What do packaging labels tell us about industrialization and the brazilian reality? –
an interdisciplinary report

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ABSTRACT
The purpose of this work was to explore the packaging labels of products consumed in everyday life by
students, seeing them as textual and geographic and biological information genres and thus, through them,
introduce the curricular contents in ten (10) 1st year classes of the Integrated Technical Education of
CEFET-MG, in Belo Horizonte - MG, Brazil, in an interdisciplinary view in the subjects of Geography
and Biology. Topics concerning the progress of industrialization in the Brazilian territory and the quality
of products were discussed, especially those consumed by the population (nutritional data and its technical
vocabulary, processing of industrialized foods, malnutrition and food exports, expansion of
agribusiness...), associating them with the movement of globalization of the world economy. Among the
topics studied, we also highlight: history and spatialization of industry, transformation of geographic
space, stages of Brazilian industrialization, urbanization, concentration of infrastructure, consumer
market, internationalization of the economy, labor qualification, degree of nationalization by industrial
sector, privatization, industrial decentralization, precariousness of labor rights, among others. Exercises
were carried out based on the data collected using printed maps, in addition to the use of the Google Earth
app, devices used to locate industries in the country, which also contributes to a better perception of
cartographic images. In a didactic investigation that combined prosaic resources - packaging labels - with
geotechnology - the Google Earth application, the need for diversification of instruments and
methodologies used in the classroom is evidenced, which together with adequate planning can help
students to achieve meaningful learning, as happened in this reported experience. The theoretical-
methodological foundations that guided this work are present, especially, in the theories of David Ausubel
and Jerome Bruner.

Keywords: teaching geography and biology, packaging labels, brazilian industrialization.
1 INTRODUCTION

The didactic intention came from the authors' desire to use products/materials present in the students' daily lives, seeing these as possible didactic-pedagogical tools as textual genres. The objective of this pedagogical intention is to allow different readings around the world in order to promote an interdisciplinary dynamic between Geography and Biology in ten (10) classes of the 1st year of Integrated Technical Education at CEFET-MG, Brazil.

Often, taking into account the lack of infrastructure in our schools, we encounter multiple difficulties that all of us, as teachers, know very well. However, these problems cannot prevent us from doing a correct job even in the face of the continuing depletion of schools, the derisory state investment and the lack of appreciation for education in the country.

But, according to Georges Snyders (2005), we need to “take the school as a place of dialectical contradictions” (2005, p.15) and not be stuck neither in utopia nor in the hopelessness that can lead to quitting. The researcher continues with this concept when he says that “the school, under the pretext of being neutral, does not address the issues that underlie the existence of children, above all of proletarian children (...). Such a school becomes a school of silence for the child. (...) the school becomes strange and distant” (Snyders, 2005, p. 31-32). However, not recognizing what is positive about the school and portraying it negatively as a block would be an elitist “mystification”.

Likewise, relying again on Snyders (2005), we emphasize the need for a good fight, in double movement, ahead:

(...) the effort of progressive teachers to make the usefulness and reality of what they teach visible; the questioning, therefore, of this reality and usefulness (...) On the other hand, students have to improve their sense of what’s useful and what’s real, which demands confrontation with the works already elaborated (...) and this is when teachers are necessary to clarify and support this movement. (SNYDERS, 2005, p. 337)

Part of the changes we aspire to see in education begins with understanding what teaching we want, on what basis and in what ways we will achieve it. A good start lies in the fusion of students' knowledge with that of the teacher, added to their intuition, acceptance, creativity and continuous effort that will result in perceptible achievements in the school environment.

Linking what was mentioned above, we thought then to employ material of a usual and current nature (which is not to say that they are less important than other resources, but just easier to be obtained) by bringing them alongside the reading and interpretation of texts, in an interdisciplinary perspective.

In this conjunction, we opted for packaging labels, an unusual textual genre in the classroom in teaching Geography and Biology. The purpose of the didactics was to build a didactic bridge, linking the consumption of routine products and the population's socioeconomic inequality with the reality of Brazil and its recent industrialization process, in addition to other related topics.

