

THE AESTHETIC EFFECT OF THE PROCESSES OF READING AND WRITING:  
IMPLICATIONS FOR HUMAN EMPOWERMENT AND CULTURAL  
DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

This article describes a practice of literacies from a psychoeducational perspective, applied to the reading and writing processes of the written word and the world. It analyses the aesthetic effect of the reader-text relationship for human empowerment and cultural development. It discusses the costs which the privation of reading and writing capabilities bring to a country. The article describes, in an autobiographical form and brings theoretical founding for the processes of trans-form-action of the subject, through the application of the (Con)text Method of Multiple Literacies. It presents the concept of feeling-with-the-world as a proposal of daily aesthetic exercise of the potential of communication and the expression of the written word by the subject in mutual transaction with the world.

Keywords:

Literacies; culture; aesthetic; psychoeducational; empowerment

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The function of reading and writing are not restricted to mere codification of decodification of symbols and words. In a plural, social perspective, denominated 'literacies', which still represent the human ability to do a "daily reading of the world – the inner and the outer world of each human – and a composition of these worlds through the use of multiple languages of representing meaning" (Cavalcante Jr., 2003, p. 26).

The history of humanity reveals to us a variety of feelings and readings impressed on the universal masterpieces, originating from hands, mouths and gestures of common people. These people are owners of vast popular wisdom even though they are often represented in a rustic form. But they are expressive, full of intuition and imagination (Freyre in Lopes, 1994). Unfortunately, except for artists, schooled people and scholars, there are few who find space to communicate their aesthetic responses to the world in which they live, representing ideas and feelings through their multiple forms of composition of meaning.

Upon depicting the Brazilian educational context (Ioschpe, 2004), there are still many who experience a poverty of capacity (Sen, 2000) and are deprived of something which has reason to be valued" (p. 53). It is an example of the privation of the ability to read and write, which not only hinders them from living better, but above all, keeps

them from participating more effectively in political and economic activities. From this line of thought, Sen (2000) argues,

(...) illiteracy can be a formidable barrier to the participation in economic activities which require production according to specifications or rigorous quality control (a demand which is always growing in globalized commerce). In the same way, political participation can be paralyzed by the inability to read newspapers or to communicate through writing with other individuals involved in political activities. (p. 56).

In this article as we get a glimpse of psychoeducational actions for the development of Brazil as a nation, it is imperative to consider the “elimination of privations of freedom which limit the choices and the opportunities of the persons who thoughtfully exercise their role as agents” (p. 10). According to the model of Desenvolvimento como Liderdade [Development as Freedom], proposed in the title of one of the works of the economist, Sen (2000, p. 52), we are responsible “to avoid privations such as hunger, mal-nutrition (...)”, the premise which we have developed at a national level, from previous initiatives, and, more recently in the Programa Fome Zero [No Hunger Program], “as well as freedoms associated with knowing how to read, to do math calculations, to be able to participate politically and have freedom of expression, etc”, highlighting, in this way, the merit of the recently created Programa Fome de Livros [Hunger for Books Program], “an initiative of the federal government which translates the National Policy of Reading and Public Libraries for the next twenty years” (UNESCO, 2004).

However, what we find in our experience in Brazil is the privation of freedom of expression, through the various forms of the word, which are not restricted to the lower

class, which is first seen as deprived from the access to cultural resources but which is also manifest in all the classes in different and peculiar forms, irrespective of the social possibility for the use of the resources available. Schopenhauer (1993) would say that the poor

(...) are limited by their poverty and by their needs; in their case work substitutes knowledge and occupies their thoughts. On the other side of the coin, the rich who are ignorant live only for their pleasure, as if they were cattle, which we see every day. This is more deplorable because they do not use their riches and time on that which would give them the highest gain.

