

# Interpretation of Iconic Texts Supported by the Theory of Umberto Eco and Peter McLaren<sup>1</sup>

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Received on October 12<sup>th</sup> 2021  
Accepted on November 26<sup>th</sup> 2021

## How to cite this article:

Goyeneche, J. G. (2021). Interpretation of Iconic Texts Supported on the Theory of Umberto Eco and Peter McLaren. *Spiral, Journal of Teaching and Research*, 11(2), 109 - 122.

## Abstract

The purpose of this article is to show the importance and implications of Umberto Eco's semiotic theory and the active role of the student according to Peter McLaren. It is the result of the research carried out with the purpose of strengthening the level of interpretative reading of iconic texts in fifth-grade students at "Juana Berbesí" Rural School Center "La Platanala" branch, in the municipality of Durania in Norte de Santander. Methodologically, it is a descriptive review of the theories and concepts proposed by the authors mentioned, to highlight their applicability and usefulness in the teaching of comprehensive reading of iconic texts, which is of interest in the educational field and leads to the conclusion that the behavior of these theories is relevant when applied in the classroom, given their contributions to the change in the teaching processes of reading comprehension and the granting of the leading role of the student. This review was the result of the analysis of the existing problem in the classroom in relation to the gaps present in the didactics of comprehension and interpretation of iconic texts, which is reflected in the students' limitations to interpret and understand images, which leads to deciphering the message or the communicative intention in said texts. This also limits the development of oral and written expression skills, as well as other possibilities that stimulate their imagination and creativity. Based on the analysis of the theoretical proposals of the authors mentioned above, we get the direction of alternatives and pedagogical strategies that contribute to strengthen the reading comprehension of elementary school students.

**Keywords:** reading comprehension, interpretation, Peter McLaren, theory, iconic texts, Umberto Eco.

## Introduction

Reading comprehension in students from their first years of schooling is a determining factor in this constant dynamic that demands the exercise of pedagogy linked to the socio-cultural demands of communication in today's globalized world. From the area of Spanish Language, it is necessary to emphasize the discursive changes that today are so evident and constant in the different types of texts or written resources (infographics, advertising, posters, etc.) that become alternatives that go beyond the traditional linear or continuous text. It is up to the teacher to link the student to the use and management of all types of written information that circulate today, therefore of the iconic text, a relevant component within the processes of comprehensive reading.

The understanding of the image is important at the moment of producing meaning, as it happens with the written word. However, the difficulties that most students have in

<sup>1</sup> Review article that presents relevant information derived from ongoing research on the importance and applicability of Umberto Eco's semiotic theory and the active role of the student according to Peter McLaren.

interpreting iconic texts are evident, because they are unaware that visual symbols are an important part of the communication that today circulates through many media. That is why the evaluation of the PISA Tests<sup>2</sup> in relation to reading competence, “detaches itself from the mere notion of literary text and deals with a considerable variety of texts typical of the different circumstances that a contemporary citizen may face in his/her daily life” (OECD, 2019, p. 7), a general framework in which the comprehensive reading of iconic language is located, a factor that cannot be neglected in the classroom. Even so, the difficulties that most students have with regard to comprehensive reading are evident, a fact that is a determining factor in international tests. Hence, in 2018 the test focused on the analysis of performance in the area of reading, and an overall average of 487 points was obtained, out of a possible 600” (Estrada, 2019). It is inferred that the participating countries do not reach the goal set by the organization that applies the test in which 76 countries participate, including Colombia, at the same time reflecting the existence of the problem associated with reading comprehension in the universal scenario.

In the country, according to the National Results Report for Colombia PISA (2018), the results were as follows:

In PISA 2018, 51% of students in Colombia reached or exceeded the minimum level (Level 2) in reading, surpassing by seven percentage points the percentage obtained in PISA 2006. The result for Colombia is slightly higher than that recorded by the aggregate of Latin American countries participating in PISA 2018 where 49% of students reached or surpassed

the minimum level. In addition, the country has evolved positively, in contrast to the negative trend in the region, in which, between 2006 and 2018, the percentage of students who reached or exceeded the minimum level, decreased by one point. (p. 22)

Based on this reference, only 51% of the students who participated in the test surpassed level two of the six levels set, which represents the existence of representative failures or difficulties for the achievement of the goals set, despite the argument that Colombia is better placed in relation to other countries in the region. Nevertheless, it is interpreted that the limitations exist and therefore it is necessary to contribute from the school to propose alternatives for change.

