Creative Chain in the Process of Becoming a Totality /
A cadeia criativa no processo de tornar-se totalidade

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims at discussing the Creative Chain and its potentialities for understanding the concept of totality, from a Spinozian monistic perspective. The discussion focuses on the creative struggle to produce shared meanings as a way of becoming a totality. The results of the analysis of an Extra Mural Program for teacher education in deprived communities indicate that the effort to argumentatively produce shared meanings makes it possible for new cultural outcomes.

KEY-WORDS: Sense, Meaning, Argumentation, Teacher education

RESUMO

Este trabalho objetiva discutir a Cadeia Criativa e seu potencial para a compreensão da ideia de totalidade, a partir de leituras da filosofia monista de Spinoza. A discussão focaliza luta criativa para a produção de significados como modos de tornar-se totalidade. Os resultados da análise de um Programa de Extensão para formação de professores em comunidades carentes apontam que o esforço para argumentativamente produzir significados compartilhados possibilita o surgimento de novos resultados culturais.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Sentido; significado; argumentação; formação de professores*

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INTRODUCTION

According to Robbins (2005), the actual goal we are striving for is 'free will of action' or an 'inner freedom' to reconstruct our inner selves and our environment. This sentence has an important impact in the development of the projects in our Brazilian research group *Language in Activities in School Contexts* (LACE/Linguagem em Atividades do Contexto Escolar). In this paper, I will discuss the concept of Creative Chain and its potentialities for the production of inner selves and environment. In order to understand this concept, I will first discuss the relationship between *znachenie*[1] and *smysl*[2] for the constitution of the Creative Chain. To explain this relationship, I will also discuss the internally persuasive discourse and its connections to argumentation. Finally, I will exemplify with our extramural course.

LACE is a research group that aims at understanding–transforming the unacceptable conditions of deprived Brazilian communities through education. This objective is mainly supported by an attempt to turn school into a place where different possibilities are produced for kids and adults.

Brazilian problems have been widely and internationally presented; however, there is almost no effort to find ways to contribute to solve these problems. In this context, LACE develops a teacher education intervention program – PAC (Programa Ação Cidadã – Acting as Citizens Program) focusing on the "development of citizenship as a condition of those who do not simply accept what is provided to them but who also want to produce their own rights and duties interdependently" (LESSA, LIBERALI & FIDALGO, 2005).

In PAC, researchers from LACE work to potentiate all participants' free will of action in a Spinozian monistic perspective (1677). According to Spinoza, only in the totality there is freedom. In the search for joint creative outcomes in the Creative Chain of Activities, partners have a chance to produce some kind of "free will of action".

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1 – In this text, the words meaning and znachnie will be used interchangeably.
2 – In this text, the word smysl will be used interchangeably with sense when referring to Vygotsky and with theme when referring to Bakhtin.

The idea of constituting a Creative Chain of activities is embedded within the idea of the importance of the unity and wholeness in Vygotsky's thinking.

1 THE CREATIVE CHAIN

A Creative Chain implies partnered endeavors, in an activity, producing meanings which will be, afterwards, shared with other new partners through the senses (VYGOTSKY, 1934) that those bring to a new activity. Therefore, new meanings are produced carrying some aspects created in the first activity. Similarly, some of the partners from the second activity, when engaged in a third activity, follow the same path. This Creative Chain presupposes that features of the totality can emerge in the production of new creative outcomes and of its creators.

As stated elsewhere (LIBERALI & FUGA, 2007), according to Spinoza (1677), human beings are part of the substance. They are finite and partially free but, because they are part of the totality, the whole, they have partial freedom and the possibility of partially creating adequate ideas which lead to freedom. Adequate ideas are seen as those which are considered by themselves in relation to an object in all its properties or intrinsic ways. So they can only be conceived by the Substance which contains the totality. On the other hand, human beings can only, for their human finitude, notice things in a partial or inadequate way. However, when in contact with other human beings these inadequate ideas are put together to create ideas that, though still partial and inadequate, can share more aspects with the infinite and adequate ideas of the Substance once it aggregates a greater share of the totality. In order words, when together, human beings connect their inadequate ideas in ways that make it possible to visualize a greater, though always temporary, aspect of the totality. In this sense, it increases its power of resistance (the conatus) and turns towards more freedom as a totality.

In order to better understand the concept of Creative Chain in the production of the totality, it is important to consider how inadequate ideas of a forceful human being (with strong conatus) are put together with other human beings to increase the conatus as a totality. To do

this, it is essential to discuss the concepts of sense and meaning, both in psychological (Vygotskian group) and linguistic (Bakhtinian group) perspectives, and their importance in the production of a creative totality. According to Robbins (2001), word meaning for Vygotsky was considered the unit of analysis to make it possible to understand the relationship between thought and speech. Word meaning was said to maintain the properties of the totality. This aspect is essential for the discussion of the Creative Chain.

