

RESEARCH IN SCHOOL CONTEXT: METHODOLOGICAL CHOICES FOR LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

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Research Group: Language in Activities in School Context (LACE)

Utterance position: Critical, Transgressive and Performative Applied Linguistics (AL)

- Applied Linguistics as:
- ✓ “Acting beyond ourselves, emotionally, intellectually, artistically or in any other way” (Newmann, 1996);
- ✓ Transforming injustice, prejudices, suffering and oppression in any context (Freire, 1970);
- ✓ Critical-reflective movement of thinking and acting on “crossing frontiers and breaking rules” (PENNYCOOK, 2006);
- ✓ Language as mediator and constitutive of human responsible and responsive actions.

Objective

- to discuss the theoretical-methodological choices aimed at creating collaborative contexts for all participants in a teacher education project (researchers, teachers and management team) to critically reflect, in order to comprehend and transform in creative ways the object of the activity focused on:
- to describe an intervention research, based on this frame, conducted in a Brazilian public elementary school (1st. to 5th grade), located on a poor district of São Paulo, in which students' reading and writing were evaluated as very poor by IDESP (State indicator of public schools teaching-learning quality);
- To create a context for we all to think on our projects and on the methodological choices we made to carry it on

Vygotsky's central methodological issues

- ❑ Vygotsky (1930/1997) was seeking a method that could allow him to scientifically study human beings in the specific socio-historical contexts where their experiences took place.
- ✓ Vygotsky gave a central role to language to creating contexts for learning and development- language as mediator and constitutive of human being (zpd) :
“ [we] become ourselves by means of our relations with others” (p. 64).
- ❑ Methodology can not be understood as an application of specific techniques pre-existing methods that had been thought of, in order to achieve a certain objective (strategies).
- ❑ There is a close relationship between the research object, the content and the theoretical-methodological basis of investigation.

Bases of Vygotsky's conception of methodology

- The Spinozian discussion of common notions, happy passions and the questioning on Cartesian dualism;
- the Marxist practical-materialistic revolutionary activity:
 - ✓ praxis as a dialectic theory-practice unity, in which intentionality to act is crucial;
 - ✓ collaboration and contradiction as central to understand the mutual and intentional production of transformed reasoning and actions, and to language organization that enhances learning and development;

Bases on Spinoza

- Vygotsky (1930/1997 and 1931/1999) reveals his theoretical bases on Spinoza's methodological discussions that challenge the Cartesian dualism and emphasize the intentional and voluntary action as essential to human freedom.
- The focus is on Spinozian concepts of **common notions** as a unit of composition between bodies that “affect” other bodies and are by them “affected” (1931/1999, p.190);
- on the importance of reasoning in collective relations for the constitution of clear and more adequate ideas – which enhances the power to act.

Bases on the Marxist historical dialect materialism

- participants' intentional choices to allow for the sharing of meanings (negotiation) and for the intentional establishment of controversies among “*actual individuals, their actions and material life conditions – both the conditions that they have found and those that they have produced with their own actions*” (Marx e Engels, 1845-46/2005, p. 17).
- the emphasis on not separating theory from practice, both understood within the context of their everydayness (emotions, cognition, problems, senses and meanings produced by their local experiences as well by historicity.

Bases on the Marxist historical dialect materialism

- the concept of alienation for the comprehension and transformation of:
 - the labor activity as suffering (passivity), impotence in the creation of the new;
 - their personal and professional lives usually seen “as an activity against themselves, regardless of themselves and not-belonging to them” (Marx, 1844/2007-HTML).

Bases on the Marxist historical dialect materialism

- The focus is on allowing learning to take place; not only learning of specific content, but of new understandings about how to think and talk;
- It is about creating contexts where cognitive and affective conflicts are not separated from each other, i.e., where all the participants act in order to listen to and be responsive for the actions of others, as well as responsible for their own actions.

Spinoza and Marx's discussions

- offer a philosophical bases of **collaboration and contradiction** as core notions for sharing meanings that deals with the central importance of contradiction motivated by the diverse constitution of each participant in a social activity and the also key importance of joint production to learning and development.