Ignorant, in the broadest sense of the term, in their relationship to politics, culture, economy, etc, these, rich or poor cost the nation a lot (Ioschpe, 2004). We know that in Brazil, a diffusion of the practices of literacies points out the innumerable privations of the word and poverty of abilities related to reading and writing as urgent needs to be overcome. This is especially true when one proposes to give available multiple tools back to the people, in their various contexts. These tools are for reading and composing the world, learning to give the same worth to the diversity of responses to the world, in varying possibilities.

However, we also learned, during the ten years of working with the (Con)text Method of Multiple Literacies, that in order to have an effective, sustainable change, it is not enough to give food in order to satisfy the hunger for nourishment. Analogically, it is also not enough to create libraries in order to satisfy the real hunger for books. It is necessary to teach and create contexts concurrently so that usefulness and multiple forms of reading and writing can be experienced.

Thus, it is fundamental to mobilize each subject to discover the why and the how to satisfy his individual hunger, making them agents, “someone who acts and causes change and whose accomplishments can be judged according to their own values and objectives” (Sen, 2000, p. 33). It is an individual who, through the experience with the freedom of expression, begins to act beyond the forms and from the forms of his context, recognizing himself as an agent of personal, relational and universal trans-form-action (one who acts beyond the forms and from the forms) (Cavalcante Jr., 2003, 2005a, 2005b).

#### TRANS-FORM-ACTION WITH PRACTICES OF LITERACIES

In the texts of Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire, we have already identified an important contribution to the field, which today we call ‘literacies.’ Although he never adopted this term, “literacy,” in his works in English, translated as letramento (Kato, 1986), we do find letramento in his publications in Portuguese (e.g., Freire & Macedo, 1987).

Paulo Freire believed that teaching one how to read would go beyond the exercise of codification and decodification of words. The teaching of reading would necessarily presuppose, teaching the student to read his world (Freire, 1985). The reading of the world, consequently, would become an invitation to understand the hidden components of a society – its culture, for example, represented through artifacts, values, beliefs and means of communicating between people groups. He emphasized the seriousness of this exercise in affirming that:

Reading is not going over the words; reading is to have a deep understanding of

what is read, the aesthetic of what is read. In other words, if this country took the exercise of reading of the word associated with the reading of the world seriously, with all its implications of aesthetic order, of beauty and also of freedom of creation, I think that the teaching of reading and writing, from this perspective, would be part of the pedagogy of democracy (oral transcription).

However, in contrast to other current theories about literacy, normally developed in Brazil, and originating in the vast majority from psycholinguistic studies (cf. Kleiman, 1995; Terzi, 1995; Rojo, 1998), I have been developing the concept and a methodological proposal of literacy which incorporates a plural perspective. It is understood as a daily practice of reading the world – the inner world and the outer world of each human being – and the composition of these worlds through the use of multiple languages of (re)presentation of feelings.

The (Con)text Method of Multiple Literacies, as it has been named was founded on the aesthetic presuppositions and experiences in the processes of reading and writing (Eisner, 1998, Rosenblatt, 1978/1994, 1938/1995). This theoretical and methodological concept of a practice of literacies had its beginning in 1994, in the Doctoral Program in Reading and Writing at the University of New Hampshire (Cavalcante Jr., 1998). Since then it has been being continuously up-dated through new academic research (Araújo, 2003; Cavalcante Jr., 2001, 2003; D'aguiar, 2003; De Paula, 2003; Rodrigues, 2003).

The Methods is a continuation of an educational line idealized by the coordinators of the Laboratory of Reading-Writing of that doctorate program, to which I found myself linked. From them, reading (Hansen, 1987/2001) and writing (Gaves, 1983/2003, 1994) are conceived as a process to be developed – rather than a desired end product – where pleasure, freedom and discovery are invariably present. This Method

established itself as a liberating, psychoeducational practice of human empowerment, through which the multiple forms of aesthetic expression of word – in dance, writing, music, painting, theater, among others – seeks to restore oppressed potential in human beings. This is done in order for his/her free communication and expression of ideas, thoughts and feelings to enable him/her to become an agent of personal, relational and universal transformation.

