ESCREVENDO INFOGRÁFICOS LITERÁRIOS: UMA PRÁTICA DE MULTILETRAMENTOS

WRITING LITERARY INFOGRAPHICS: A MULTILITERACIES PRACTICE

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Abstract: One of the ways of popularizing scientific information and making them more accessible to many audiences today is the use of infographics (Santos; Tiburtino, 2020). Infographics can be defined as texts that are composed through the use of different semiotic modes like verbal and non-verbal information, hyperlinks, animations, videos and sounds in agreement to function as one (Paiva, 2016). This study aimed to explore and discuss the peculiarities of infographics in order to enable students to develop their own texts about topics on literature. Faced with a multimodal analysis (Kress; Van Leeuwen, 2001, 2020) results indicate that there is a necessity to expose students to the concepts of multiliteracies and to multiple texts that qualify them to become better readers and writers. In conclusion, it is important to assert that teachers are able to support students in their writing process by applying different literacies and multimodalities.

Keywords: Infographics. Multimodality. Multiliteracies. Book Adaptations.

Resumo: Uma das formas de popularizar as informações científicas e torná-las mais acessíveis a muitos públicos hoje é a utilização de infográficos (Santos: Tiburtino, 2020). Os infográficos podem ser definidos como textos compostos por meio do uso de diferentes modos semióticos, como informações verbais e não verbais, hiperlinks, animações, vídeos e sons que funcionam como um só (Paiva, 2016). Este estudo teve como objetivo explorar e discutir as peculiaridades da infografia, a fim de permitir que os alunos desenvolvam seus próprios textos sobre temas da literatura. Diante de uma análise multimodal (Kress; Van Leeuwen, 2001, 2020) os resultados indicam que existe a necessidade de expormos os estudantes aos conceitos de multiletramentos e a múltiplos textos que os qualifiquem para se tornarem melhores leitores e escritores. Dessa forma, concluímos que é importante que professores sejam capazes de apoiar seus alunos em seus processos de escrita, aplicando diferentes letramentos e multimodalidades.

Palavras-chave: Infográficos. Multimodalidade. Multiletramentos. Adaptações de Livros.



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Introduction

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, communication has encountered ways of distributing texts in different formats. One example is the high use of infographics and their varied possibilities of templates, structures, and viral sharing qualities in the digital world (Yekta, 2016). Infographics can be defined as texts that are composed through the use of different semiotic modes like verbal and non-verbal information, hyperlinks, animations, videos and sounds in agreement to function as one (Paiva, 2016). This genre can be used in the classroom to grasp students' attention, since it is dynamic, colourful, brings imagetic content and is usually short. Such characteristics may call non-readers' attention and motivate them to interact in class and discuss many subjects. In addition, according to Santos, Tiburtino (2020), infographics have become a way of popularizing scientific information, making them more accessible to many audiences. To Guterra (2020), the use of infographics can also promote multiliteracies, specifically, their critical aspects. Thus, this paper intends to focus on the exposition and discussion of infographics and this genre's peculiarity, in order to enable students to develop their own infographics on a meaningful topic in their academic course, literature. To sum up, as teachers, we believe that we can support students in the reading and writing process by exposing them to genre characteristics of infographics, multiliteracies and multimodality.

Multiliteracies are intrinsically intertwined with new technologies and new ways of teaching (Oliveira, 2021). According to Rojo (2012), the pedagogy of multiliteracies proposes, by the meaning of the 'multi' prefix, a mixture of literacies, cultures, ideologies to better prepare students to their reading life and to many other circumstances throughout adulthood. In the mist of uncertainties around emergency teaching, in the pandemics, technology gave us ways to maintain education on its path, regardless of the many problems that were brought up by it.

Along with multiliteracies studies, multimodal ones call our attention to the paramount need to empower students to write and read, in different platforms, that make use of diverse modes: audios, images, hyperlinks, videos, gestures – and to the versatility of multimodal texts, like infographics aforementioned, memes, digital collaborative texts (Soares *et al.*, 2021). Multimodality is related to Social Semiotics, a field of linguistics that is interested in how language formulates and transform meaning through semiotic modes (Kress, Van Leeuwen, 2001). Therefore, multimodality deals with typography, layouts, designs, the mixture of the modes above mentioned, colors and their salience to call readers attention, and many other possibilities of meaning regarding these characteristics.