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ZPD

- This is also connected to Vygotsky's concept of zone of proximal development (zpd).
- zpd means creating activities in which, by means of intentional actions, people negotiate their comprehensions and ways to transform realities through dialogic and dialectic relations (Newman and Holzman, 1999, p.100).
- zpd – as the distance between “being and becoming” (Holzman, 2009, p. 34).

The Project: Reading and Writing in Different Areas(LEDA)

Organized as a formative intervention in school contexts

Objective: Educating professionals conscious of:

- ✓ their actions for the constitution of themselves and others with whom they interact;
- ✓ the importance of organizing the school as a collaborative community that reflects about needs, problems, values, teaching-learning concepts and common objectives;
- The creation of contexts to stress the political role of schools and researchers in working to comprehend and transform as a dialectic unity.

Project Methodological Organization: Critical Collaborative Research (PCCol)

- ❑ An educational intervention as opposed to a linear intervention (Engeström ,2009) that focuses on reproduction and transmission of knowledge that is considered valid by the teacher educators;
- ❑ Carried out in a State Elementary Full Time School that receives from 1st grade (6 years of age) to 5th grade students, from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.,
 - ✓ located in a middle class neighborhood, it receives children from neighboring districts – who are from a lower middle class,
 - ✓ organized by a General Curriculum (in the morning) and Curricular Workshops (in the afternoon).

Central Concepts: Collaboration and Contradiction

- Collaboration aims at creating a context of trust, negotiation to listen and comprehend the other senses attributed to concepts, values, beliefs, and in this process comprehending ourselves .
- Contradiction aims at making the invisible, visible
- Together they aim at creating a critical movement to establish conflicts motivated by the diversity in social, cultural and historical constitution of activity participants.

Collaboration and Contradiction

Both collaboration and contradiction cannot be seen as separated movements, but as a dialectic unity in which each participant can intentionally act to:

- ✓ mutually and inter-dependently listen to the other and to him/her own to share reasoning, problems, emotions values, beliefs;
- ✓ be open to expanding his/her own understandings;
- ✓ raise doubts and ask problematic questions;
- ✓ pose challenges and make suggestions; ask for clarification, disagree, review or complement ideas previously explained, describe experiences as a means to relate to others.

1. Collaboration and Contradiction in language organization

A process that involves both a collaborative action and an argumentative organization of language because,

- ✓ although collaboration is responsible for the negotiation with the other – which presupposes an attitude of involvement from the part of participants, and the development of mutual trust (Magalhães, 2003/2007; Magalhães and Fidalgo, 2007; Ninin, 2006; Liberali, 2010)
- ✓ it does not allow for learning and development without an argumentative organization of language, that is without the focus on conflicts.

2. Zone of Proximal Development: The creation of mutual zpds

- ✓ The context of diversity of socio-historical experience will necessarily create conflict and tensions caused by the affective-cognitive diverse senses and meanings and the anxiety in faced new experiments.
- ✓ Conflicts will inevitably create an emotionally intense zone since conflict imply that the participants will take intellectual and emotional risks for the joint development of negotiated meanings (John-Steiner 2000, p. 198).
- ✓ Involving all the participants in the shared negotiation can lead the school to overcome limitations, individualism and alienation (Marx, 1844-1845/2007) that organize most schools and life contexts.

Self-Reflective Process - Smyth

To involve participants in 4 types of actions (based on Freire's methodological frame) related to different types of questions:

Describe – what do I do? (context, objective, classroom organization, rules, division of work...