The idea of studying Brazilian industrialization through textual genres was manifested a few years ago in informal conversations with other professors. The purpose was to transport to the classroom other possibilities of reading the world through real accessories/utensils that incite students' attention due to the inherent informality of these mechanisms, transforming them into teaching resources – potentially significant (Ausubel, 1982, 2000) and that, through the mediating guidance of the teacher, they could encourage a greater qualification on the social body in which we are all incorporated and, as a result, also examine the country itself.

We understand that the resource used, whatever its nature, is just a mainstay, which if well intended, can contribute to teaching-learning. In this consensus, the student forges their own educational journey going beyond what is presented to them. Paulo Freire (1981) then points out about those who study:

To seriously study a text is to study the study of who, studying, wrote it. It is to understand the historical-sociological conditioning of knowledge. It is to seek the relationships between the content under study and other related dimensions of knowledge. Studying is a way of reinventing, recreating, rewriting – the task of the subject and not the object. (...) The critical attitude in the study is the same one that must be taken towards the world, reality and existence. (FREIRE, 1981, p.9).

Making an analogy, we are able to interpret the entire domain we encompass by different means, aware that this decoding is also a cultural action – both intrinsic and extrinsic, within a historical-social context.

Over time, we began to witness in our practices that the familiarity of students with "prosaic" teaching objects (prosaic in the sense of being simple materials, but not often didactically adopted in Geography and/or Biology classes) allowed a natural transposition of this fun moment aimed at the entire teaching-learning scenario, evidently anchored to a planning with purposes distinguishable to all participants.

We also found that the experiences – always with a cultural character, placed in progress inside and outside the school – are incorporated into the narratives of the subject/individual, understood by Bruner (2001) “as a way of thinking and an expression of the worldview of a culture”, therefore they end up assuring that we have “a version of ourselves in the world”, a cultural system that provides “models of
identity” for its members. Therefore, in this framework, narrative is seen as thought and “as a vehicle for the production of meaning” (Bruner, 2001, p.44).

In the forms of teaching and education, still according to Bruner (2001), we need to see children “as thinking beings” and “knowledge holders”, and because the school is an archetype of culture in itself, it should be encouraged continuously.

It should be noted, in the same way, that in order to transmute education, we must encourage agency (the subject's ability to take responsibility for his mental activity), reflection (understanding what is learned giving it meaning), collaboration (discursive and dialogic course with the other) and culture (as a grouping of resources to interpret the world and overcome it) (Bruner, 2001, p. 59-67).

This time, life experiences result in culturally constructed narratives that become artifacts of conciliation with the world, making it tangible, as explained by Bruner (1987) later:

(...) eventually the culturally shaped linguistic and cognitive processes that guide the self-production of life narratives assume the power to structure the perceptual experience, to organize memory, to segment or unite the diverse events of a life. In the end, we become the autobiographical narratives through which we tell our lives. And, (...) we also became variants of canonical cultural forms (BRUNER, 1987, p. 15)

So, we consider that the making of these cultural “autobiographies” is equally processed at school, as we are all products of the same society. And that the argumentative deepening about the “instruments, ideas and techniques”, as well as our opinions as citizens, should be promptly checked in the classroom. To enrich the discussion, we admit the thoughts on culture in Saviani (1996):

The essence of culture consists, therefore, in the process of production, conservation and reproduction of instruments, ideas and techniques. (...) As products of man's existence, these fundamental elements intertwine, constituting a network of relationships, meanings, values that determine at the same time that they are determined by the ways of acting and thinking of men. (SAVIANI, 1996, p. 135)

Therefore, according to Saviani (1996), the population cannot be observed – in an oligarchic conception, only in the “condition of absorbers of the ideal artifacts that are distributed to them” by this elite. This does not mean that workers enjoy the guarantee of generating “by themselves the ideas they consider adequate to express their perception of themselves, of nature and of their social situation” (Saviani, 1996, p. 136).

The school, due to its structure, always tends to perpetuate the system, and teachers, still in the judgment of Demerval Saviani (1996), generally “are not equipped to address the educational phenomenon in terms of the context that configures it, transiting the cultural process with ease in totality for the specific activities, and vice versa” (Saviani, 1996, p. 136).
But, aware of such circumstances, we continue to scrutinize new didactic options that provide opportunities for the syllogism in teaching-learning. With such a feature, given what has been exposed, nothing more emblematic to deconstruct this dominant and suppressive social expectation than taking advantage of the packaging labels of products consumed by the Brazilian population to highlight our social inequalities.