In this context, the results on the reality of Colombian students in relation to reading comprehension do not show a positive scenario, a statement that ratifies the existence of difficulties that are also expressed by the Ministries of Education and Culture (2018), when they argue that “Colombia registers indices of precarious reading habits (...) In addition, in the evaluations to students both nationally and internationally, a scarce development of communicative competencies is perceived” (p. 1). The Colombian Institute for the Promotion of Higher Education (ICFES), through the results of the Saber Tests, reveals that, year after year, there is little progress in the area of language in many educational institutions in the country.

In relation to the situation in the regional scenario, through a study conducted by the Governor’s Office of Norte de Santander with the participation of the Secretariat of Education, a management report (2016-2019) with the results in the area of language from which they argue that the averages of the students are not sufficient to achieve certification (Gobernación de Norte de Santander-Secretaría de Educación, 2016-2019). In the averaged data for the selected years in Norte de Santander, the deficiencies in the processes of communicative competence

2 PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) is an international assessment study, promoted by the OECD and the participating countries, which attempts to respond to a need common to all current educational systems: to delimit, describe and explain what 15-year-olds, who will soon exercise their rights as citizens, know and know how to do, applying their knowledge to a variety of environments and contexts, at the end of their compulsory education stage. Ministry of Education and Vocational Training-Spain (2019).

are evident: written comprehension and production evaluated through the Saber Tests in the area of Language.

In this reality is located the problem set as the object of study of the inquiry from which this article is derived, which, at the institutional level, has to do with the existing limitations among the students of the fifth grade of Elementary Education of the “Juana Berbesí” Rural School Center “La Platanala” branch, in the municipality of Durania in Norte de Santander. In relation to low academic performance around communicative competencies, according to figures shown in the report by ICFES (2017) on the results of Saber Tests 2016, it is expressed that:

In the results of the Saber Tests (2016), 96% of third-grade students and 66% of fifth-grade students are located at an insufficient performance level in reading communicative competence and, when comparing with the national results, 45% of third-grade students and 50% of fifth-grade students are at an insufficient performance level in the same competence.

These results become a fundamental reference to reflect on the learning in which students show low performance. At the same time, they summon the educational establishment and teachers to reflect on their work and the role they play in relation to the didactics used for the promotion of communicative competencies and the skills for the comprehension and interpretation of texts of different types. This reflection should lead to the formulation of action plans to overcome difficulties through the implementation of didactic strategies adjusted to the social situation and the particular context chosen as a scenario for the progress of the study under consideration here.

Thus, the proposal is formulated, given the evidence of the difficulties observed when, for example, children have to look at an image and, from this, to give an explanation or invent a story; it is also difficult for them to follow a sequence from images, as well as to state ideas and formulate conclusions regarding the images they observe. This leads us to



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foresee the existence of limitations in reading images as an action that leads to deciphering the message or the communicative intention in these images. In other words, they have problems interpreting images, which, from the perspective of Sanchez (2009) becomes a limitation for the development of oral or written expression skills, as well as other possibilities that stimulate the imagination and creativity of students. Consequently, it is evident that there is an educational problem that deserves to be addressed, so in this case this intention was placed in the theoretical references of Peter McLaren and Umberto Eco.

### Methodology

In methodological terms, this research is a process closely linked to the set of activities that were intentionally set in order to approach the components of the process carried out to strengthen the level of interpretative reading of iconic texts and the theoretical tendencies of Umberto Eco and Peter McLaren. To this end, the necessary information was sought and classified for the compilation and registration of the information on which the document was structured to show the importance and theoretical implications addressed. It is an article of reflection because it assumes a perspective of analysis around the theories of Umberto Eco and Peter McLaren on the pedagogical value of the production of signs within the communicative context and teaching with a transformative vision of the future based on the student's experience. From these theories we arrived at the approach of reflections and presentation of points of view of the researcher by taking as a basis the actions carried out through the ongoing research from which this document is derived.