The pluralization of the concept of literacies was presented to us by Donald Graves (in Voss, 1996), the founder of the Doctoral Program in Reading and Writing at the University of New Hampshire, a superb researcher who dedicated his entire career to the study of writing, and who, even in the classroom drew our attention to the fact that:

(...) our definition of literacy needs to be broadened. Schools are centered in words. There is no question that words are important, but they are only one manifestation of intelligence. By focusing on words to the exclusion of other modes of expression, we prevent masses of children from making valuable contributions to schools and to our communities. (p. xi-xii)

Fruit of this period of pluralization, Voss (1996), Wells 1996) and later, my own doctoral research (Cavalcante Jr., 1998), began to disseminate this concept, including the multiple forms of communication and expression of feelings.

Upon returning to my native country and with the publication of my thesis in the format of a book (Cavalcante Jr., 2001), the (Con)text Method of Multiple Literacies began to be consolidated and continued to be over the last ten years (Cavalcante Jr., 2005a, 2005b). My objective has been to introduce in Brazil a discussion in favor of the



plurality of the literacies (Soares in Cavalcante Jr., 2003). The goal was to inaugurate an adequate practice of unveiling the various talents, potentials and abilities which were culturally oppressed in human beings. This was directed by the understanding of empowerment as a process of “unfolding one’s potential through collective reflection and continuous dialogue where differences give way to mutual purposes and directions – thus transforming lives” (Delgado-Gaitan, 1996. p.11).

Grounded in the practice of education where life, experience and learning are conceived to be inseparable (Dewey, 1938/1971), all being components of the same continuum of joys and sorrows, making life experiences one life-long learning experience (Teixeira, 1978), the (Con)text Method of Multiple Literacies began to take shape in 1994. It emerged from my own experiences which I will now narrate in three streams of trans-form-action.

#### Intra-subjective trans-form-action

Although I had been through courses and sessions of psychotherapy, it was in the books I read that I found one of the principle tools for trans-form-action. Far from my culture and my family, I spent long hours in the company of books and stories. Many were compulsory texts for the Master’s and Doctoral courses. Others, however I had specially purchased and were with me in my free time. The majority of these were biographies or autobiographies.

Through the reading of these books, I met with lives and experiences in various countries, which, I suppose I would never have had access to myself. Within my small studio in the US, I found out about lives. One example was that of the medical doctor, Howard Brown, author of Familiar faces, hidden lives. Others I ‘met’ were poet Paul

Monette, author of Becoming a man and young John Reid, author of The best little boy in the world, to mention a few.

All alone, I talked with the authors, marking parts of the texts which were significant to me, which made me think about my own experience. The practice of reading consisted, in this first phase, of an intra-subjective exercise, where I conversed with myself, thus giving life to the text I was reading. There still was no real interaction with the authors, even though I felt I was in their company and could relate to their life experiences.

In some form, the exiled silence among books permitted me to dive deeply into myself, even though I had always had the habit of reading. At this time I read in order to fulfill my study tasks, I read to console my loneliness. Curiously enough, I also read in order to talk to myself. In this meeting, it was possible to discover talents, give worth to hidden potential and to recognize my own way of being, thinking, feeling and acting.

It is in this intra-subjective phase, however, the moment in which the reader, through the other's experience, finds an invitation to read himself and his own uniqueness interposed in the world. However, when there is a (re)discovery that his life experience also has worth, he needs a community. He needs the acceptance of an 'other' with whom he can share his thoughts, ideas and feelings, without fear of being judged, which I will illustrate below.

#### Inter-subjective trans-form-action

After discovering the transforming potential of reading, the reader, upon 'transacting' with the text (Rosenblatt, 2005), is no longer content to keep his emerging reactions to what he has read to himself. He has the desire to blend himself with the text,

to go beyond it, expressing his ideas, implying feelings and building new thoughts, which were summoned by the writings of another person.