As already indicated by Freitas (1997), both Bakhtin and Vygotsky had a compromise with totality. Bakhtin was against abstract objectivism and idealistic subjectivism. For him, this duality should be overcome by the concrete utterance. On the other hand, Vygotsky did not believe in the duality expressed by both the rationalist and empiricist views of the subject; on the contrary, he suggested that these views were overcome by the view of the subject as constituted in the relationship with others.

These similarities lead us to the discussion of the Russian distinction used by both authors for the terms *znachenie* (translated into English as meaning for both Vygotsky and Bakhtin) and *smysl* (translated as *sense* for Vygotsky and as *theme* for Bakhtin). This simple (CEREJA, 2005) distinction can be seen as the starting point for the important considerations I want to make about the production of shared meaning.

Although Rojo (2005) presents some differences between the two approaches to *znachenie* and *smysl*, she also recognizes great similarities between them. As differences, this author suggests that Vygotsky focused on verbal thought, inner speech and the status of meaning in the internal functioning of the person while the Bakhtinian Circle emphasized the social circulation of meaning and themes through interaction and utterances. However, Rojo (2005) also explains that both theories have a lot in common. For instance, they assert the origins of these concepts as imbued with the experiences of individuals determined by the social circulation of discourse and language, which the subject appropriates as his/her own language and discourse. Besides, she mentions that both admit different types and levels of *znachenie* and that its roots are embedded in *smysl*; finally, both point out monadic concrete units, founded and founding reality.

These contrasts and similarities in mind, we turn now to the understanding of how *znachenie* and *smysl* can be understood in the production of shared meaning in the Creative Chain.

ZNACHENIE

The Russian word *znachenie* was both used by Vygotsky and Bakhtin to discuss those aspects of generalization which are socially established for a word. According to Rojo (2005), in order to find the *unit* of verbal thought and consciousness, Vygotsky (1933, 1934) outlines his own definition of *meaning*. For him, (A.A.LEONTIEV, 2001a), meaning was considered a unity of generalization and association, communication and thinking. The meaning of a word could be seen as a conventional social production with a relatively stable nature through which human beings appropriate productions by preceding generations.

A.N. Leontiev (1978) explained that this objective meaning is understood as the generic images, or the concepts or the result of a process of assimilation of *ready-made*, historically evolved meanings: "are produced by society and have their history in the development of language, in the history of the development of forms of social consciousness." As a psychological phenomenon, meaning was not considered a thing, but a process. This dynamic unity is seen as situated in history and not remaining constant. It is a system of processes, a system of actions (A.A.LEONTIEV, 2001b, p. 71) some of which may be seen as crystallized, as definitions in a dictionary. A.A.Leontiev (2001b) acknowledges they are "psychologically determined through a control mechanism only" (72). However, Rojo, (2005) supports the Vygotskian perspective that meaning is not a simple stable *association*, as averred by behaviorism, Gestalt and some approaches that tend to proclaim that the meaning of a word is established once and for all and its development is complete. For Vygotsky, this is a never-ending process of the constitution of the society infused in word meaning.

Similarly, Bakhtin points to *znachenie* as the self-identical and reproducible zones of the utterance in all its repetition. It is the technical apparatus for the realization of a *smysl*. They have abstract, not concrete or autonomous existence. The meaning of a word is kept by "its forms of morphological and syntactic union, interrogative

intonations etc., that form the construction of the utterance" (BAKHTIN/VOLOSHINOV, 1929, p. 100). Bakhtin claims that *znachenie* is absorbed by the *smysl* and is destroyed by its contradictions to be recreated as a new form of *znachenie*, which carries a temporary stability and identity.

According to Amorim (2006), in Bakhtinian perspectives, *znachenie* is the arena for the evolution of the opposition between I/ you. She discusses how meaning is eternized in a possible not value bound way because it is only when associated to an act that this meaning acquires values and that these values will turn into the voices in the texts. The utterance, though real and concrete, stabilizes the meaning, putting it closer to eternity and abstraction. For Vygotsky, "Meaning is only one of the zones of sense, the most stable and precise zone"(1934, p. 245). These definitions lead to the view of *znachenie* as connected to the adequate ideas discussed by Spinoza (1677). Just as announced by Spinoza, meanings are just temporarily set and created by the combination of senses into a more temporarily stable perspective.

A.A.Leontiev (2001a) affirms that mastery of meaning is the most important way in which individual behavior can be mediated through social experience. The author declares that it is "*the potential possibility of a word's reference to a given referent or class of referents*, realized thorough various 'significations', and depending primarily on the place of the given referent within activity" (62). *Therefore*, znachenie introduces an idea of the power of existence yet to come: the power of becoming or ZPD (HOLZMAN, 2002). In this sense, it leads to the idea of *conatus* as the possibility of creativity, which is essential to the infinite development of the Substance. Fundamentally, it indicates meaning as the potential for human beings to get together in order to create new meaning through the senses they share in the chain of activities they take part in throughout their lives.

SMYSL

According to Vygotsky, *smysl* is defined as the "sum of all psychological events that this word activates in conscience". It is seen as an aspect of conscience, which might be the way meanings that are historically established are internalized and externalized by each individual. For him (1934, p. 181), "a word's sense is the aggregate

of all psychological facts that arise in our consciousness as a result of the word." The author explains that sense is a dynamic, fluid, and complex formation that has several zones that vary in their stability (1934, p. 276). During complex processes of interaction, the individual social experience becomes a source of new subjective senses and meanings that will actively take part in the subjective configuration of personality (GONZÁLEZ REY, 2000).