To reach this point, the objectives of the review were defined based on questions about the knowledge and built about the topic of study; a bibliographic search was conducted by consulting different online sources such as

digital libraries, university repositories, books published online and in print to then move on to the preparation of the article whose results are presented below. We sought to generate new knowledge, while providing understanding about the importance of two unknown theories in the school environment as important references to innovate and contribute to the solution of a specific classroom problem.

In order to carry out the research, it was essential to know what has been said on the selected topic or problem in order to advance in this research; therefore, the construction of the background was carried out, based on the collection and study of documents from which the approach to the problem was strengthened to the extent that it provided the analysis of the accumulated knowledge in relation to the specific area of the topic of study. To this end, a search was carried out at the international and national levels as follows.

The initial exploration of the knowledge built in relation to the subject matter of this research in the international scenario, was initially located the work of Tello's Doctoral Thesis (2016), entitled "The icon-verbal method in the development of creative oral communication in five-year-old children: experience in educational centers of the initial level in the district of San Luis in Lima, Peru", presented to the Complutense University of Madrid. The main objective of the research focuses on proposing an iconic-verbal method to develop oral and creative communication in early childhood education children. It is developed methodologically under the paradigm of quasi-experimental research with 320 boys and girls from 32 educational centers with whom the checklists corresponding to the verbal-icon method were used as a mechanism for the collection of information.

The proposed method corresponds to the presentation of pictures of animals and landscapes of the students' context, which they



observe, select according to their preferences and then describe their characteristics through oral communication. A pre-test and a post-test are also applied, from which an improvement in the processes of the icon-verbal method is deduced, with positive incidence in the development of visual perception in children. As a central conclusion, it is established that "understanding the image as an iconic sign requires assuming its value as a system of signification, but also sustaining its specific difference before purely denotative structures, especially before the model par excellence of all semiotics: the linguistic sign. It is therefore demonstrated that the icon-verbal method significantly promotes the development of oral-creative communication" (Tello, 2016, p. 294).

Due to its thematic, theoretical and methodological contents, the doctoral thesis in question, contributed important guidelines to the present research on which the procedures carried out were directed, especially in relation to the management of iconic language as a strategy to enhance students' communicative

competences. It was taken as an opportunity to argue the intention of working with the group of students on classroom practices that reactivate the competences for the comprehension of iconic texts. Learning was also obtained about methods to be used in the classroom and to enhance communication from the use of verbal and visual language as well as the channels through which information is transmitted.

We must also mention Holguín (2017) and his article entitled "Iconic Method in inferential reading skills in eight- and nine-year-old children of a state educational institution of the Constitutional Province of Callao" Peru. It corresponds to the pre-experimental type study with a single group pre- and post-test, whose objective was to determine the improvement of inferential reading skills, through the design and application of an iconic method program based on experimental evidence in the study of comprehension and learning in a sample of 93 students averaging between eight and nine years of age. The proposal is based on strategies and resources offered by images,



Parroquia de Santa Lucía – Guane (Santander)

given their capacity for visual stimulation and the motivations they generate in students towards learning. It is emphasized that verbal-iconic stimulation transmits a great amount of information contained in this type of texts, which contributes to improve reading prediction, contributions that, in this case, were taken as outstanding to develop the work with the selected school group, and support the possibilities of improving with them their ability to interpret texts, and thus strengthen reading skills, a process where the use of images was considered important as a pedagogical mediation.

On the other hand, we have the research of Farfán (2018) entitled "The icon-verbal method in the development of oral communication in children of the Katherine Navarrete Kalinoswki school in Centro Poblado de Tambillo-Cusco Perú". It corresponds to the search for motivations in children of five years of age on average through the icon-verbal method, which is significant for the development of oral communication at this stage. Methodologically, it follows the quasi-experimental model, working with a non-probabilistic sample of 20 children, using the observation technique and the field diary form as an instrument. In addition, an input test is applied in relation to the variable linked to the development of oral communication in relation to the dimensions of clear and fluent expression, naturalness and clarity, intonation and adequate voice volume, oral articulation, written production and its indicators, communicative intention, the same components that are evaluated in the output test whose results show significant improvements in the development of oral communication after the application of the icon-verbal method, concluding that it is effective in improving the development of oral communication of the students. The contribution of this academic production focused on the fact that actions focused on the use of the iconic-verbal language

are an opportunity to strengthen students' communicative skills. It is also of interest the proposal made in relation to the application of entry and exit tests both in the initial diagnostic stage and in the final assessment stage.