It is important to debate who consumes, what we consume and its quality, hunger in a food exporting country, the arc of environmental deforestation in the Amazon, the picture of industrialization implemented in the country, among other related issues.

Given the opportunities for didactic application of packaging labels as textual genres, we used the explanations of Luiz A. Marcuschi (2002) when defining them:

(...) they are historical phenomena, deeply linked to cultural and social life. A result of collective work, the genres contribute to order and stabilize everyday communicative activities. They are socio-discursive entities and forms of social action that are unavoidable in any communicative situation. However, even with a high predictive and interpretive power of human actions in any discursive context, genres are not watertight and rigidifying instruments of creative action. They are characterized as highly malleable textual events, dynamic and plastic. (MARCUSCHI, 2002, p.19)

The didactic-pedagogical sequence was designed for the 1st year of High School, due to informal questions asked by the students, culminating in this reported proposal where the link was made between the Brazilian geological structure, the exploration of our natural resources by transnational companies, the industrialization model adopted in the country and the quality of the products consumed, in particular the food.

The use of packaging labels increased the students' motivation and curiosity, generating an informal connection with the points that were discussed, which contributed to the elaboration of a proactive and reflective roundtable at the end of an educational succession. In this development, we respect their identities and their previous knowledge, we do not ignore their life stories, desires and spontaneity: we look at their answers as significant, guiding them in the constitution of critical reasoning focused on teaching-learning and life, favoring independence and communication throughout this segment.

According to Bakthin/Volochinov (2006), language is not just a tool, but a social historical work that is supported by the link between the enunciator and the co-locutor in the verbal interrelation, mirroring and reverberating reality and establishing meanings.

A word, in this context, would consist of an ideological and societal event, its concreteness being assimilated through the attribution of signs. If communicability advances and intervenes in a sign, it takes on an organic and dialogical complexion, since civilizing principles and beliefs would be engraved in each
assertion made. For the same authors, the meaning of the sign occurs due to the medium that makes it perceptible and the course of history, promptly:

Thus, the element that makes the linguistic form a sign is not its identity as a sign, but its specific mobility; just as what constitutes the decoding of the linguistic form is not the recognition of the sign, but the understanding of the word in its particular sense, that is, the apprehension of the orientation that is given to the word by a precise context and situation, an orientation towards evolution rather than immobility. (BAKTHIN & VOLOCHINO 2006, p. 87)

Packaging labels have surpassed their “signality” when apprehended within a critical and also playful composition: “a word is always loaded with content or an ideological or experiential sense”, Bakthin/Volochinov (2006, p. 88), that is, part of the motivation came from the connection with the students' daily life and baggage. It is only in this way that “we understand words and only react to those that awaken in us ideological resonances or those concerning life” Bakthin/Volochinov (2006, p. 88).

Reading the labels also contributed to new reading skills and the learning of countless pieces of information: by deciphering them, students read the texts printed on these material bases and went further, bringing them together with other language systems (cartographic, oral, digital) and with their previous qualifications, providing opportunities for reasoning and multisemiotic literacy.

Anyone who captures the meaning of a given discourse assumes an attitude of “active responsive” in Bakthin's understanding (1997), as happened in the suggestion mentioned here. When hearing and consciousness go together and are dynamic, that is, the "understanding of a living speech, of a living utterance" ensues, thus, in this materialization of the dialogue, "all understanding is pregnant with response and, in one way or another, necessarily produces it: the listener becomes the speaker" (BAKTHIN, 1997, p. 291).