A word may continue to be the same but its corresponding object is perceived in different ways. That is why González Rey (2000) asserts that needs, which are the sources of emotions and affective states of the subject, transform themselves into new qualitative subjective senses in the subjective configurations of personality. The individual sense of an utterance includes attributes that are shaped by culture and appropriated through social interaction.

According to A.A.Leontiev (2001a), the root of these differences is social-historical-cultural. Meaning and the sense of a word vary a lot, mainly in a class society, since personal motives and interest diverge in different societies. For him, sense is not individual but has a relationship that is colored by a set of group interests. Therefore, sense can also be seen as a form of social influence on the individual, but a non-codified one.

Rojo (2005) affirms that, for the Bakhtinian Circle, because of the diversity of the (social and material) conditions of human interaction and activity both utterance and its theme are seen as concrete and irreproducible reality of discourse. Following the same perspective, Souza (2002) points out that *smysl* carries the most important monist characteristics stressed by the Bakhtinian Circle, that is, the fact that it is ideological, historical, phenomenological, sociological, and dialogical. The utterances are infused with other people's words but still they create our unity because they combine these words in a very special way which makes it possible for the development of culture.

As claimed by A.A.Leontiev (2001a), if one takes into consideration the historical perspective of human consciousness, *smysls* are seen as particular forms of a person's objective reality. In a class society, the objective content of man's labor (his sense) does not coincide with its meaning. Relating this to Marx, A.A.Leontiev discusses self-alienation, considering the distance between what a worker produces in general and what he produces for himself. In the

labor activity, the worker is a creator of the product he produces. Through his activity, he ensures the life of the society. However, for him, what he does is not to produce but to guarantee his survival. In this way, his sense of the products he produces is divorced from the general understanding of it, its meaning. So, his creation does not make him part of the totality, but an individualized instance who has a tenuous link with the totality. In this sense, his conatus is weakened and his freedom in the totality almost non-existent.

In the same way, as pointed out by Guimarães (2005) based on Bakhtin, the incorporation of the voices of others into the discourse of the one creates the illusion of a single absolute meaning, making the subject suppose this utterance is only his. However, it is the utterance's responsive character which is essential to the production of creative outcomes. And this illusion should be suppressed by the understanding that each word is infused with contradictory values which can only become in the process of interaction between listener and speaker.

In similar view as that of Spinoza (1677), A.N. Leontiev (2002 a and b) insists that senses lose their real life basis and for this reason sometimes agonizingly discredit themselves in the consciousness of the subject. These senses are finally created by the existence of motive – goals that conflict with one another but which make it possible for the development of new shared meanings.

SMYSL – ZNACHENIE

The relationship between smysl and znachenie is essential to understand the Creative Chain. The production of shared meanings seems to emanate from the struggle established in the activities between crystallized meanings and subjective senses. To understand the production of new cultural tools to transform society, I believe this understanding is essential.

As pointed out by Bakhtin/Voloshinov, "if we were to restrict ourselves to the historical irreproducibility and unitariness of each concrete utterance and its theme, we would be poor dialecticians" (1929, p. 100). *Smysl* is the upper, actual limit of linguistic signification; while *znachenie* is the lower limit of linguistic significance. Meaning is a potentiality, the possibility of having a meaning within a concrete theme. This correlates to what Souza

(2002) expressed about the Bakhtinian Circle, that is, the utterance is the chain that keeps dialogical resonance in action. In other words, *smysl* is responsible for keeping the dialogical orientation of the utterance both connected and creative in relation to the previous and future utterance. As claimed by Bakhtin/Voloshinov (1929), *smysl* does not stand by itself. But it is through the meeting and merging of *smysls* into *znachenie* that new *smysl* emerges. *Smysls* exit only in relation to each other and in historical life, so the chain of *smysls* grows infinitely; that is why *znachenie* is always renovated, reborn again.

This refers directly to the movement of the meaning through the Creative Chain of activities in which the *smysls* express both the subject's subjectivity and the collective possibility for transformation into a totality. It then correlates to the idea that "a change in meaning is always a reevaluation or the transposition of some particular word form from one evaluative context to another" (BAKHTIN/VOLOSHINOV, 1998, p.105).

Understanding, the germ for response that tries to meet a counter word in the chain of activities, becomes responsible for the possibility of creatively producing the future. Thus, meaning is the essential aspect of the Creative Chain once it is created in the process of active, responsive understanding. As pointed out by Bakhtin/Voloshinov, meaning "is the effect of interaction between the speaker and listener produced via the material of a particular sound" (1998, p. 103).