The next section will focus on the discussion of infographics, multiliteracies and multimodality by the perspective of different authors. Then, it is explained the methodology followed in this paper, since the proposition of writing infographics to students, to their result. Subsequently, students' production is analyzed. Finally, it is exposed the last remarks about this paper and the paths it took to grasp how teachers can improve students' writing process via genre characteristics of infographics, multiliteracies and multimodality.

Theorethical bases

Infographics

The idea of exploring a variety of texts, verbal or imagetic, is one of the pillars of Brazilian teaching documents, especially regarding secondary and high school - basic education. BNCC (National Common Core Curriculum, Brasil, 2018) was proposed as a plural and contemporary guide to be used in basic education. The document is the result of collaborative work among researchers and educators from all over the country with the purpose of being a reference in school politics and practices. This initiative is supposed to take into consideration the diverse population in Brazil to formulate competencies that range from empowering students to understand and value their place, society, culture, art and technologies to comprehend and to argue about facts, history, data and language. Nonetheless, some researchers (Michetti, 2020; Dourado; Siqueira, 2019; Barreiros,

2017) and the National Union of Teachers of Higher Education Institutions¹ (Sindicato Nacional dos Docentes das Instituições de Ensino Superior – ANDES) have criticized BNCC, especially because of the interference of many business groups in its development and promotion (Carvalho, 2017; Michetti, 2020. Silva; Neto, 2020) and the influence of international organizations (Peternella; Borges; Neto, 2021).

In spite of understanding that students in higher education, who have had adversities to acquire different bases of knowledge, we believe that they can also benefit from activities supported by these guides. For instance, BNCC proposes that teachers "expand the linguistic, multisemiotic and cultural repertoires of students, enabling the development of greater awareness and critical reflection of the functions and uses of English in contemporary society – [...] why it has become a language of global use" (Brasil, 2018, 476). As a type of multimodal text, infographics bring the opportunity to approach diverse textual genres and possibilities of writing, with their many templates. Thus, we believe that university students will have the opportunity to be presented to different literacies and also, a chance to practice their reading and abilities to analyze visual texts.

Given the evolution of ways to communicate, people have started to share more content in different genres, especially those that are easier to understand and are accessible. According to Yekta (2016), infographics have acquired a popularity in media due to their versatility and ample possibilities of production. The author adds that:

> The use of infographics has become a popular medium for conveying complex ideas in a visual manner. Infographics relate to the graphic representation of information to enable the prospective users to visualize the big picture linked to an idea that might otherwise be difficult to understand (Yekta, 2016, p. 1698).

The pandemics, for instance, opened the way to the dissemination of innumerable infographics in the media, to guide people about safety information regarding the virus and its effect and symptoms. There are interactive ones, which brings data about specific locations², others promoted by universities³ that can be printed and shared. Thus, if we motivate students to read, understand and write infographics, they will be able to comprehend their layout structure, the importance of selecting information and also, the paramount use of images and modes in such texts. Therefore, it is imperative that students should learn how to use infographics and how to read their visual information.

During her researches, Oliveira (2021) states that infographics have acquired recognition through their easy access online. Nowadays, it is possible to download, without any charge, many applications that supply users with a variety of templates (*Infogram, Canvas, SlideGo, Venngage*), see image 1. In addition to that, search engines, like *Google*, already supply users with an enormous database in which many subjects are explained in a schematic, summarized and simple way (see image 2). Such advantages can help teachers when planning their classrooms to be more creative and dynamic. Moreover, writing experiences can be proposed in one of the aforementioned platforms so that students can feel like protagonists of their learning process.

¹ Available at: <u>http://portal.andes.org.br/imprensa/noticias/imp-ult-2053556448.pdf</u>. Accessed on November 25th, 2023.

² Available on: https://infographics.channelnewsasia.com/covid-19/map.html. Accessed on December 13th, 2023.