Inform – what does it mean? Theory relation

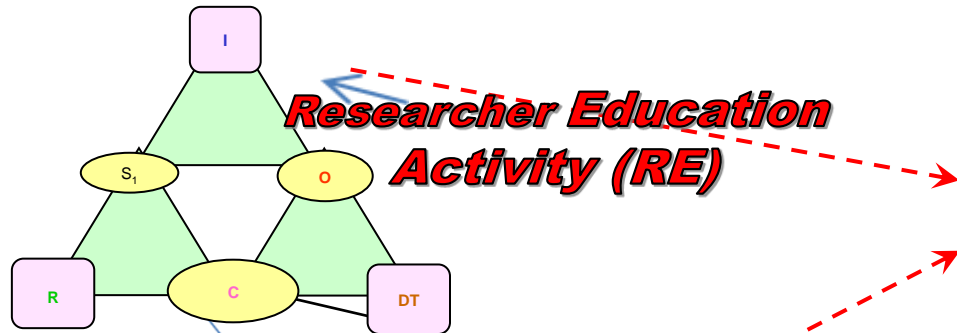
Confront – what kind of students in constitution? Relation to citizenship issues- relations between classroom context to the whole school, society outside school.

Restructuring

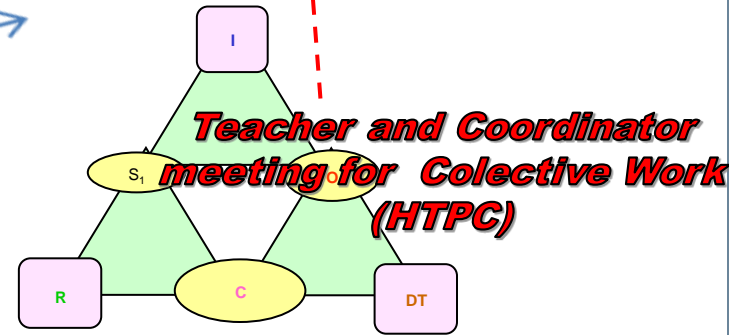
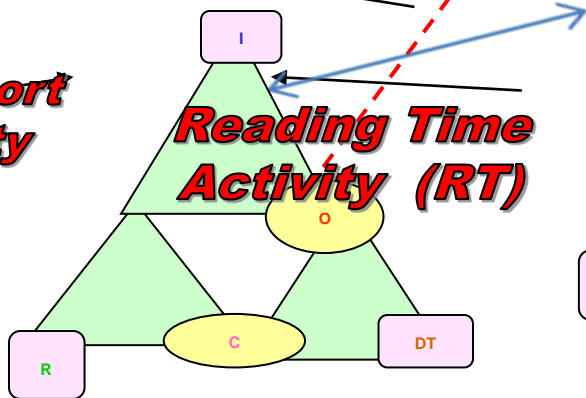
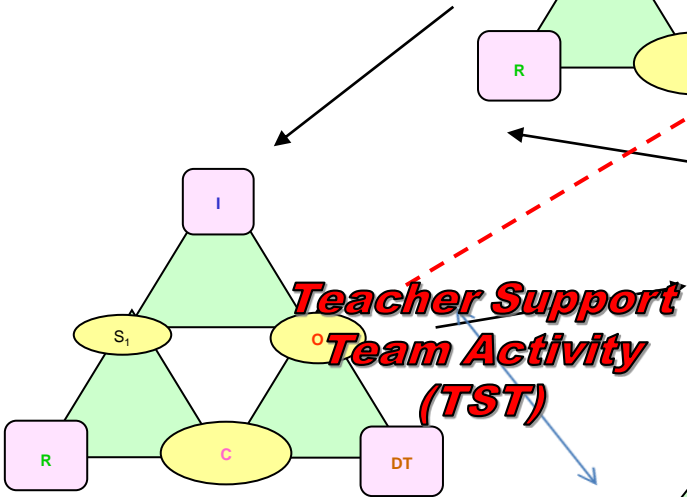
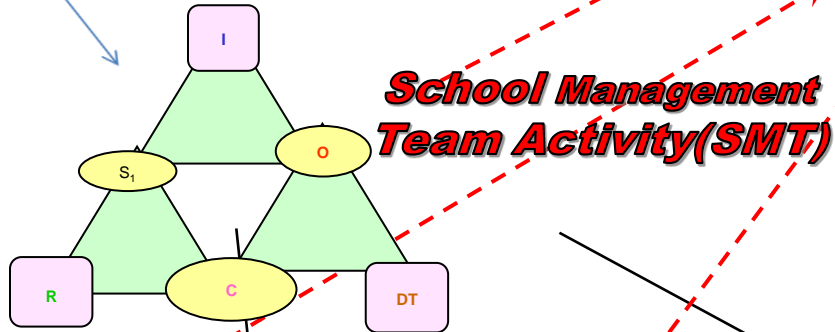
Those actions are not in a hierarchical relationship