In this sense, meaning could be considered also as essential to the development of creative products and of creative selves. Moran and John-Steiner (2003) stressed that creative thought starts as an imaginary sense of how things might be, which is transformed into meaning and externally expressed in an ongoing dialectic between the general and the specific. Therefore, one could say that meaning and sense are both tied to emotional experience (VYGOTSKY, 1997). Through their work and subjective experience, creative people expand the senses of an object, word or symbol; or bring a new sense into the phenomenon's social meaning; or create new relationships between the phenomenon's meaning and sense.

Besides that, according to Mahn and John-Steiner (2002), Vygotsky relied on both Stanislavsky and Paulhan to establish his idea of sense and meaning. With Stanislavsky, for instance, Vygotsky

took the idea that the sense of words serves to identify the characters' motives behind them. With Paulhan, he developed the distinction between sense and meaning in order to explain the way an individual uses language to produce the affective aspects of social interaction, which he connects to the concept of *perezhivanie*. This concept was foundational for his examination of the relationship between affect and thought. Similarly, in Bakhtinian terms, social evaluation is essential to the understanding of the generation of theme and of the meaning implementing the theme. It is the essence of the evaluative purview: "the sense of the whole of all those things that have a meaning and importance for the particular group" (BAKHTIN/ VOLOŠINOV, 1998, p.106).

A.N. Leontiev (1978) perhaps expressed this idea in a fairly explicit way when he stressed the fact that if the individual is forced to choose in certain circumstances, the choice is not between meanings, but between the conflicting social positions expressed and comprehended through these meanings. That is why, as he explains, the transformation of personal meanings (*smysl*) into adequate (or more adequate) objective meanings shows that this occurs in the context of the *struggle* for people's consciousness that is waged in society.

This enrichment of words by the sense they gain from the context is the fundamental law of the dynamics of word meanings. A word in a context means both more and less than the same word in isolation: more, because it acquires new content; less, because its meaning is limited and narrowed by the context (VYGOTSKY, 1934).

2 ARGUMENTATION IN THE STRUGGLE OF SENSES AND MEANINGS

Argumentation is seen as a type of language organization that works as a tool in the production of shared meanings in this Creative Chain. Parts of the discussions developed in the activities proposed by PAC seem to shed a light on how different senses and crystallized meanings are discursively negotiated in the production of shared meanings. The new cultural outcomes are dialectically produced through the use of argumentation as a tool to overcome the authoritarian and dogmatic perspectives both of common sense

(senses or theme) and of scientific knowledge (crystallized objective meanings).

From this monist perspective, argumentation is seen as essential to the understanding of the reciprocity of internal and external, individual and social, internalization and externalization, development and creativity, culture and personality, that is, of the essential articulation of objective and subjective aspects of humans (ROBBINS, 2005 and MORAN & JOHN-STEINER, 2003).

In the Creative Chain, argumentation is responsible for the collaborative (MAGALHÃES, 2004) expansion and restriction of the objects (meanings) that will fulfill, not individual needs, but those that make it possible for us to understand ourselves as part of an interdependent totality. In this sense, argumentation is responsible for the struggle between different senses and crystallized meanings in order to create new meanings, restricting the individual senses in order to expand the collective shared meanings.

This argumentative struggle between senses and meanings leads to a discussion posed by Bakhtin/Voloshinov (1998) about the difference between internally persuasive discourse and authoritarian discourse. According to Bakhtin (1934/35), the discourse of authority imposes and demands some kind of recognition and assimilation. It is the discourse of the given and transmitted that demands unconditional recognition, not understanding and free assimilation. An authoritarian discourse enters the verbal consciousness as a compact and indivisible mass.

Contrary to that, the internally persuasive discourse (BAKHTIN, 1934/35) involves ideological transformation of individual consciousness (which is essential in critical teacher education). This internally persuasive voice creates the basis for autonomous thought and integrates the area of tension and conflict with other internally persuasive discourse once it is constitutively articulated with a listener-reader. Thus, personal ideological transformations are expressed in the conflict among differing points of view, in an everlasting conflict of semantic possibilities that generate the feeling of incompleteness.

We could say that argumentation could be seen both from the perspective of the discourse of authority and from an internally persuasive one (LIBERALI, 2005). According to Gutiérrez (2005),

argumentation can be a useful tool in the analysis of ideological discourse once it sheds light on the legitimating procedures, dissimulation strategies, etc. It is mostly understood as the attempt to convince and persuade the others of one's view (TOULMIN, 1958). However, one could also think, with Navega (2005), that argumentation can also be used to expand people's knowledge through the interaction of ideas that can serve the Totality. This way, the emphasis falls on the competition not among people but among ideas. Bearing in mind that no one is "the owner of truth" (NAVEGA, 2005, p. 11), mutual criticism should be highlighted.

According to Navega (2005), argumentation may also be used to make ideas interact, bringing them together in conflicts. In this context, the objective of argumentation is the construction of a dialectical new idea as a result of the construction of knowledge by all those involved. Argumentation, in this case, is related not to the debate of what is true or more logical but to the prospect of creating new possibilities of understanding realities.