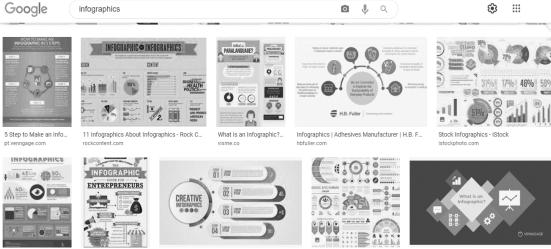
³ Available on: https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/coronavirus/coronavirus-facts-infographic Accessed on December 13th, 2023.

Image 1. Infogram screen and templates

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		c	Search template
	Infographics		
Infographics			
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Social media posts		CHART TITLE	2013
Email headers	Blank template	CHART TITLE Ocean Sand	Timeline Dark Infographic

Source: The authors' infogram profile (2022).

Image 2. Keyword: infographics⁴



Source: Google images (2022).

Although this genre has acquired a popularized status, it does not mean it is understood or read correctly by its viewers. To Guterra (2020), it is still necessary to explore the reading characteristics of infographics in schools, since this genre can facilitate the comprehension of data by readers, although much emphasis has not been given to it, in Brazil. This idea is validated by the fact that readers might have difficulties putting together the ideas expressed in a non-linear text, since infographics might appear in different templates. Moreover, the multimodal characteristics (colors, images, typography, verbal text, layout, etc) may be challenging to unattentive readers.

If we consider what is exposed by Santos; Tiburtino (2021), we will admit that infographics are changing the way we read information. That is to say, infographics allow readers to keep a dynamic reading experience in which they can follow a linear or non-linear flow of information. The authors state that "infographics are understood as a verbal-iconic or verbal-visual text, with or without movement and sound effects, they meet the need of construction/expression of information" (Santos; Tiburtino, 2021, p. 178). Furthermore, the design of infographics and the meaning and its ideology will be intrinsically linked to effects the designer wants to pass on to his/ her reader.

The next subsection approaches how multiliteracies are imperative to students' grasp of reading abilities and to master interactions in the world.

Multiliteracies

In order to acquaint our students with different texts and diverse literacies, it is imperative that we expose them to concepts of multiliteracies so that they can call on their background knowledge in their reading lives. Since many changes have shifted the way teaching used to be, educators need to be aware that literacy involves flexible strategies, intertwined with technologies and the reality that their students go through (Cope; Kalantzis, 2009). With that in mind, Rojo (2012, 2013) invoques our attention to the meaning of the prefix "multi" that will be tied to the ideas of multiple languages, semioses, midia and multimodal texts. In that regard, students need to be immersed in their cultural diversity to understand and grasp the meanings of different texts that are published daily in our society.

To Cosson (2015) one strand of literacies, the literary one, should be given more focus, especially because its range can engage many spheres of education. To this author:

Literary literacy is the literacy that is done with the literary text. In this case, there is a tendency to prioritize the development of reading and writing skills, especially the former, through literary texts. It is an essentially conception from schools not only of literacy, thought of as the acquisition of writing or its mastery, but also of the literary, which is identified with the canon or texts labeled by the school as literary (Cosson, 2015, p. 181)⁵

Moreover, classes on literary literacy should be taught and planned to reach students that are reluctant to read and express themselves through writing. In our experience, when teachers only focus on the canon that might move students further away. Therefore, shorter texts, adaptations, contemporary books or authors, that are part of students' reading experience, might elevate their interest in reading itself.

In this paper, the adaptation of *Sense and Sensibility*, one of Jane Austen's books, serves as a motif of propelling students to write their own infographics using digital platforms. This activity is supposed to enhance students' literacy on digital and literary perspectives.

With regards to digital literacy, we recall what Ribeiro; Coscarelli (2014, p. 12) state about the way users tend to look for knowledge "searching for information on the internet also implies knowing how to find texts and understand them, which presupposes selecting relevant information and evaluating its credibility". This task has proven to be challenging, given the rise of fake news and its rapid spread, affecting the way politicians reach their focus group and manipulate users into thinking and acting on their behalf⁶. Therefore, it is vital that teachers work on the characteristics of digital literacy, for instance, credibility, source, sharing information and the concept of bias. Above all, we believe that it becomes necessary that:

> the teacher invests in activities that develop in the students specifications for these new ways of reading and writing. To create texts intertwined by links, teachers and students need to reflect on new ways of building textual coherence and cohesion, since it is necessary to think about how, when and why to use links (Novais; Ribeiro; D'andrea, 2011, p. 27).