At the national level, Arias (2013) and his work on language and school in critical pedagogy presented to the Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas was initially found. It corresponds to an article based on some references of the research "National identity, youth and school" carried out by the author in the framework of his doctoral thesis. It turned out to be opportune as a background, because it suggests some clues to understand the relationship between language and power in school practice, which in turn provides the opportunity to promote, based on this identification, school agents and pedagogical dynamics respectful of the subject. The author assumes the approach of critical pedagogy, fundamentally the one worked by Henry Giroux, as a theoretical current that analyzes school discourses linked to the logics of power that cross society and culture.

In this framework, some clues are suggested to understand the relationship between language and power in school practice and glimpses the opportunity to enhance, from this identification, school subjects and a qualitatively different society. The contribution made by the article to the present research is related to the ideas that explain critical pedagogy in school scenarios and their social interactions inside and outside the school. It also explains clear concepts from the perspective of Giroux and McLaren (1998) that language does not reflect or represent reality, but constitutes it, is generative and is the means through which knowledge is constructed. These appreciations apply to the present case, where the topics of language, reading and iconic texts are linked within the framework of their interpretation.

Valiente (2016) and his work entitled "Reading images to read the world, the iconic reading from a pedagogical strategy based on artistic expressions in the Corpohunza Kindergarten" published by Distrital Francisco José de Caldas University was also located; it addresses the issue of iconographic reading as a pedagogical strategy to stimulate reading comprehension with the linkage of art. The relationship and meeting points of this work with the one developed in this case, is expressed in the coincidence regarding the promotion of reading and the use of images; the author emphasizes that images in their narration, interpretation and description are an indispensable tool for the improvement of communicative competences in the classroom. In this framework, the most outstanding contribution is related to the intention of stimulating in the child an adequate level of interpretation. Another of the visible contributions has to do with the approach that, in these processes, iconic reading and its pedagogical function are contemplated as a research problem whose analysis should initially take into account the age, the school environment and the context in which the child develops so that he/she can observe, identify and interpret some of its elements in front of an image.

The development of the process leads to the conclusion that, by applying appropriate strategies, students are guaranteed interaction with the world through iconic reading, which, from their subjectivity, allows them to incorporate a new lexicon into their vocabulary that will help them understand the different communication systems and develop their skills.

One more of the localized antecedents refers to the work of Ávila (2018), presented to Santo Tomás University in Bogotá, with the title "Discourse analysis for the comprehension and interpretation of irony in iconic texts: a reading of Osuna's political cartoon from the

didactic sequence". The objective of the work is to elaborate a didactic sequence proposal from discourse analysis to develop the process of comprehension and interpretation of irony in iconic texts in Colombia. As can be deduced, interpretation, comprehension and iconic texts are considered as categories linked to the research topic, which are coherent with the same categories reflected in this project. On the other hand, in relation to the methodology, the qualitative model and the description of the proposed phases are adopted: in the first one, the theoretical construction is made, the collection of the cartoons that make up the corpus of analysis of the work, the identification of the theoretical basis, the application of the chosen model; in phase two, the pedagogical proposal is made and with this, the conceptual construction of the understanding and interpretation of iconic texts from the reference documents of the Ministry of Education (MEN), and the elaboration of a didactic proposal oriented to the analysis of the discourse; phase three proposes the structuring of the degree project that seeks to offer a bridge of connection between the communicative action of the cartoon and its discursive study.

The most outstanding conclusion reached is that the cartoon, as an iconic text, is a powerful discourse and should be recognized as a pedagogical tool to the extent that it naturally relates the image, the text and all the contextual, ideological and personal content of not only the author, but also the interlocutor. As extracted from this document, it can be taken as an important contribution, the relevance given to the iconic text and its communicative intention, which largely contributes to support the intention that, in this case, focuses on the interpretative reading of this type of texts. In addition, the interpretation and comprehension of iconic texts according to MEN guidelines and reading comprehension models can be considered as a reference for the theoretical construction around the teaching

of Spanish language in Colombia. In addition, from the methodological approach, processes of the qualitative method are proposed that contribute to the outline of the design that is carried out in this case.