Argumentative discourse presupposes a critical perspective of language, that is, the analysis and discussion of problems and not the automatic acceptance of ready-made truths. In argumentative situations, Gutiérrez (2005) affirms that a socio-historical scene must be taken as essential in the definition of discourse as a social practice, in which the conditions of production – institutional, ideological, cultural, and historical – binds social and discursive universes. Following a similar perspective, Dolz (1995 & 1996) suggests that any argumentation departs from a controversy in which a conflict of interests is expressed. As a general purpose, in this type of situations, interlocutors aim to convince, change the disposition of the auditory or find a common ground, since they have as their object of controversy a conflict concerning values where several answers are possible (for example: disputable opinions, attitudes, behaviors). The interlocutors, assuming their hierarchical, cultural and social roles, present an argumentative orientation which determines the value of the arguments and counter-arguments they present in the social setting they play a part in.

In discursive terms, Gutiérrez (2005) claims that argumentation should focus on the articulation of a number of reasons to support or refute a thesis and the methods to appreciate and evaluate the

arguments. In this sense, it implies, as stated by many different authors (TOULMIN, 1958; PERELMAN & OLBRECHTS, 1996; DOLZ, 1995 & 1996), the presence of polemics between differing points of views, supported with some kind of reasoning and refuted by opposing views.

In this line, Bronckart (1997), Dolz (1996), Dolz, & Schneuwly (1998) propose that argumentation be organized through an articulation of: the presentation of points of views/ theses (including the topic studied and the criteria for evaluating it), the argumentative supports, the counterarguments, and the conclusion and/or deal. This is an interesting support for the discussion of the production of shared meanings in the Creative Chain once it implies the possibility of a deal in the dialectical form of presenting suggestions for the combination of differing senses and meanings.

3 ARGUMENTATION AS A TOOL IN THE CREATIVE CHAIN

The results of the analysis of the data, taken from an Extra-Mural Program (PAC) for teacher development in deprived communities of São Paulo, indicate that the effort to argumentatively produce shared meanings makes it possible for new cultural outcomes to be dialectically produced. The focus here will rely on one of the projects that integrates PAC: *Acting as Citizens Project: Reading in Different Fields* (PAC: LDA), which took place in a city in the outskirts of São Paulo in 2005 and 2006. Essentially, PAC: LDA develops a collaborative project in education, taking as a starting point the problems with reading presented by Brazilian students and, specifically, the bad score of that community in the national tests. Its main objective is to work with the critical reading of the social genres (Bakhtin, 1953) that had the worse scores in the official exams for all school levels. Purposely, it aims to develop Teacher Support Teams – TST (DANIELS AND PARRILA, 2004) to work in an autonomous way with reading in different subject areas. Figure 1 illustrates the idealized object of PAC-LDA.

Subjects: students in deprived communities
Needs detected: bad score in national exams and non-critical participation in the community

Tool: Critical Reading

Real objects: Subject Contents
(Scientific and everydsay concepts)

Initial tool-and-result:
Critical reading of different genres to
understand different school subjects
and to promote community events for
more scientific awareness and action
towards everyday problems they face.

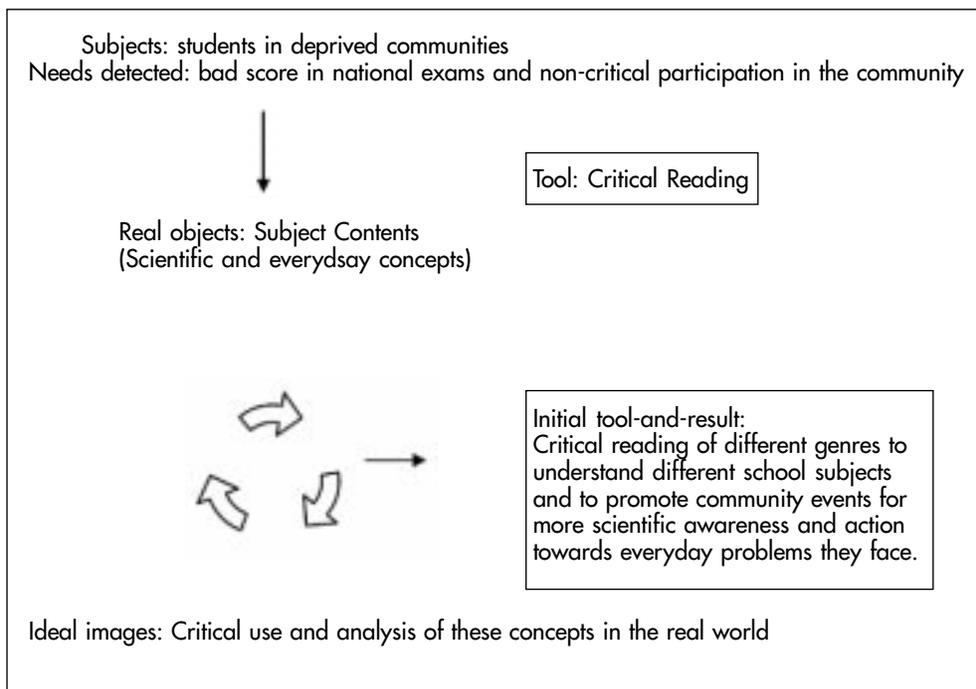Ideal images: Critical use and analysis of these concepts in the real world

Figure 1 – Ideal Object in the network of activities of PAC-LDA for the Learning
and Teaching Contexts of Public Schools

In PAC-LDA, the TST comprises three or four teachers from each of the 24 schools that belong to the Program. The TST, who are supported by the researchers from LACE and the supervisors from the State Secretariat of Education (SSE), autonomously discuss and work, with their school staff, reading in different areas and ways of critically and transformatively acting in their communities. In order to do it, LDA develops a number of activities: workshops with researchers and TST; meetings with TST and school staff, mainly teachers; classes involving these teachers and their students; and the projects developed by students in their communities.