It was through the expression of pain that I discovered for myself the potential of writing and the importance of a community which would accept me and my writing, where I could share my first draft. The first poem I wrote, entitled “Vida” (Cavalcante Jr., 2001, 2003) was written at the end of 1994, months after the death of my father, the death of an aunt and some weeks after the death of one of my dear sisters. All these losses came in one semester, exactly the one in which I began my doctoral course.

On the verge of leaving the program, prodded by an immense desire to go back home to Brazil, I sat in front of the computer one cold, North American, winter night and let the words flow unpretentiously from my heart. The words of Jean Cocteau were witness to that writing: “poetry is indispensable. If I only knew what for (...)” (apud Fischer, 2002, p. 11). It was an enchanting and paradoxal epigram to the moment I was experiencing.

Today, I clearly see the importance of that heart-felt, spontaneous writing. It was a cauterizing form of expression, which functioned as a rich, therapeutic moment for me. I am reminded of the words of the poet from Minas Gerais in Brazil, Bartolomeu Queirós (in Lima, 1998): “There are only two places in the world where we can speak of ourselves: on the psychoanalyst’s couch or through writing. (...) And since it is necessary to seek a ‘cure,’ I have chosen the written word” (p. 123-4). It was what I did as well, in the intuition of a process. I myself was the greatest proof.

However, pleasurable reading and spontaneous writing would not be enough to awaken in me the therapeutic potential of reading and writing (something later confirmed through my academic research, e.g., Cavalcante Jr., 2004). Reading and writing, at that moment were actions which were only related to myself.

If it were not for the careful intervention of Jane Hansen, professor who was teaching a class I was taking that semester, who allowed me to share, in class, the poem which I had written that night, my development as a reader-writer could have been aborted. Grateful was my surprised reaction to hearing, in class, my colleagues' reactions to the text I had written. Some could relate to my pain, remembering losses which they had suffered. Other offered words of acceptance and encouragement. In essence, it was a community of reader-writers, who did not pass judgment on my text, which spontaneously showed me the importance of community as a catalyst for new collective writings and feelings.

From that day on, I began to come out of the 'dark night' which bound me to the sorrow of the losses of my loved ones. This made me see, through my colleagues' written and verbal reactions, that there were many ways of dealing with human suffering. The discovery of these other ways was a lightning bolt of hope in my individual loneliness. With these discoveries, I began to outline the first actions of what is today called the (Con)text Method of Multiple Literacies.

I began, in 1994 while excited with the transformations produced in me by reading and writing, to work with texts. Initially I worked with books of children's literature, something quite common in North American schools. They are used as productive stimulus for spontaneous writing. The discovery of the potential of books of this literary genre, which enchant youth and adults alike, came spontaneously as well. Working as a volunteer in a first grade class in a public school in the US, I had, as my task, to read books to children, thus assisting them in the process of learning to read and write.

One day, Mallory, a very intelligent and gentle girl, began to act aggressively in the classroom. Neither the teacher nor I knew what was happening in the life of that

little girl. Since I read to the children individually, Mallory came up to me with a book in her hands and said softly, “Mr. Cav (my short name for the children), can you read this book to me, please?”

Only she and I sat in a corner of the room. The book she had chosen was Nana upstairs & Nana downstairs (Paola, 1973). It tells the story of Nana, a very dear grandmother and of the memories of happy moments with her grandchildren, until her passing away. To my great surprise, when I finished reading the book, Mallory, with a sad voice and look, whispered: “my grandma is dying”.

I felt in complete harmony, for I too was dealing with the pain of the losses in my life and on that day, Mallory was suffering with her grandmother who had cancer and was in the hospital. The prognosis was not good. No one knew, up to that point, what that child was going through which would justify her aggressiveness in the classroom.

I took a deep breath and asked Mallory if she would like to write about what she was feeling in relation to the story I had read to her. As I did so, inside, my own reactions filled me with emotion on remembering happy times with my beloved sister who had passed away only a few days earlier. I remembered her weekly handwritten letters she had written from Brazil. Immediately Mallory picked up a crayon and began to write. She, in her own invented spelling (when letters correspond to the phonemes of the words), wrote one of the most beautiful written reactions which I have ever read.

