors are readers, even if not all are readers of literature, and even if they engage with excerpts, sentences, or fragments of text. For the author, some words or phrases read can resonate throughout an entire lifetime. They can also be elaborated or reworked after a long time. The process allows us to decipher our own life encounters and experiences.

## Note

1. A pesquisa foi submetida ao Comitê de Ética em Pesquisa (CEP), sendo aprovada conforme o Parecer Consubstanciado número 5.650.960.

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