Nowadays, the association between image and word takes up an integral role of information, predisposing to an easier cognition, in the opinion of Ângela Dionísio (2008):

All the resources used in the construction of textual genres play a rhetorical role in the construction of meanings in the texts. [...] Representation and images are not merely forms of expression for disseminating information, or natural representations, but above all, specially constructed texts that reveal our relationships with society and with what society represents. (DIONÍSIO, 2008, p. 132)

In this aspect, the different education specialists mentioned here – Ausubel, Bruner, Snyders, Bakthin, Freire (...), share the same general view regarding teaching, that experiences in/of the world are consistent with identity and collective knowledge of the subject, enriching the recognition of oneself and others.
Therefore, we express the didactic richness of the use of packaging labels in the teaching of Geography and Biology, with practices aimed at High School (1st year), which in fact, favored the students' ability to debate and interact, and achieve learning with a meaning.

2 METHODOLOGY

The interpretation of packaging labels recognized as textual genres portrays various levels of considerations about Western capitalist civilization. We can identify, at first, the information contained on the packaging labels - name of each product, the industrial sector, the origin of the funds in that industry, the location of the companies in Brazilian territory, their industrial concentration, the connection of mineral/natural resources and the types of industries.

However, to carry out the proposed activity, it was necessary to test their prior knowledge through a diagnostic evaluation. There are countless themes with the potential to be discussed. The activity was carried out with students from the first and second years of integrated courses at CEFET-MG.

In the 1st year we teach Brazilian geological structures and discuss our mineral and natural wealth. The teaching of geological formations is associated with the type of colonization suffered from the colonial period to the present day, working on the history of exploration of our mineral resources by transnational mining companies.

As a result, there is an accelerated destruction of our biomes, with the most recent situation in the Brazilian Amazon and the consequences of these interferences for the country are discussed: who they serve, the relationship with industries and other economic sectors, and the repercussions on the living conditions of our population.

The application of labels can also be used in Biology, working with first-year students on the chemistry of life. The various chemical substances existing in the bodies of living beings, and, therefore, in the students themselves, could be learned in a contextualized way, in practice, from the reading and interpretation of chemical substances on food labels.

Inorganic components such as mineral salts and vitamins, and organic components such as carbohydrates, lipids, amino acids and proteins were identified on the labels, bringing forth the discussion on the importance of each substance for human life and the daily amount needed to be consumed in food.

Subsequently, the discussion was expanded to the socio-economic situation, discussing which foods are most consumed, what is the nutritional value of each one and whether society influences the food choices of students and their families.

In the 2nd year of the Integrated Technical Education, we investigate Brazilian industrialization further with diversified topics for debate, from mercantilism to the phases of industrial revolutions, with the appropriation of colony territories by Europeans.
It is up to each teacher, depending on the year of Integrated Technical Education in which they teach and the knowledge they have about their students, to make their choice. The main thing, in addition to planning and defining the contents and how they will be presented, is not to forget what the students bring as prerequisites in their "autobiographies", cooperating so that they conceive a narrative that is both individual and collective about the selected topic - Brazil's geological structure, natural resources and economic sectors, or Brazilian industrialization.

The focus is to analyze the entire network of relationships engendered from the socioeconomic and historical point of view and the transfigurations resulting from this industrial “development” in Brazil and in the world.

For the authors, the praxis described in this article only expresses that part of the resolution of the difficulties we face in the classroom dialogues with our desire to rewrite another “autobiography” as educators.

Moreover, changes related to didactic-pedagogical experiments done in the classroom or outside of it allow us to learn from our experiences and those of others. It is also important that we courageous meditate on our educational actions, making all of us who work with education feel encouraged to move forward, testing new alternatives and paths.

Below, we present the steps carried out with the 1st year classes in High School at CEFET-MG in Belo Horizonte, in an interdisciplinary panorama:

1. Planning the practice (methodology, teaching materials that will be used, number of classes available, issues that must be addressed in the assignment, feasibility of being fulfilled with other subjects).
2. Conversation with the classes, with the presentation of the idea of the interdisciplinary project.
3. Informal research done by students, in groups, on the Brazilian geological structure, main mineral/natural resources, mining companies operating in the country, environmental disasters, threats to Brazilian ecosystems, associations between mineral/natural resources, technology and type of industry or industrial sector, the quality of the food we consume, hunger vs. food exportation, advances in agribusiness, among others.
4. Defining the dates for carrying out the tasks with labels, exposing the groups' research, and having collective discussion with conclusions.
5. Production of complementary material and an interdisciplinary exercise with packaging labels performed by teachers.
6. Preparation of a tutorial on using the Google Earth application explained and given to the students.
7. Availability of maps of the geological structure and mineral/natural resources of Brazil and of the Industries of Brazil, to be placed on the classroom walls.