On each page she wrote a phrase, in the same style as the book I had read to her. Gathering all the pages, we made a book which she entitled “The make me happy book.” The words expressed her gratefulness to her grandmother for all the happy moments they had had together. I have transcribed below, the text written by that child of only seven years of age.

I loved the way you looked at me.

I loved the way you made me happy.

I loved the way you smiled.

I loved the way you made me laugh.

I loved the way you made my heart beat.

And I specially loved the way you loved me.

When the book was finished we stapled it together and I asked Mallory what she would like to do with her production. She said she would like to go to the hospital and give it to her grandmother. Internally, she felt that the time had come for her to say farewell to her dear grandmother. We told her parents of her desire and they promptly took her to the hospital, where Mallory not only gave the book, but read it phrase by phrase as well. A few days later, Mallory's grandmother passed away. Apparently she was able to deal well with this death, and recovered her excellent grades and sweetness in the following months. She had been able to express the words contained inside her heart; a spontaneous word to the world in which she was living.

From that day on, with the impact of that experience with Mallory, I have read hundreds of books (and continue to read) to children, youth and adults, always asking them during the reading to ask themselves: what does this story make me think of, remember or feel? After that, they spontaneously register, in writing, their reactions to the text read. A methodology which, later I denominated felt text, or rather, a text which describes exactly what is felt by the reader and which makes sense to him/her. This became the principle tool in the work of the (Con)text Method of Multiple Literacies.

Thanks to Mallory I discovered the importance of this tool, and beyond that, the potential of the so-called books of children's literature as a stimulus of images experienced by children, youth and adults. Since the majority of them are short and extremely aesthetic in words and images, these short stories are able to draw out, from within the reader rich reactions in felt-texts, developed during our lives.

Later while doing field research in Brazil for my doctoral thesis, I discovered in the literature of popular folk stories, music, dance, poetry, painting, sculpture and other forms of Brazilian 'felt' forms of communication and expression, rich texts forms (which I called 'multiple literacies'). I began using them as evocative stimuli and as means of spontaneous writing. Upon reading the lyrics of a song, or choreography or a poem I began to ask the reader to express his/her reaction to the text which had been read through a felt text composed of the language(s) of his/her choice. Thus a felt-text for example, in reaction to a song, could be expressed through a painting, poem or dance or even in a combination of the multiple forms of literacies.

For many years, the (Con)text Method of Multiple Literacies has been used among the most widely varied groups possible in Brazil, as well as abroad. These groups are made of children, youth and adults at different ages, different levels of scholarship from the illiterate to the post-graduate. With the defense of a doctoral thesis on the subject, the publication of two books and some articles on the (Con)text Method of Multiple Literacies, along with orientation for a Master's thesis with the use of the Method in diverse contexts, I naively thought I had come to the end of my work. I was entering a tiring routine. This was just the opposite of the proposal of the method which is a path to be followed. It all seemed to be well founded, with firm theoretical and methodological support, working, with satisfactory results. Seemingly, the (Con)text Method of Multiple Literacies was well-rounded in its conception

With the rigid certainty of having traced my path, I began to dedicate time to the spread of my work through publications and compositions in Circles of Literacies in innumerable Brazilian contexts. I trained mentors of the Method, gave orientation to projects which were evaluated and praised. I gave lectures and courses all over until the academic work became heavy and dull. A decade of research and practice seemed to be sufficient to put an end to it and shift the emphasis of my research. I was in search of new, broader horizons.

Reading books, once again, I discovered that I was in a process of ‘normosis’ (Weil, Leloup and Crema, 2003) and due to dissatisfaction with the rigid rules of the Brazilian University, I was on the verge of prematurely abandoning a beautiful journey which had begun only a decade ago.