As can be seen, the background of the topic of study gives important significance to the language of images and the need to learn to understand their meanings, since they are part of the communication that circulates today in various media. In addition, it is appreciable the role of the teacher in the classroom, in terms of promoting activities for students to achieve the development of expression and communication skills through nonverbal language, since images, while replacing words and concepts, provide sensory data, knowledge of the surrounding world to the extent that they share some attribute with their referent. It is also extracted that, besides condensing information, images are very suggestive, striking, attractive and occasionally transmit as much or more than words; images are important as a component of the iconic language that by itself is explanatory, informative and universal.

### **Umberto Eco's theory**

Within the framework of the above, Umberto Eco's theory regains importance as a contribution to the understanding of situations related to the interpretation of a text, whether linear or iconic; it contributes to understanding the reader's interpretative processes within the framework of a social and cultural construct that gives foundation to the processes of textual interpretation. This is the central sense of Eco's theory, which in fact is a significant contribution to the disciplines that deal with the study of discursive phenomena. Thus, for the case of the development of this work it is taken as the main reference since it allows the understanding of what it represents to read iconic text: experience that is part of a process of interpretation of signs and symbols; it rests on the semiotics associated with the idea of conceiving reality as a set of signs that human

beings have created to understand each other and to understand the world and the reality that the same symbols or images have created (Alvarado, 2017).

Linking the topic of teaching how to understand an iconic text in the classroom must be done from a semiotic definition which, from the position of Eco (2000), is the way in which the answer is set to the questions of how human beings know the world around them, how they interpret it, how they generate knowledge and how they transmit it. For Eco, semiotics studies everything that can be used to represent something that exists in reality, such as images, sounds, concepts or even a gesture. Hence, it is a concept linked to the interpretation of iconic texts, insofar as these are associated with images of different types that preserve a message or a communicative intention that must be understood and interpreted by the reader.

In this course, it is important to address the issue of semiotics and recognize, as Correa (2012) says, that it enables the subject to:

Find the mechanisms that lead the individual to establish a meaningful relationship with something, which may be an object, a graphic, an image, a sound or a combination of these, so that, when he comes into contact with it again, his mind will remember the meaning with which it was originally linked (p. 10).

In other words, when the subject makes use of semiotics, he/she seeks to find the meaning of something, a process in which certain cognitive functions that generate knowledge become evident. It follows that, when this is applied to the work of reading iconic texts, interpretation, reasoning and analysis are used to find the meaning of the text, i.e., its significance. In this regard, semiotics proposes to know how human beings can form and abstract meanings through signs, symbols, icons, signals and other concrete observable entities that can replace and at the same time emit such meanings.





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Associating the above with the topic of the interpretation of iconic texts within the framework of semiotics, leads to establish that the reader experiences an innovative way of reading through which he/she gets to know different ways of elaborating questions that lead him/her to obtain certain information that can be read, interpreted, reflected upon and valued as content that provides new knowledge.

From the theory of semiotics, as stated by Eco (2000), the process of interpretation can be carried out by contemplating that the semiotic function addresses the theory of codes or systems of signification and communication and the theory of the production of signs. This is explained from the understanding of culture as a phenomenon of signification and communication product of the actions of humanity and society when it establishes relations of signification and communication processes; hence, all aspects of culture can be valued as contents of a semiotic activity and as a product of communication based on systems of signification.

These appreciations, when put in context, lead to the interpretation that iconic texts are the product of the communication established by people in a specific sociocultural environment in which new knowledge is expressed through graphic signs; therefore, they are the object of a semiotic interpretation if they are understood as a component of the language that explains a process that finally reveals a message. The latter is interpreted from the signs, symbols, figures, indications, codes and other indicators that may be present in these types of text. This is where semiotics becomes visible from the relationship between a sign and a meaning to deliver a message.