8. If the teacher has a good condition of adequate contributions at school, they can create a “PowerPoint” to support the presentations or make use of the Geography textbook or the internet.

9. On the date set in advance, the students in groups brought the packaging labels for their classroom achievements (each group had from 4 to 5 students, with 20 labels from different industrial sectors brought by each group).

10. As a precaution for smooth running of the actions, the teacher, when possible, should provide extra packaging labels, in case of unforeseen events and forgetfulness by the students.

11. Students can exchange packaging labels among groups during the exercise, as necessary, if there is a repetition of the labels brought.

12. Leading the exercise in the classroom, where students made graphs with the data collected according to industry sectors and filled in a printed map with this data as a reference (Figures 1, 2 and 3).

13. Later, the Google Earth application was used to draw a map of the location of the industries detected on the packaging labels. (Figures 4 and 5).

14. Presentation of the research performed by students in the following classes, with a maximum time of 20 minutes for each report.

15. The material created by each group before the presentations were sent in advance to the Geography and Biology teachers by email and also sent to the email inbox of each class.

16. The students were invited to watch the documentary “Much beyond weight”, produced by Marinha Farinha Filmes. After watching the documentary and analyzing the labels, they reflected on why we eat, what food represents for the individual in a capitalist society, who determines what and how we eat, and whether it is currently easier or difficult to have access to healthy food.

17. Later, in the classes in which these questions stood out, the discussion was deepened by addressing the following themes:
   a) What health problems are generated by a poor diet?
   b) What foods are often offered to children and adolescents? What are their nutritional values?
   c) What is the role of carbohydrates and fat in contemporary food?
   d) Who is to blame for a family's possibly poor diet? (Should it occur!)
   e) Is there a lack of knowledge about the nutritional values of food?
   f) What is involved in the act of eating? How can we explain that we are undernourished and hungry in a food exporting country?
Figure 1 - Exercise with packaging labels

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Source: Material made by the authors.

Figure 2 - Distribution of Brazilian industries by sector (Graph)

DISTRIBUIÇÃO DOS PRODUTOS POR

Legenda:

Source: Material made by the authors.
Figure 3 - Model of the Map of Industries of Brazil - completed with data taken from packaging labels

![Map of Industries of Brazil](image)

Source: Material made by the authors.

Figures 4 and 5 – Examples of maps on the Brazilian Industrial Locations made with the Google Earth app, based on packaging labels.

![Example Maps](image)

Source: Material made by the students. Source: Material made by the students.

18. After a collective discussion and the communications of the groups alongside the analysis and comparison of the results presented in the exercise, new deductions were added to those previously made and there was a collective evaluation of activities.
3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The tasks performed in groups took place in a pleasant and cooperative atmosphere: the rules were
decided together and the students' autonomy and the competence of organization and reasoned
argumentation were encouraged throughout the didactic-pedagogical development.

At first, the students did not understand where the usefulness of packaging labels would fit into
this course, which sparked their enthusiasm. Discussions about the issues – geological structure,
mineral/natural resources and industrialization of the country were deepened, being brought to the routine
of our lives, both for students and teachers.

The initial questions were answered in collective exchanges, supported by the students' prior
knowledge, in the research groups and in the complementary material prepared by the teachers.

The apparently informal (but thoroughly planned) processing of the project stages favored
interaction and dialogue, where teachers acted as guides for the didactic process so that students could
reach analytical considerations in each class. The questions posed preliminarily by the classes were
diverse, despite the fact that the theme was common; therefore, the moments mentioned in the
methodology are flexible “sketches”.

During the roundtable, when the students discussed the current food problem, they realized that
low-nutrient foods are the cheapest and easiest to access. They were amazed by watching the documentary
on how there is an immense difficulty for the low-income Brazilian population to obtain quality natural
foods such as fruits, vegetables and greens.