LEDA Organization

- Organized in 5 idealized activities to focus on: culture, ethics and values towards social responsibility, creation of contexts for the constitution of a collaborative, critical school aiming at citizenship development;
- The activities partially interact as to the object, subjects, rules and work division related to reading and writing as tools for teaching- learning:



Shared Object : READING AND WRITING IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF CITIZENSHIP





Researcher Education Activity – RE: university participants (professors, DO, MA, undergraduate students) meet fortnightly at the university for theoretical-practical discussions about reading and writing, planning and evaluation of the work carried out, besides analyzing and interpreting data produced.



- **School Management Team – SMT:** researchers, students taking their master’s and doctoral degrees, the school’s principal, deputy principal and coordinators meet fortnightly at school, for discussions of how to evaluate their reading and writing work in the school in relation to the managerial work they carry out in the school.



Teacher Support Team – TST (Daniels and Parrila, 2004):teachers, managerial team and researchers meet every fortnight at school, to discuss the work with reading and writing developed, the epistemological-methodological matters about the daily practices with reading and writing as teaching- learning instruments.



Reading Time Activity – RT: Reading Class teacher and, eventually, undergraduate students organize writing and writing projects as a social activity (Liberali, 2009: Organizing a soiree of poetry. Students in Groups: chose the poems, prepared the presentation, wrote invitations to school mates, and presented to the whole school.

Teacher Continuing Education Time Activity - HTPC

HTPC (Hora de Trabalho Pedagógico Coletivo [Time for Collective Pedagogical Work]: teachers and coordinators meet, twice a week, to pedagogical discussion, with the involvement of a MA student, once a week. Subjects discussed in the TST meeting are thought to be shared with the whole school.

Data Analysis

To the analysis it was considered verbal, non verbal , and paraverbal data:

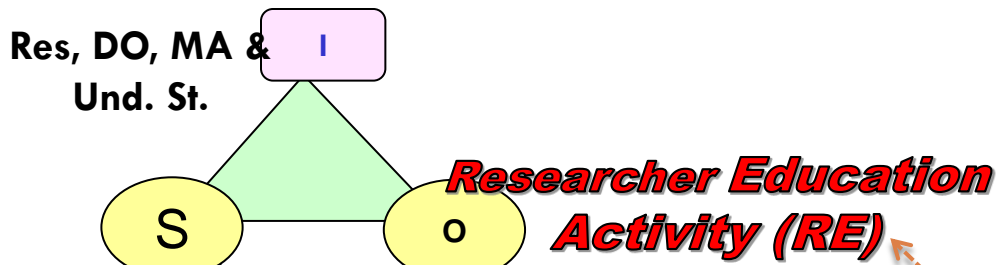
- ❑ three dimensions: enunciative, discursive and linguistic;
 - thematic content through lexical choices to understand senses and meaning.
- ❑ the collaborative process will be analyzed through
 - turn-taking in participants' relations through linguistics and non linguistics dimensions to understand the participants relational patterns to:
 - ✓ make requests for clarification, explanations, understanding, exemplification, or to reveal disagreement, questioning, acceptance; participants roles and division of work;
 - ✓ types of questions and statements (Brookfield and Preskill)

Project organization and observed transformation

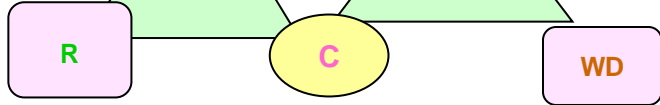
Data were analyzed to find out how :

- intervention methodological organization created context to all participants learning and development on the ways reading and writing were understood and worked in classrooms;
- participants shared meaning construction in three activities of the chain: Researcher Education (RE); Teacher Support Team (TST), and Reading Time (RT);
- the pattern that organized participants` interactions and created researchers, teachers, principal and coordinators contexts for assuming greater risks, establishing contradictions and conflicts through negotiation.