The message corresponds to a group of symbols, signs and meanings that are encoded following a set of rules that are established within a specific language, so they are part of communication and, therefore, iconic texts are

considered as a language and communication system whose main feature is that they keep a message, a meaning derived from the basic elements that make it up. Ricoeur's (2006) point of view is based on this process when he explains how the textual theory of interpretation reaches its final point when the subject, through reasoning, obtains the explanation and understanding of the meaning and communicative intention of a message.

According to Eco (1973), any appearance that somehow allows an interaction between two subjects, and even the translations that each individual makes in his or her mind, can be called a sign. In other words, a sign is something that serves as a representation and therefore has a signifier and a signified, that is, something that makes itself known. There are signs in their own sense, such as words, some acronyms, some signaling conventions, and then there is everything else that is not a sign, which can be perceptual experience, the capacity to deduce hypotheses and forecasts from experience, etc. These criteria, when put in context, have to do with the way a subject perceives an object, a thing, an entity, an element and assigns it a meaning; hence, the essential of the sign as a sign is that it refers to different interpretations.

In itself, the study of semiotics as proposed by Eco can be transposed to the classroom, as proposed in this case in order to link it with the theme of linguistics, since it has to do with both verbal and iconic language that allows the student the possibility of converting real experience in the context into a system of meanings or, in other words, into a semiotic configuration. This is a process in which language plays a fundamental role as an instrument that the individual uses to interpret reality; it is here where language becomes a means through which children learn to signify and express meanings to others.

Taking into account Eco's theory to transpose it to the elementary school classroom so that

students develop skills to interpret iconic texts, implies having clarity in the first instance about the meaning of intertextual competence associated to the communicative competence that allows the subject to take into account his culture, validate it and from this, develop and define the understanding of the text, which leads him to enrich linguistic, communicative and critical skills (González, 2012). It is one of the founding principles of the teacher's work when guiding the student to delimit the coherence of the text, whatever it is, to follow processes of construction and interpretation of the text, a fact on which Eco (1997) emphasizes when defining that intertextual competence is fundamental in the construction of sense and meaning of reality expressed through signs and images.

In general terms, Eco's proposal is based on the importance of understanding the interaction between the icon and the object from what is perceived of reality through the senses; in other words, the individual can interpret an image from what he is able to identify from the senses and in relation to the conventions that his cultural group has defined, what he calls socially learned cultural codes. To materialize these points of view in the classroom, the teacher must provide opportunities for the student to learn to recognize the codes that identify or characterize a content, an image, a text.

### **Peter McLaren's theory.**

Approaching the ideas of this theorist to give them application and support for classroom intervention, led to the recognition that his work is fundamentally committed to the idea of privileging educational and social practices that in the school scenario contribute to the students' real preparation to assume an active and critical role in the face of their educational and socio-cultural reality. His work can be synthesized as an attempt to propose a critical pedagogy committed to the imperatives of

empowering students and transforming the social order that prevails in traditional schools.

As explained in the prologue of his work entitled "Revolutionary Critical Pedagogy", this type of pedagogy helps understand that school work must go beyond the barriers of the classroom and overcome the models of the established order to give better opportunities to the new generations by ensuring the establishment of teaching programs designed by the teacher in a cooperative work with the other entities of the educational community (McLaren, 2012, p 11). As can be seen, what the author proposes is a new theoretical perspective of education that calls for knowledge to be built from the problematization of everyday life, a position from which this study is assumed as an opportunity to contribute to the change that is urgently needed in the daily praxis of the school.

Considering the above implies recognizing education in the school as a strategy that the teacher must adopt to build adequate didactic strategies that allow the student to assume critical positions; this, together with the subject of learning the interpretation of iconic text, leads to the intention of making congruent the generation of teaching and learning spaces that are true spaces of socialization with clear possibilities of crossing iconic texts proper of the culture of the school group with a pedagogical work that gives prominence to the student. McLaren himself, in the preface of the work "Critical Theory and the Meaning of Hope", in his analysis of Giroux's work, states that the commitment of education is that schools should prepare students with the capacity to assume an active, critical and enterprising role as citizens who react firmly in the face of social injustices and inequalities.