⁵ Translated by the authors. Original version: O letramento literário é o letramento que se faz com o texto literário. Neste caso, tende-se a priorizar o desenvolvimento das habilidades de leitura e escrita, principalmente as primeiras, feita por meio dos textos literários. Trata-se de uma concepção essencialmente escolar não só do letramento, pensado como a aquisição da escrita ou seu domínio, como também do literário, que é identificado com o cânone ou os textos rotulados pela escola como literários

⁶ More about fake news on: https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/business/media/trump-fake-news. html; https://oglobo.globo.com/politica/cpi-da-covidfilhosde-bolsonaro-comandaram-rede-de-fake-news-napandemia-aponta-relatorio-final-25243495. Accessed on October 13th, 2023.

Digital literacy goes beyond the uses of tools, hardware and different software. As highlighted above, the reading abilities of a critical reader must be applied every time he/she is in contact with online texts, verbal or non-verbal.

The role of a teacher, in our perspective, has gathered many other functions, especially during remote teaching. Now, teachers are supposed to know how to understand, develop videos, and work on their edition; multi-tasking among numerous digital platforms, while trying to provide an enjoyable and interactive environment to their students. Thus, it becomes evident that this area of knowledge should also be taken seriously in teaching.

During the production of their infographics, students were able to use different templates and platforms, already mentioned, to test their usage and adequacy to the idea they had in mind for their texts. This activity has brought to light students' abilities with technological tools that have not been considered before, with a pedagogical application.

Subsequently, concepts about multimodality are presented. In this way, we hope to promote readers' view of this paper theoretical bases and how they are connected.

Multimodality

Multimodality is one of the aspects of Social Semiotics, a theory that is interested in every manifestation of meaning (Kress, 2010). Meanings, as linguistic signs, keep their roots related to a specific society. However, the semiotic sign is influenced by the desire of its creator, relations of power and the idea thought to be expressed through different modes. Therefore, a semiotic sign is motivated and conventional.

In respect to that, we agree with Kress (2010, p. 59) that "a social semiotic theory attends to general principles of representation: to modes, means and arrangements." Given the advances in technology, diverse modes (music, image, verbal, gesture, etc.) are put together to develop texts and genres that were not considered as such before. As an example, it is possible to highlight the status of memes, which can be classified as a media, usually humorous, that spreads easily through online networking (Suryawanshi *et al.*, 2020; Hegde *et al.*, 2021; Eleutério *et al.*, 2021) and that uses verbal-imagetic content. Nowadays, infographics have also acquired a viral status. They can be developed with ease, attending to a multitude of themes, explaining subjects that range from scientific to TV series characters.

Infographics are considered non-linear texts (Paiva, 2016; Assunção, 2014; Oliveira, 2021). Readers may choose which section to read first. Nonetheless, this might be influenced by the societies they belong to and their writing system. For Kress; Van Leeuwen (2020), the way we read texts may indicate the path we take in understanding, which has greatly to do with how our society is culturally organized. To these authors:

Different readers may follow different paths. Given that what is made salient is culturally determined, members of different cultural groupings are likely to have different hierarchies of salience, and perhaps texts of this kind are the way they are precisely to allow for the possibility of more than one reading path, and hence for the heterogeneity and diversity of their large readership (Kress; Van Leeuwen, 2020, p. 205).

To sum up, the knowledge of multimodality can help students to understand the value of different modes established inside a genre. As a multimodal genre, infographics can also be classified as conceptual representations (Kress; Van Leeuwen, 2020). These representations describe things or participants according to their classes, meaning or structures. To the authors quoted above, infographics can classify (classificational) something from inside a group (all mammals from Earth) or can symbolize (symbolic) participants from a group in relation to their order, use or status, like the hierarchy among soldiers in the army.