It was during a sabbatical year, which I had requested for myself, while considering the lack of this kind of leave in the Brazilian university culture that I began to do some psychotherapy sessions, read again and felt the world as a form of reunion to my inner self. This time the discovery was that I had to go beyond my ego, to transcend my own personal and professional expectations, which were, many times, influenced by cultural models of my society. It is this third phase which I will discuss next, although succinctly, since I find myself experiencing it and still elaborating it as I write.

#### Trans-subjective Trans-form-action

In the trans-subjective phase, the connection does not occur between the subject and a single other, whether that be with my own lost subjectivity or whether it be with a third party in his/her deep complexity. Rather the link is made with all the others who compose the greater universe. We suspend the perception of the isolated ‘I,’ in order to



consider the existence of a community, living with everyone, with the impossibility of being disassociated, being with all in this network which sustains life.

In this stage we discover the meaning of spirituality, understood in the words of philosopher, Robert Solomon (2003), as “nothing less than love, well-thought in life” (p. 18). It is not necessary, according to this author, “to be religious – much less to belong to an organized religion – to be spiritual” (p. 19).

It was after a reflective period to think thoroughly about my life, motivated by a continuous sense of dissatisfaction with the routine in which I found myself, and accompanied by the sudden passing away of my mother, that I was able to become aware of what was forcing me into a mold in my university work.

In the Brazilian context, a professor with a doctorate must publish articles, give lectures, attend conferences, give orientation for dissertations and theses, participate on examining boards, in other words, be a part of an academic model dictated by dominate first world cultures. This model was previous built for the maintenance of a good reputation, where the majority take part without having to take any critical stand while facing the “perverse, vicious circle into which the post-graduate level in Brazil is heading for” (Horta in Bianchetti and Machado, 2002, p. 11).

Like the majority of my teaching colleagues, I was out of touch with myself, with my interests which meant my choices, until the time in which I reflected about the life I was living, of the normosis which I had created for myself. I began, once again with the help of books and my own writing, to think about what was really necessary for me to live happily, and in what way this awareness would ramify in my professional processes.

Thus, I fell in love again with the new challenges of the work of thinking about and using the (Con)text Method of Multiple Literacies. In this recent phase, I have

recovered the sense of beauty and of the aesthetic sense of the life of the reader through, for example the poem. It is always present in my discoveries - understood by Rosenblatt (1978/1995), as an event which occurs in the reader-writer relationship at the meeting of lives and experiences charged with the common feelings of all humanity, “[The poem] happens during a coming-together, a welding, of a reader and a text. The reader brings to the text his past experience and present personality” (p. 12).

This reader-writer transaction, proposed by Louise Rosenblatt, becomes possible, only when an aesthetic posture of reading is assumed, allowing the text to become organic and synthetic to the reader. She continues, “In aesthetic reading, the reader’s attention is centered directly on what he is experiencing in life during his relationship with that particular text” (p. 25).

Today, as I write these lines I received a gift Os cem melhores poemas brasileiros do século [The 100 Best Brazilian Poems of the Century], selected by Ítalo Moriconi (2001). Behold, I find, in the words of the poet, Antonio Cícero, a mirror of my relationship with this new writing: “Keeping something is not hiding it or locking it up (...) Keeping something is looking at it, staring at it, focusing on it because you admire it, or rather giving light to it or being illuminated by it. (...) That is why one writes, one speaks, one publishes; that is why one says or recites a poem (...)” (p. 337). That is also why I tell you my story, unveiling what I thought, to begin with, to be unrevealable, so that this, my text is able to keep that which is to be kept.