I consider each of these activities pieces of the Creative Chain under consideration for this paper. Although one can still find instances of reproduction combined with attempts at creativity, the aim of LACE is the creative production of new cultural outcomes,

having argumentation as the tool in this production of meaning. This can be better visualized in figure 2.
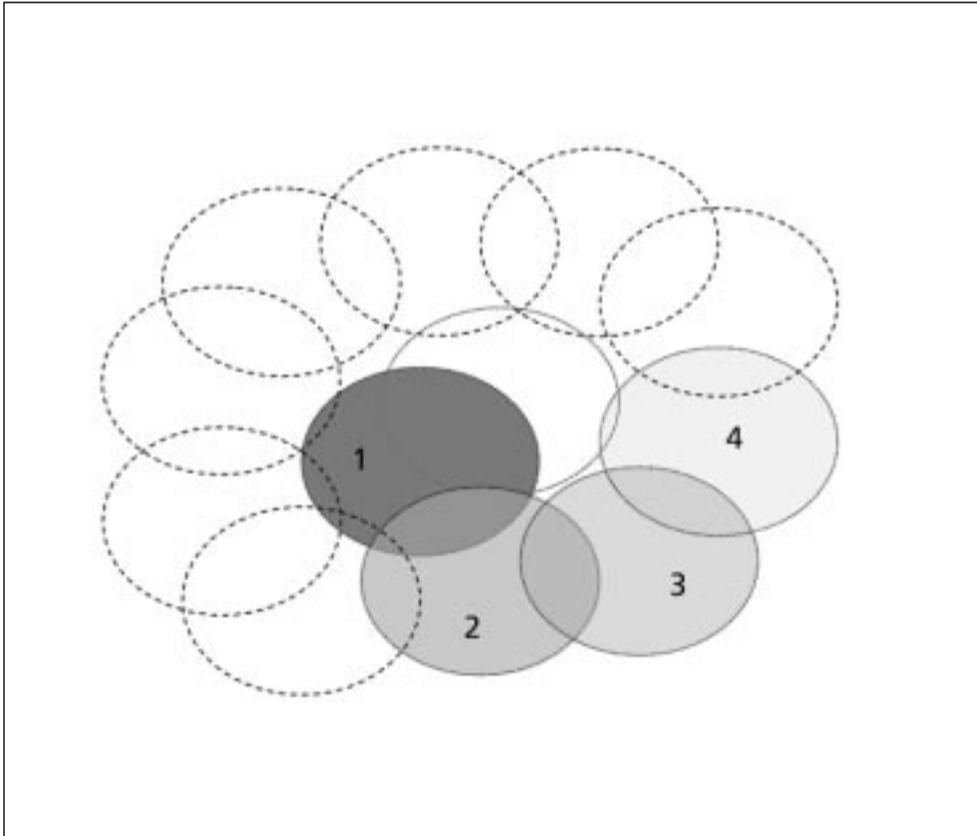

Figure 2 – Creative Chain in transformation (figure by Daniel Liberali).

In the sections below, two of the four chains of the Creative Chain of PAC: LDA will be exemplified and discussed. In the examples, there are many crystallized meanings under concern. First, the researchers have developed a great number of concepts about reading, teacher education and teaching-learning context which guide the practice and the way they conduct research. These are part of the theoretical background that both joins the group together and establishes parameters for what they will do in their research projects. On the other hand, the practitioners (supervisors, coordinators, teachers

from PAC) also share some crystallized meanings about reading and teacher education which were constructed through many years of public school programs, procedures, and plans. The researchers share a meaning of reading based on Bronckart, Schneuwly, and Dolz discussions of language capacities (DOLZ, SCHNEUWLY, 1998 and BRONCKART, 1997) while the teachers have had training sessions about the necessary competence and abilities for reading. These crystallized meanings from both groups are put to discussion in the Creative Chain and the senses (created from these meanings) of all participants are negotiated into new shared meanings.

Chain 1: Workshops with researchers, supervisors, teachers:

The workshops with LACE researchers, SSE supervisors, and teachers were planned as places to work with reading and with TST development. Besides, they were also used to contribute to the preparation of workshops for the *HTPC*[3] meetings – Chain 2. In these workshops, the TST, formed by teachers of different subject areas, gathered to discuss how to critically read different genres in their own subject areas; to discuss teaching-learning approaches to discursively engage in social practices through reading; and to develop tasks to work in the communities with their students.