Despite the benefits infographics provide to the development of writing skills, especially to visual learners, and to the pedagogical purposes of writing instructors, they still encompass different challenges to their users. Creating infographics requires a special ability in graphic visualization.

According to Bursi-Amba *et al.* (2016), when creating effective infographics, writers must select and incorporate the information in a simple way that allows readers understand and extract meaningful knowledge from the source. And the best way to achieve this result is making design choices that do not cause distraction from the message. Some students, especially those who do not master the usage of digital technologies may conflict in providing visual elements that enclose the main purposes of an infographic.

Regardless of the difficulties and the lack of abilities of some users, which are real, the acknowledgement of infographics as a vastly useful tool in educational contexts is something observable, especially for teachers who want to plan and organize information for their classes as well as for students who need to summarize and access information in a simpler and more synthetized way.

Although these problems are possible to occur along the production of an infographic, teachers must be able to instruct their students and help them to raise awareness to the fact that creating such tools requires a special attention to the multimodal aspects, which have a particular importance to the act of conveying meaning throughout different texts and genres.

The next section indicates how this study has taken place. So far, we have attempted to show readers that multiliteracies and multimodality work together in the production and proposition of infographics in educational purposes. Thus, it is believed that this activity may serve as an idea for other teachers trying to implement those concepts in their teaching experiences in the classroom.

Methodology

Considering that students have been exposed to many digital tools along the pandemics, and that educators have endeavored to adapt their classroom realities to these challenging times, this paper aims to explore and discuss the peculiarities of infographics developed by students and analyzed in the perspectives of multiliteracies and multimodalities studies. According to Gil (2008), this investigation can be classified as action-research. It considers the reality in which the researcher is inserted and what can be done to change a specific situation through interaction and changes in the status quo.

Once students of the course English II, from the Language course, at the Regional University of Cariri (Universidade Redional do Cariri - URCA), would read an adaptation of a literary work, it was decided to use that opportunity to work on their reading and writing abilities through different literacies, digital and literary ones. After that, we considered their linguistic level and what activities could be applied to their better improvement. Thus, since infographics had acquired a status in the media, because of coronavirus information and propagation, we decided to use this genre in the classroom. In this way, students would need to list the pieces of important information that would be part of their production, along with pictures and any other resources they like to use.

To acquaint students with different possibilities, some digital platforms were presented for the creation of texts in the aforementioned genre: *Canva* and *Infogram*. When these tools were approached, it was emphasized the importance of choosing models, templates, considering visual aspects that would call their readers' attention, like an adequate text layout, fonts, colors, etc. Then, students had three weeks to complete their task and present the final work to the class.

Some of their productions will be shown in the next section.

Results

The use of infographics as a resource for English classes has been a strategy adopted by some of the English language teachers at URCA to encourage the production of multimodal texts and ensure the practice of digital literacy by students. During the pandemic context, when emergency remote teaching required a certain mastery of digital technologies and knowledge about digital discursive genres, such practice seemed convenient.

Fifteen productions were received differing in themes and templates. All of them bring the use of color, text and geometrical forms that help divide the text into smaller parts. Some students

opted to insert pictures or drawings related to their topic, or screen shots from movie adaptations from the same austen's work. In the following paragraphs, we will analyze three of them.

Image 3 brings an infographic about Jane Austen's family. The template chosen reminds us of a family tree. Geometrical forms, squares, are linked to single out the relations sustained among each relative. Below, there is a speech bubble as if the writer, the student, indicates what he has discovered in his reading of the adaptation. As multimodal aspects, we can highlight the choice of colors and typographic marks (Kress, Van Leeuwen, 2021) as positive aspects, since their distribution in the template contributes visually to identify general and specific information about the topic and to create a sense of organization of what is being exposed, as it was also found in Assunção (2014) work. On the other hand, the lack of more visual elements like images to support the text can be seen as negative by some readers that need elements that are more appealing to be more familiarized with the infographic's content. A picture of Jane Austen would be probably enough to demonstrate the proximity of the reader with the text.