Enamored, once again, with the aesthetic of my own relationship to the texts, I currently work, based on the presupposition of Eisner (1998) for whom “brains are born and minds are made” (p. 23), to understand to what extent new states of the human mind can be constituted from the aesthetic experience of sensing, feeling, imagining and thinking through the practice of literacies. These are actions of particular interest to the

Method when proposing spontaneous writing, a reaction to the multiple texts, coming from what the reader thought, remembered and felt. More emphatically, this same author deepens our attention to the fact that:

We learn to see and hear. We learn to read the subtle qualitative cues that constitute the environment. We learn to distinguish and differentiate between kittens, squirrels, and puppies. Eventually, if we care enough, we are able to see qualities in Irish setters, golf clubs, fine wines, antique cabinets, Japanese pots, and the complex nuances of American football that others miss. If we care enough and work hard enough we achieve experiences. We become connoisseurs of some aspect of the world. (p. 24)

Thus, a human being outside this relationship of aesthetic experience with the world will be seriously impaired in his ability to find meaning in his actions. This, thus allows him to be carried by a current of normosis, making himself equal to all others who have been molded by the tyranny of the cultures of the masses. I believe, and my research as well as my collaborators have been showing, (Cavalcante Jr., 2001, 2003, 2005), that through reading and writing it is possible for the subject to begin to break down these inherited, cultural rules and begin to print new patterns for future generations.

### WORDS FOR EVERYONE

The expression of the word, understood as being the very subject in expression of himself, sustained the concept of Touraine (1999) that the “subject is word” (p.95). This brings us to close with the argument of this same thinker, that “the subject has no

other content other than the production of himself” (p.23). However, he needs to become aware of the fact that, the transformation of his experiences into an act of meaning in and of itself, as the actor in his own story, is the path to follow in order to begin feeling-with-the-world. World and subject transact in a constructive, transcendent relationship with the unique ‘I’ (intra-subjective relationship) and that now, in relationship with a ‘you’ (inter-subjective), becomes greater than ‘we’ (trans-subjective).

In the (Con)text Method of Multiple Literacies, we returned to the word understood as being the “base of the inner life” (Bakhtin, 1929/1999, p. 52) of the subject, which, in turn has a capacity of using the symbols of writing, painting, of music to express this inner life. However, some experiences in the Brazilian context, show that the expression of the inner life does not always find space for its externalization. Many in Brazil are still destitute of capacities (Sen, 2000), and go through the world, but do not allow the world to go through them. In other words, their ‘journey’ does not imply in the reading and writing of themselves in this world (Cavalcante Jr., 2003), or simply, they do not reach a feeling-with-the-world level.

Every experience (Dewey, 1938/1971), or mental activity – as Bakhtin prefers (1929/1999) – has great potential to be understood and expressed. Emphatically, this author affirms, “all mental activity is expressible, that is, it constitutes a potential expression” (Bakhtin, 1929/1999), p. 51). However, it is important to remember that a “mental activity is not visible, nor can it be directly perceived” (p 61). But it can be expressed through linguistic symbols and “the inner symbol for excellence is the word, the inner dialogue” (p. 62).

The concept of the word in Bakhtin is the result of the reader-writer transaction, and according to him, “we only react to those things which waken in us experiential or

ideological resonance” (p. 95). This concept moves us to his Russian contemporary, Vigotsky (1934/2003). For Vigotsky “(...) the meaning of a word is the sum of all the psychological events which the word awakens in our consciousness” (p. 151). These two authors help us to understand the principle, presented in the words of Eisner (1998), that brains are biological and determined by nature, while the constitution of the human mind is the result of cultural experiences of this subject-world relationship which I call feeling-with-the-world.

Democratizing access of Brazilians to the plural world of languages is not only an ethical or aesthetic commitment, but it directly implies assuming a concrete movement for the development of our country which depends on minds which act, influence and govern. The concept of development which we have used here should be understood “as a process of expansion of the real freedoms which people have,” according to the proposal defended by Sen (2000, p. 17) who later warns: “(...) the abilities that a person really has (and not what he theoretically has) depend on the nature of what is socially available, which could be crucial for the liberty of individuals” (p. 325-327).

It is necessary, however, to be conscious of the fact that a culture, in this case, the Brazilian culture, “displays the forms humans have used to give expression to what they have imagined, understood, and felt” (Eisner, 1998, p. 45). It is this production of culture where one finds the contributions of aesthetic (felt) processes of reading and writing introduced.