In the example[4] below, from one of the first meetings, teachers and researcher are discussing the initial concepts that are basic to the development of the pedagogical units to work with critical reading. These concepts are essential as the basis for the development of the process of reading in different areas through the learning of what the SSE usually calls "competences" and "abilities". Bearing in mind the importance of keeping track of the needs imposed on teachers by the SSE, the researchers (as explained above) decided to keep the same names used by the SSE, although their concepts of reading were somewhat different from the ones the SSE had.

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3 – HTPC (Horário de Trabalho Pedagógico Coletivo – joint pedagogical work time) - These are pedagogical meetings officially determined by the government for teachers to jointly discuss aspects of their pedagogical activity.
4 – The examples were translated from Portuguese into English by Claudia Winter.

In the discussion the speakers are trying to produce a shared meaning for competence and abilities since they came from different backgrounds on the topic. They do so through the discussion on what teachers understood about these concepts and how they would define them.

> R[5]: How would you define these things? No cheating … or referring to notebooks … (Controversial question)[6]
>
> TST1[7]: Competence (topic) is something broader (point of view of the enunciator with predicate with some kind of evaluative perspective)
>
> All at the same time
>
> TST1: The ability (topic), it is not so broad, as for competence (predicate with some kind of evaluative perspective with comparison), sometimes I have the competence to do something, but have no ability (support with exemplification).
>
> R: And how is that so? Give me an example of something that you are competent at but has no ability … (questions to clarify and deepen the discussion)
>
> TST1: Well, I may be able to … park a car, but that doesn't mean I have the competence to do so (support with exemplification)
>
> R: Wouldn't it be the other way round? (question for clarification)
>
> TST1: Or I have the competence but not the ability, may be… (Clarification of researcher's question)
>
> All at the same time
>
> R: Why do you think she would be competent, but not be able to? (Question for reasoning/backing – to create basis for the presentation of a position)
>
> TST1: You need ability to park a car… (Circular reasoning with some kind of warrant)
>
> R: What ability does she need to park a car? (question for explanation to support position)
>
> TST2: Well, she… has to practice a lot until… (support with examples)

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5 – R refers to the researcher.

6 – The comment in parentheses refers to the analysis I did.

7 – TST refers to the TST members and the numbers to the specific member who took the turn to speak.

If one considers the aspects pointed out before about the situation of production, one would say that the interlocutors (researcher and teachers) assume a teacher-student procedure in which the researcher (teacher) questions her interlocutors. The controversy in this case is expressed by the differing perspectives which each participant seems to have about the concepts under discussion. For the researchers, the discussion and definition of a common ground about "competence and abilities" is essential for the work they plan to develop with the teachers.

Therefore, differing senses should be expressed and highlightened so that a shared meaning could be produced. In this case, instead of constructing a situation in which the teachers should receive the concepts as ready-made historically established definitions or crystallized meanings, the researchers try to make teachers elaborate on their own senses, making it possible for the other to really responsively listen and re-structure their views. Therefore, the values of each participant could contribute to the reorientation of the meanings they would share.

Following the same discussion, the researchers introduce their idea of competence by connecting it to some background theory which was used to prepare the workshops they were going to experience. In this sense, she tries to connect the audience to the theoretical background in which LACE based its principles: the interpretation of reading as an activity that involves not only cognitive aspects but the full participation of all subjects in the reconstruction of their ideas, actions – the world. Through writing, subjects were seen as participants in the production of meanings shared with the authors, the community and the future readers of those texts. Based on this principle, LACE uses Bakhtin's view of genre as essential to the understanding and production of different texts. This was the basis for the researcher to present their view of competence based on Bronckart (1997) and Dolz and Schneuwly (1998) as follows:

> R: When we talk about SARESP[8] and the issues of competence, which competences are they testing? (a question that may turn out to be controversial)

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8 – State evaluation of students' comprehension and production.

(They all talk at the same time)
R: These aspects, they allow us to act in daily life situations. And these aspects have to do with action capabilities, discursive and discourse-linguistic (introduction of the theoretical support of LACE). For example, I may know that when I come here, I have to say something, I have to follow an organization, I start by presenting what I am going to do, then I present the first part, and then the second, the third... (Support with exemplification). [...]

When we talk about language competence, the first aspect we need to know is the competence to understand which social situation we are working with (support with explanation). And when we do that, what do we need to know in relation to the linguistic event? (Question to the audience – to allow participation in aspects they are acquainted with – everyday knowledge)
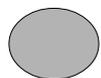
TST1: Student's reality.
R: Student's reality. What else? (Questions for more examples)
TST5: Their needs. (Support)
R: Their needs. For example, I am going to the bank today to get some money. How do I determine which situation this is? Going to the bank – what sort of situation is this? (Questions for exemplification and explanation)

In the presentation of the crystallized meaning of the research group, the teachers are called to join the definition, with examples, explanations that are part of their everyday world. With this, they contribute to the presentation of the crystallized meaning while they also contribute to recreate it with their own senses.