They concluded that on several labels, for example, the word 'sugar' is masked as carbohydrate,
leading to “false” information about food with a lower sugar content, which, erroneously, would be
understood as healthier. Thus, the data printed on the labels mislead a large part of the population by
showing a technical vocabulary that is not very enlightening. There is also the fact that the letters are quite
small, making a possible reading difficult for a population that is also unaware of the meaning of the
nutrients described on these labels and part of their rights as consumers.

It was deduced that society is a major influencer of which foods and the amount of them the
population consumes. This dominant and pernicious coexistence comes from advertisement and sales
strategies in industrial and commercial centers, which place foods with low nutritional value in attractive
packages, especially for children, shaping eating behavior since childhood.

The students had an insight when they realized that their eating habits fit within the molds made
by the big food industries. They understood that the act of eating transcends pleasure: the act of eating is
for survival and a healthy life.

They became more aware of the social and economic problems that affect the population, resulting
from a model of capitalist and exclusionary territorial occupation aimed at meeting the demands for
mineral/natural resources of richer countries, which in turn deepens the environmental devastation, the loss of our sovereignty and the gap of socioeconomic inequality, reproducing more poverty and helplessness, which in the view of the majority would be a crime against the population and the country.

Learning in light of these facts was significant, since the investigative activities activated an interest for research on the chosen themes and supported their arguments and the productive debate at the end, reaching a reflective scrutiny. The students, in the evaluation of the activity, clearly understood the objectives of this didactic suggestion and were satisfied with the interdisciplinary nature of this planning, and found the use of labels seeing them as textual genres unusual.

They found it very easy to use the Google Earth application, checking the results and verifying the use of cartographic language. The students also suggested that other interdisciplinary practices could take place again.

4 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

It was concluded that packaging labels were perfectly suited to this didactic proposition between Geography and Biology in the 1st year of high school studies, and embodied the guidelines determined by the authors. These assisted the practices linking information from the students' daily lives, contributing to the unveiling of the Brazilian reality and corroborating with teaching across topics.

Labels are considered here as “cognitive bridges” (Ausubel, 1982, 2000), a generalist and engaging material that establishes a dialogue between the substantial notions already present in the cognitive structure of the student to the learning action. In this sense, “the learning material is only potentially significant” (Ausubel, p. 1).

The coming into reality is connected to the teacher's actions, directing the dynamics and raising reasoning. It is what helps in the affirmation of new knowledge and others that will emerge during the didactic processing, giving rise to other derivative and more in-depth learning. Showing, as happened in this report, that “significant problem solving largely depends on the availability of both subordinating concepts (...), and subordinated concepts (...), in the learner's cognitive structure” (Ausubel, 2000, p. two).

Still in accordance with Ausubel:

It is also evident that (1) human beings interpret 'raw' perceptual experiences in terms of particular concepts in their cognitive structures and (2) that concepts form the foundations for both learning by meaningful reception of declarative propositions and for learning. creation of meaningful propositions for problem solving. (AUSUBEL, 2000, p.2)

David Ausubel's Theory of Meaningful Learning allows teachers to support their praxis, bringing it together with clear objectives and good planning, “diversifying their actions and uniting them with
narratives in the form of autobiographies” (Bruner, 1995) or the “pre-existing elements” of their students (Ausubel, 2000, p. 3).

Bruner & Weisser, therefore, clarify that "the turning points in a life are not caused by facts, but by revisions in history that are used to talk about one's own life and oneself". And as teachers, we consider it very natural to use these narratives didactically, which still, from the perspective of the same authors, state that "(...) in a certain sense, lives are texts: texts subject to revision, exegesis, re interpretation and so on. (Bruner; Weisser, 1995, p. 142).

All these characteristics ensured, therefore, a significant and autonomous learning, based on curiosity and investigation, starting from generalization to the particular in constant dialogue.

The positive results support the path taken by the authors, in the sense of continuing to study and investigate different methodological possibilities, preferably interdisciplinarily. The experience allowed the authors to leave their comfort zone and curricular habits, strengthening the awareness that there are no immediate solutions and no plans without confirmed supporting information, which begins in the recognition of the cultural "autobiographies" of the students and in the creation of "narratives" that intersect at different moments.
REFERENCES