Aiming to, in this way, promote the mental activity of Brazilians, starting from their inner dialogue (word), is how the (Con)text Method of Multiple Literacies has been being used over the last decade. There is the commitment to the freedom of expression of the subject in reactions to the texts which are read, in his transactions with

the word and the world which surrounds him, as well as with a composition of this world through “a structured, material expression (through the word, symbols, drawings, painting, the sound of music, etc)” (Bakhtin, 1999, p. 118). In other words, it is any tool of composition of meaning, inherent in his culture and, also, other forms which are learned in the heterogenic groups of the Circles of Literacy (name given to the environment where the Method is developed) which aims at the broadening of capacities through the learning of new tools.

In this manner, contributing so that the subject, he who learned to be “the actor of his own history” (Touraine, 1999, p. 73), is allowed to go through the world and allows the world to go through him – feeling-with-the-world. I have been tracing a decade of practice of literacies which today prods me to understand the aesthetic effect of the subject-world and world-subject relationship. It is a result of this transaction (intra-subjective and inter-subjective), bringing the being in trans-form-action to a third place, which I have called trans-subjective, or universal, being, which, currently is my focus of study.

### FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The processes of change experienced in Circles of Literacies have been previously cited (Cavalcante Jr., 2001, 2003, 20005b). A special example came at the end of 2004 when we ended a seven-year cycle of accompanying a Program of Literacies in the municipality of Itapajé in Ceará (Brazil) (Cavalcante Jr., 2005a), where the Method mentioned was experienced in all the diversity of its possibilities, limits and conquests.

However, it is important to remember that a process of change, as Geertz (1995) warns us, “is not a parade which can be watched, while it passes by” (p. 4). The desire

to change needs to be felt and experienced by each participant of a Circle of Literacies. This participant, together with his colleagues, share together the multiple tools which can sculpture a new way of being and of dealing with old realities.

The most important aspect of this type of experience of personal and collective empowerment, which Hansen (2001), one of the collaborators with me in the Program of Itapajé, says, is truly

the momentum in this district continues to build and will not stop as long as the teachers share their ideas with one another and use one another as resources. They strive to create strong voices for themselves, one another, and their students. In so doing, they move forward as professionals. (p. 165)

Professors such as Paulo Freire, Louise Roseblatt, Elliot Eisner, Donald Graves, Jane Hansen, Luizinha Braga and I, fought because we believed that there was hope in our actions as educators. We keenly felt the consequences of various forms of oppression, and were able, with the help of many and ourselves, to overcome the barriers and became agents of trans-form-action through education.

Education, here, is understood to be the daily time we write our “book to make me happy” like young Mallory did. Somehow she knew how to go beyond the forms and from the forms (trans-form-action) which locked her to her suffering.

Finally, we know that many do not have appropriate places for free communication and expression of the word, as Mallory truly found. It is for this reason that we praise the Latin American campaign to dedicate the year of 2005 to reading and writing, as well as congratulate the Brazilian Government for its initiative of the Hunger for Books Program. However we cannot forget that the book, like a source of fuel, is

not able to create in the reader the desire to seek out new sources of reading, composing meaning through his writing.

In other words, it is necessary that the reading and writing programs are capable of assisting the reader to discover the functionality of reading-writing in his/her lives (Soares, 1999); “it is not enough to learn to read and write, more than this is necessary in order to go beyond functional literacy” affirms Magda Soares (2003). She adds “literacy is more than learning to read and write, it is learning to read and write within a context where reading and writing make sense and are part of the student’s life” (p.2), awakening the pleasure, the freedom and the discovery of new worlds, fruit of an aesthetic (felt) relationship with words.

As an artist, the reader-writer is not able to work with formulae, deadlines or imposed rules, strategies which function only to inhibit his creativity. The freedom of expression is a path taken by those who make reading and writing an art of communication of the word and a tool of trans-form-action of the world. Let us move forward to meet the challenges.

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