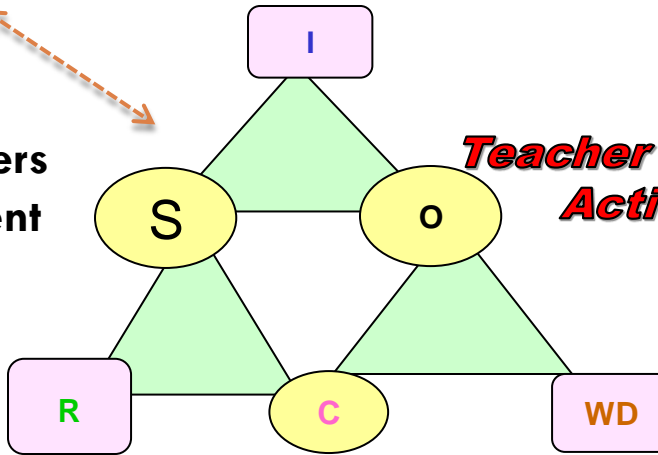
Excerpts from two episodes exemplify the findings



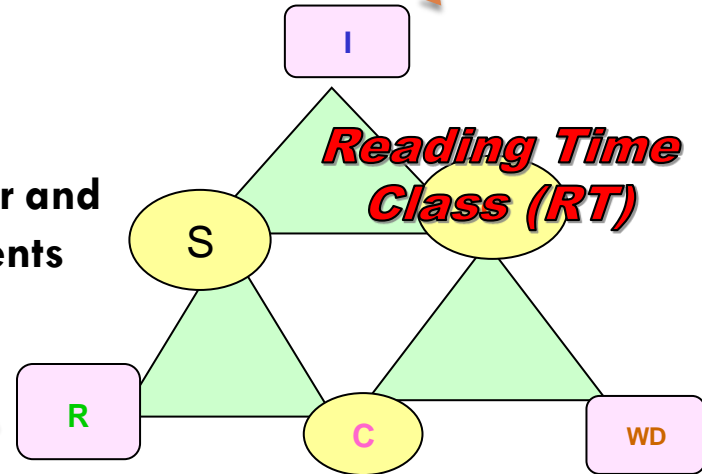
Shared Object :
READING AND
WRITING



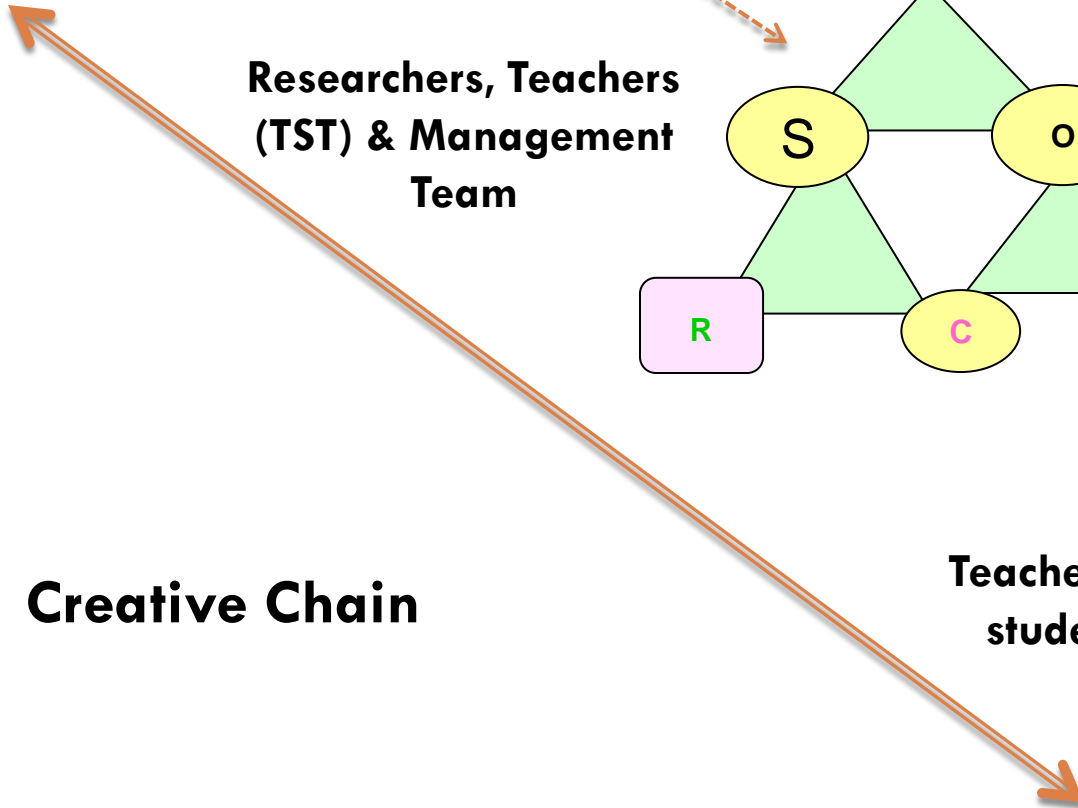
Researchers, Teachers
(TST) & Management
Team



Teacher and
students



Creative Chain



1st episode (04/05/2010):

Initial understanding of reading and writing processes and the ways they were focused on in classroom practices

- Participants: 20 teachers, principal, principal deputy and coordinators, researchers
We were in a circle in the video room.
- Objective:
 - ✓ to introduce the project so teachers could decide about their participation, to understand senses and meanings on reading and writing, as well as the ways both were focused on in classroom practices by teachers of different subjects in that particular school;
 - ✓ Organizing the TSG and deciding on the day our meetings would be held:
 - As we had planned (TE), we start a performance so teachers could talk some about the question in small group and then discuss in the large group: **what are the needs in terms of reading and production in the school and how you had been facing these needs.**
- Episode 1 de reveals these senses:

- **Students have great difficulty to read, they have difficulty to concentrate**
- **They do not like to read (presence of contradiction)**
- **Students have passive roles in classroom practice**

□ RM: Well, I will try to be the first to speak. In the 5th year: ... (...) ahn... **we motivate students to read a lot; we find it difficulty in... in...terms of concentration and attention** from the part of the students. This is very difficult; they are not concentrating; they do not pay attention to anything. (...)

□ *L* : The children who are in the second, third grades, they are **different** (...) we meet, discuss a proposal, read to them every day and every type of text (...) **we tell them the story and discuss what is there; we show them the books. What is the child going to learn with that? In fairy tales, what did you learn? Who are these people... who is the witch in the fairy tale? Who is the prince? Who are you in the story? So that was what we tried to do with all the fairy tales, to bring to the child's reality and try to make that child awaken to reading, you see?! (...).**

Writing is a major problem

DA: I feel that they lack autonomy and also self-trust because often we read the text... when it is their turn to speak, they do. Things go rather well, but when they have to put pen to paper, they blank, just as we do (...) but what I think the most in my group is that: when they have to read, they do it alone. They finish an activity and ask: Teacher, can I take the book out? (...)


Reading as decoding (first grade teacher)

AC: (...)but I began with a song about the frog that is brief, and then from the song about the frog, I took just the initial characters – so as to avoid that memorizing of a,b,c,d,e,f. So I began with the S for sapo (frog) and, from this letter, we began to talk about what we need to form words, names, their names, that I need to join the letters; it is the joining of letters that forms words, and so then she began to understand that she needs to join, in her little earthworms, she needs to put some letters because otherwise, she will not form words, you see?