In the writings of McLaren (2012), a clear position is perceived regarding the theoretical contributions around critical pedagogy where ideas related to the class struggle and antagonisms in the school scenario stand out:





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the analysis of the resistance of teachers and students to change against impositions and the construction of a different way of seeing the world to give priority to a less unjust and more humane reality against exploitation. In general terms, the greatest of his contributions is in the location of education as an opportunity for political transformation, to make pedagogy an occasion for reflection on the relationship between conceptions and actions of educators in such a way as to help students analyze the alienating conditions of the traditional school and its relationship with the conditions of a society with marked class differences.

It also suggests that it is appropriate to make the pedagogical task a work to reconstruct experiences for both students and teachers, within a pedagogical project capable of criticizing the praxis as a way to obtain answers to the concrete and real problems that arise in the daily life of the classroom. Points of view that when taken to the context of the present study, indicate the importance of the educator

assuming his/her role of teaching from the understanding of this action as a pedagogical practice that “takes seriously the racial, class, gender and power relations in the production and legitimization of meaning and experience” (McLaren, 2012). That is to say, that the action of teaching is consistent with the valuation of the capabilities that students possess to contribute to the change of their society through the exercise of justice, equality, inclusion and, above all, the promotion of a critical sense among students.

In summary, as Contartese (2012) says in the presentation of the above-mentioned work, McLaren’s (2012) ideas are salient because:

They transcend criticism to become a tool of thought and struggle for a different kind of education: A free, democratic, autonomous, horizontal education, where the daily actors, teachers, students and the rest of the educational community are the real subjects of it, without the weight of bureaucratic structures; a praxis that develops daily in the cracks of the system,



where the teacher in the classroom must appeal many times to his/her free initiative to overcome all the shortcomings and difficulties of a system in crisis; a praxis that fights for a free, fair and democratic education, autonomous and linked to the educational community, which repudiates the classist education of the public school (p. 12).

All of this leads to understand the educational practice within a logic of the teacher's commitment in the construction of an empowering language that makes the student think and act critically. This has to do with a radical change from the traditional instrumental practice to another capable of enhancing learning from the student as an active subject capable of questioning his/her reality.

### Conclusions

Based on the above and in coherence with the purpose of this article, it is concluded that each of the theoretical positions explained is important when placed in the context of the classroom, since they make possible the revitalization of concepts and actions that are often neglected when it comes to promoting communicative competencies. Specifically, when the importance of learning to understand and interpret iconic text is omitted as a determining component of reading comprehension.

In view of the above and in coherence with the need to modify it positively in the school context, Umberto Eco's theory provided valuable arguments that lead to the determination and recognition of the importance of following procedures from which the teacher, besides enriching his/her knowledge, manages to contextualize a didactic that leads the student to the achievement of reading images that are produced to represent a meaning of reality, a process in which visual stimuli stand out because they allow the reader to make a mental abstraction, and from there express concepts or definitions in reference to the image he/she

is reading in order to make use of cognitive situations associated with understanding, interpretation, analysis, and critical position.

On the other hand, Peter McLaren's proposal suggests that students should be led to play an active role in the construction of their knowledge and adopt critical attitudes towards it. He also establishes a clear differentiation between what schooling and education represent; the former is signified by the concept of social control at school and in the classroom, while the latter is specified as the action that promotes individuals with the potential to contribute to transforming society. This is where the student must be valued as an active subject of his/her own training, which demands from the teacher a role of competent transforming intellectual to link his/her knowledge to practice and to be a mediator of social and cultural life, which will allow him/her to go from being a simple school official to exercise his/her profession as a trainer.

It is finally concluded that the behavior of the two authors taken into account, theoretically validate the task of teaching and learning in a perspective of transformation of the school and the work in the classroom. They allow understanding, on the one hand, the importance of increasing actions that lead the student to the interpretation of iconic texts and thus to the interpretative and analytical reflection, to the promotion of critical thinking, to the construction of concepts, assumptions, implications and consequences as the central purpose of reading comprehension as a didactic procedure suggested by Eco. On the other hand, McLaren's position proposes the establishment of educational scenarios concerned with the integral formation of students based on the recognition of their human condition, their skills for critical judgment, their willingness to think and act, autonomous reflection and academic exercise within a framework of respect for diversity and humanity.

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