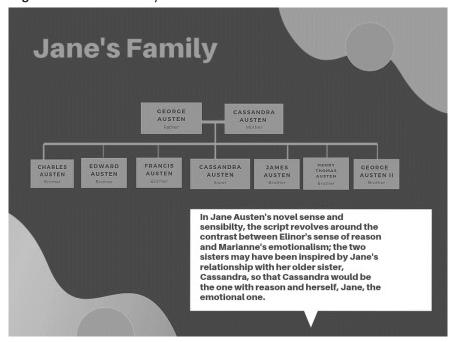


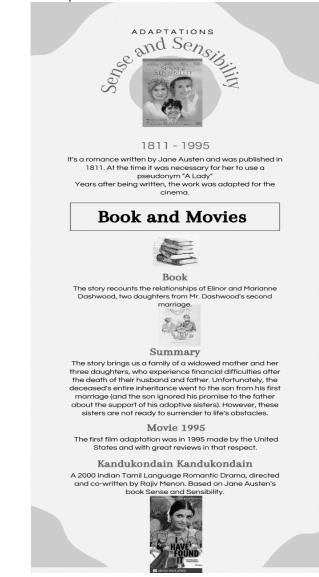
Image 3. Jane Austen's family

Source: Infographic produced by a student (2022).

Image 4 provides an example of an infographic whose aim is to present some mediatic adaptations influenced by Austen's Sense and Sensibility. The infographic succeeds in presenting the ideas intended by the author besides the lack of broadness when it shows only two adaptations. The distribution of contents is well-organized, and the previous summary gives the reader a brief but important direction to associate the book and the adaptations. The arrangement of colors, from the background to the titles and text, and the choice of images and typographic elements such as the font and the size of letters create an inviting atmosphere that provides the reader a better comprehension of the elements displayed in the infographic. All these aspects are intertwined with different forms of literacy, or multiliteracies (Rojo, 2012, 2013) which have contributed to a broader view of the activity by the students.



Image 4. Mediatic adaptations



Source: Infographic produced by a student (2022).

The infographic presented in Image 5, different from the previous one, has no problem with broadness and scope of information, although it brings even more information than is necessary to a text of this genre (Guterra, 2020, Oliveira, 2021). It is necessary to reaffirm that one of the purposes of infographics is to synthetize data and information in a way that it causes no comprehension problem to the reader. Excess information may create a feeling of tiredness and confusion in a reader that only intends to capture essential knowledge about the topic. The decision to include images that are related to the topic presented, which is marriage and social status in Austen's period, was an excellent strategy. It encompasses well the message conveyed in the text, although it was not well executed, since the white color chosen to represent the letters does not fit well with the background pictures (Kress, 2010). The template used in this infographic provides a good disposition and organization of titles, sections, colors, verbal texts and the usage of images, like the ones approached by Oliveira (2021). The choice of the right multimodal elements and the combination of them in order to attract the reader's attention and focus result in a better production and comprehension of texts of this genre.

Image 5. Marriage and social status



Source: Infographic produced by a student (2022).

Therefore, it is possible to admit that infographics should be taught and read in higher education classes to develop multimodal skills of reading. As future teachers, language e course students need to be prepared to implement multiliteracies praxis in their planning and in their classes. In this way, their future students would benefit from diverse pedagogical activities supported by the advances in technologies and multimodalities.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is essential to state that teachers can support students in their writing process by applying different literacies and multimodalities so that a variety of genres can be exposed in class, for instance, infographics. Texts are intrinsically multimodal; they bring diverse characteristics that allow writers and readers to frame their ideas through many semiotic modes (images, hyperlinks, videos, verbal content, music, etc.). Meanwhile, multiliteracies present interdisciplinary ways to read and write, composing a constellation of meanings that are acquired through strategies that consider students' critical, multimodal and digital thinking abilities. Moreover, when working with the production of infographics, students could practice parameters of outlining, mind maps, textual organization, the importance of images and their skills to manipulate digital tools like *Canvas*, Infogram and Slidego.

To sum up, teachers should be prepared to propose different and meaningful writing experiences, especially if their students are working to become future teachers themselves. These practices in the classroom can mold students' perception of the requirements of their forthcoming profession and their role as designers of activities and pedagogical tools that will support them in their career. Teachers should be ready to work on their students' development and on themselves to make a difference in education.

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