□ Students do not read and write in math classes

C : Do students write (in math classes)?

DE: ... no, ...it is.. the quantity with actual numbers, for example, number 1 and the notion of one quantity, you see?



FC: The student is having difficulty to read, the student is having difficulty to understand what s/he needs to do, then, how do you deal with this?

L: you feel that they can read something, but they can't, then you explain later

Episode 2: TST(4/26/2011)

Participants: 10 teachers, researchers, the principal, her deputy and two coordinators D and AC, in E1- first grade teacher)

Objective:

- to discuss the choices made by C (researchers in the previous meeting, she had performed a 1st grade teacher reading to students the book: “O Segredo da Lagartixa” [the secret of the gecko] by Letícia Dansa, illustrated by Salmo Dansa, edited by LTD .

• Episode 2:

- **Reading as a process:** Coordinator AC in HTPC, new ways to work with reading - still as reproductive praxis
- type of questioning – **Researcher collaboration and contradiction – context for sharing meanings**

Researcher – goal setting

FC: We introduced the reading of this book. **Did you see this book?** (*question for description*)

AC (Coord): **We spoke in the HTP.** (*coordinator clarification*)

FC: **What did you talk about in the HTP?** (*Question that requests a position from the coordinator about what had been done in the HTPC*)

AC: **I spoke about the text; I spoke about the introduction of the cover and about how it was introduced here – first the images and then the type of text, the vocabulary, you know? I spoke of all the dynamics that you used, I took everything to the HTP.** (*Summarizes what she had done, that was exactly what C had done*).

C: **But why did I do that, did you ask them that?** (*C asks the coordinator to deepen her description and information by justifying the reasons for working with the reading the way we do – a matter discussed in the previous meeting.*)

Coord1: **Well then, I didn't do that.**

Episode 2:

Focus on the researcher's reasoning during reading class planning

1. Goal setting
2. Question to create a context to focus on C's reasoning

FC: (...) We are trying to discover the reasons for things rather than simply repeating this activity in another way in order to do the analysis, we will think of what the teacher's planning process would be for this activity; what this teacher would do in order to think to organized the lesson. (...) so I will show you on a PowerPoint presentation as an attempt to recover the planning process of the activity; it is not the actual activity; it is the planning; what does a teacher think of in order to plan the activities.

Why do things one way and not another?

Episode 2:

Reasoning to choose a text

- **FC:** The first question we asked was why we chose a narrative poem “*The gecko secret*”. So assuming we are interviewing a teacher and we asked her: **why did you choose a narrative poem?** Before telling her criteria, **I want you to say some about what do you think would be the teacher’s answer.**

Episode 3

Reading Time Class (RT)

06/07/2011 (4th grade students)

Objective for the Class: reading a novel (Book *Romeu and Juliet* (Brazilian adaptation by Ruth Rocha, Atica, 2000) of the story by Shakespeare).

- work with reading as a process; communication context, discursive organization, linguistics choices
- work with prejudice
- Teacher: AR , and her Students
- Sitting on the school video room
- Teacher projects the book, students read silently



Episode 3: Objective for the Class, working with story organization

Teacher 's acceptance of students answers and questioning to expand them

AR: we will discuss the story. What happened in story. What is the purpose of our class? What is the purpose of reading?

St: Learning to read

St: To use our imagination when reading

AR: To use our imagination, when reading

St: Knowing story

AR: Knowing story (...)

AR: Now let's talk about the story. Our story matched your previous hypotheses about it? (part not filmed)?

Sts: yes. (Everybody wants to talk)

AR: Reading this book, what type of text is this?

Sts: narrative

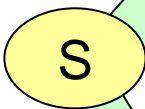
AR Why do you think it?

St: It is narrative

AR: Why ?

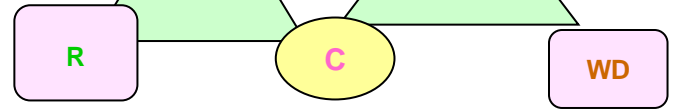
Sts: Because. It tells a story.