Chain 2: *HTPC* meetings: TST, teachers, students, supervisors, coordinators, directors, and researchers

The participation of the TST in the *HTPC* meetings was designed to develop teacher education procedures for the teaching of reading in different subject fields and of critical participation in the communities. These meetings were coordinated by the TST with the

support of LACE researchers and SSE during both the preparation and the conducting of the meetings themselves. However, the TST was totally in charge of everything that had been planned and developed in the meeting. The idea was for the TST to take the units they prepared during the workshops and discuss them with the rest of the school staff as an example of how to work with critical reading in the school. Each TST chose a different way for conducting the HTPC meetings of the 24 schools of the project. Some prepared the meetings as a critical reading experience, that is, their colleagues would join them to discuss reading as if they were the students. In other words, the teachers experienced the tasks prepared by the TST as if they were students (actually, some of them had great difficulties in dealing with the texts). The TST also had discussion on the theoretical background of the work they were doing. So, they discussed what competence, abilities, narratives, argumentation, etc were, just as the researchers had done with them during the workshops.

It was really intriguing to see how different these discussions were. In the following example the TST explains what they understand by a narrative. Their first definition is a simple reproduction of the ready-made, crystallized meaning taken from the theoretical support they had.

> TST1: For example, one type of organization is the narrative. What is the objective of a narrative? It is to tell a story supported by a process of conflict. (Definition based on the theoretical support)

However, the explanation is followed by examples from the TST own reality. In this case, their senses, based on the crystallized meanings discussed, are recreated and give basis for the production of new meanings with the group of teachers.

> TST2: Right. Why don't they like to read? Because they can't get the conflict there. And what will they do if one asks them to read the text? (pause and question for explanation) They will wait for a colleague to read it and tell them where the problem is (explanation). And then they will refer only to their problem. (Presentation of the problematic situation that supports the importance of learning about narrative) Why are some films not successful? (Question for reasoning/ explanation) Because the conflict is not clearly

> stated. What they really want is to be able to spot the conflict straight away, in their own language; there is no other possible conflict for them (explanation).

Besides, the TST made it possible for their colleagues to understand the project by giving examples of how they connected the reading of different genres to their subject areas. The TST used arguments and presented their opinions supported by the examples they had in their experience with those texts. This way they did not simply reproduce what the researchers had said about the importance of reading, but they brought their reality into this new meaning which obviously shared many important features with the previous, crystallized meanings of the theoretical background.

> TST2: Gerson said some really interesting thing: he managed to work on a certain topic, not letting students realize it was related to Math (presentation of position taken). He is about to work with fractions now (conceding formulation), but the students already have some previous knowledge and it is very important because it makes things a lot easier... (support with explanation).

Besides, they refer to the voices of the researchers when making their presentation, but they recreate them just to present them as authority assertions to their conclusions or positions. In this case, to justify how the citizenship acting should be part of what they already do in their everyday classes and not a big event apart from school activities, the TST refers to the sentence used by one of the researchers in order to make the task very clear to every one and to give support to the position the TST has taken.

> TST: The project cannot be seen as a problem (position taken). Some people say: Oh, not another project! (Counterargument – with direct style referring to the interlocutors) But this is our research project; we want to find tools to help you in your own areas of work (support with data). Fernanda (one of the researcher) told us that we are not supposed to create new situations or contexts; we are supposed to work with what we have (Support base on authority assertion).

In each of these moments, the meaning the TST shared with the researchers was recreated in order to make it possible for new

meanings to be created. When discussing with their colleagues, the TST presented their senses which were infused by the meanings they had shared before. In these senses, they showed how the chain of activities performed by the participants was already being moved by new meanings carried in each participant's senses the germ of the meanings shared in previous activities.

CONCLUDING REMARKS ON THE PRODUCTION OF SHARED MEANINGS IN THE CREATIVE CHAIN

The Creative Chain produced by the network of activities named PAC: LDA was responsible for creating new meanings. In each of the activities, the senses, part of the meaning shared in the previous activities, contributed to create this new shared meaning. Similarly, some of the partners from the second activity, when engaged in the third activity, followed the same path. In this way, features of the totality could emerge in the production of new creative outcomes and of its creators. The community, the students, the teacher, the directors, the coordinators, the TST, some of the supporting staff and the researchers were part of this creative production of meanings, senses and selves. As provoked by Vygotsky:

> This monistic integral viewpoint is to consider the integral phenomenon as a whole and its parts as the organic parts of this whole. Thus, the detection of the significant connection between the parts and the whole, the ability to view the mental processes as an organic connection of a more complex integral process---this is dialectical psychology's basic task (1997, p. 115).

The examples presented show the essential articulation of objective and subjective aspects of humans because they suggest how in the activities performed and constituted mainly through language, there was an intentional objective of creating a new outcome for the terrible realities of the deprived communities involved. In this aspect, it is possible to perceive the reciprocity of: internal and external aspects of sense and meaning, the relationship between individual and social, the connection between internalization and externalization, the dialectics of development and creativity, and,

above all, the interchangeability between personality and culture (ROBBINS, 2005 and MORAN & JOHN-STEINER, 2003).

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