Res, DO, MA & Und. St. I

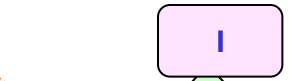


RE: researchers evaluate, plan, reevaluate

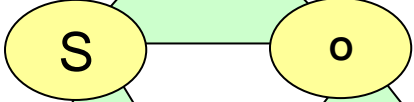
Shared Object :
READING AND
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Researchers, Teachers (TST) & Management Team



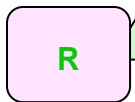
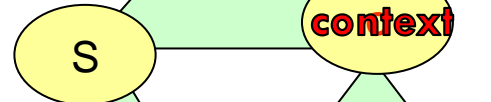
TST; working context



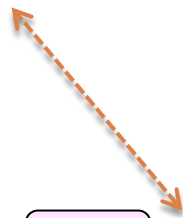
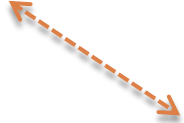
Teacher and students



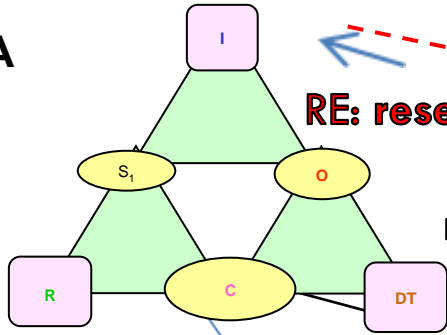
RT: reading-writing context



Creative Chain:
HTPC; was an
importante context
to reach the whole
school



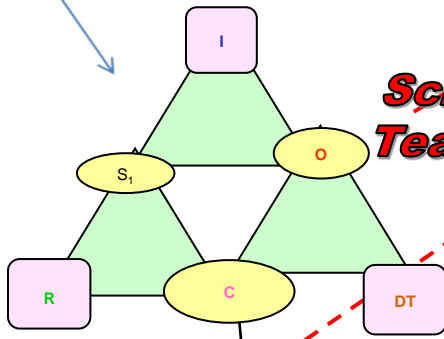
Res, DO, MA
& Und. St.



RE: researchers evaluate, plan, reevaluate

Shared Object : READING AND WRITING IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF CITIZENSHIP

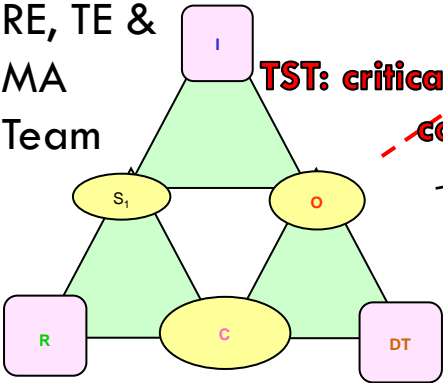
Researchers & management team



School Management Team Activity (SMT)

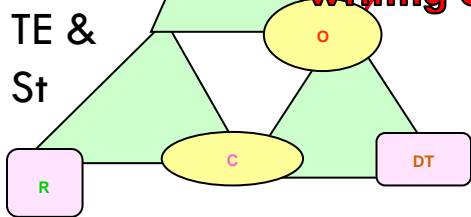
Issues of power
The role of the management team

RE, TE & MA Team



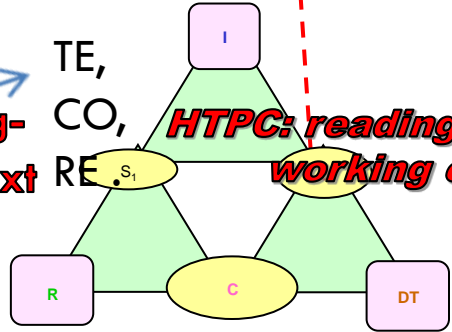
TST: critical-collaborative context

TE & St



RT: reading-writing context

TE, CO, RE



HTPC: reading and writing working context

