

The political-educational discourse against bullying: a social-semiotic approach

Rosália Maria Netto Prados

PhD in Semiotics and General Linguistic by the University of São Paulo; researcher of the master's program in Public Policies of the University of Mogi das Cruzes, in the research line in Cultural Politics, Diversity, and Citizenship.

E-mail: rosalia.prados@gmail.com

Marinete Pereira de Souza Oliveira

Master's student of Public Policies at the University of Mogi das Cruzes.

E-mail: marinetebio@gmail.com

Abstract: This article introduces a research that aims to analyze the discourse expressed in the slogan of an advertising campaign of the São Paulo State Secretary of Education, promoted by the School Protection System in partnership with Cartoon Network, that encourages delation as a mechanism to prevent and fighting bullying. To understand the discourse underlying this slogan, we based our analysis on the Greimasian semiotic theory and the principles of visual semiotics. From the social-semiotic analysis of such discourse, we intend to describe the campaign's narrative structure and the relations between subjects and objects of value, to identify persuasion and manipulation mechanisms.

Keywords: discourse analysis; bullying; education; semiotics; socio-semiotics.

Resumo: Este artigo apresenta uma pesquisa cujo objetivo é analisar o discurso manifestado no texto do *slogan* de uma campanha da Secretaria da Educação do Estado de São Paulo, promovida pelo Sistema de Proteção Escolar que, em parceria com o canal Cartoon Network, incentiva a denúncia como mecanismo de prevenção e combate ao *bullying*. Fundamenta-se na teoria semiótica greimasiana e nos princípios da semiótica visual para compreensão do discurso subjacente ao texto. De acordo com a análise sociosemiótica do discurso, pretende-se descrever a estrutura narrativa da campanha, as relações entre sujeitos e objetos de valor, a fim de identificar mecanismos de persuasão e manipulação.

Palavras-chave: análise do discurso; bullying; educação; semiótica; sociosemiótica.

Received: 01/17/2017

Approved: 04/28/2017

1. INTRODUCTION

Considering that children and adolescents coexist for a long time in the school, it is important this context to also establish as a place for improving the quality of life. Quality of life is an eminently human notion, relating to the well-being found in family, love, social and environmental lives, being even related to the own existential aesthetics¹. It presumes the ability to perform a cultural synthesis of all elements that a given society considers to be its standard of comfort and well-being.

Teaching is an art, and nothing can replace the riches of the educational dialogue. According to Delors², mediation opens unexplored routes to education. Mediation of conflicts in school environments also becomes a matter of public policy, in which demands, and context need to be considered.

We propose an analysis of the discourse expressed in a campaign slogan of the São Paulo State Secretary of Education that, through the School Protection System³, encourages delation as a mechanism for preventing and combating *bullying*. This analysis is based on Greimasian semiotic theory⁴ and in the principles of visual semiotics, to understand the discourse underlying the text. Narrative and relationships between subjects and objects of value are described, aiming to identify the persuasion and manipulation mechanisms of the discourse.

In this discussion about bullying, the crystallized or conventional forms found in the discourse are considered as signification, not only as signs⁵. Such approach requires an understanding of discourse that is based in the science of language. Discourse is considered the result of a human activity consisting of content and expression, which produces and reproduces representations and experiences.

Studying discursive processes and reading possibilities in the communicational relations, as well as investigating the cultural process of building “social knowledge”, or shared knowledge, are part of semiotic and socio-semiotic researches. Such approach of discourse analysis is the capturing of meaning in the moment of its production, i.e., the meaning in situation or act, built on the interaction subject x world. This is the discourse produced in different situations on the communicational sphere, such as journalistic, advertising, political and political-educational discourses, among others, in which enunciator and enunciate are collective and represent a social group.

2. SCHOOL PROTECTION SYSTEM

The School Protection System, a program of the Foundation for Educational Development (FDE) of the São Paulo State Secretary of Education (SEE-SP)⁶, is defined as a set of actions coordinated by the SEE-SP which aim to promote a healthy and safe school environment, conducive to the students’ socialization, through the prevention of conflicts, appreciation of the pedagogic role of school teams, and the stimulus to students’ participation and integration. Actions of

1. MINAYO, Maria Cecília de Souza. (Org.). *Pesquisa Social: teoria, método e criatividade*. 16. ed. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2000, p. 22.

2. DELORS, Jacques. A educação ou a utopia necessária. In: ORGANIZAÇÃO DAS NAÇÕES UNIDAS PARA A EDUCAÇÃO, A CIÊNCIA E A CULTURA. *Educação um tesouro a descobrir: relatório para a Unesco da Comissão Internacional sobre Educação para o século XXI*. São Paulo: Cortez, 1996. p. 11-34.

3. SÃO PAULO. *Secretaria da Educação*. 2012. Disponível em: <<http://www.educacao.sp.gov.br/portal/institucional/a-secretaria/>>. Acesso em: 14 out. 2015.

4. GREIMAS, Algirdas Julien. *Del sentido II: ensaios semióticos*. Madri: Gredos, 2001.

5. FONTANILLE, Jacques. *Semiótica do discurso*. Trad. Jean Cristtus Portela. São Paulo: Contexto, 2008. Na semiótica greimasiana, amplia-se a noção de signo para significação, pois essa teoria tem como base os estudos da Linguística.

6. SÃO PAULO. *Secretaria da Educação*. 2012. Disponível em: <<http://www.educacao.sp.gov.br/portal/institucional/a-secretaria/>>. Acesso em: 14 out. 2015

the program reaffirm the school as a privileged space for the construction of a participatory citizenship and for achieving the full human development.

An antibullying campaign was developed in the School Protection System, choosing a cartoon to serve as a mote and illustrate the advertising discourse, which intends to introduce a process of raising awareness against this type of violence.

The Cartoon Network (CN)⁷ is a North American television channel, owned by the Turner Broadcasting System network, which airs primarily animation programming. This channel was launched on October 1, 1992, after Turner purchased from Taft Broadcasting the Hanna-Barbera animation studio, in 1991.

For this analysis, we selected a non-verbal text, the image of one of the characters in Cartoon, in which stands out the verbal text: the *slogan* “No more bullying: don’t keep your mouth shut”.



Figure 1: SEE-SP, Antibullying campaign.*

According to semiotics, this is a syncretic text, as it presents verbal and non-verbal languages. Meaning is the substance of a given form, in both content and expression⁸. Signification, the object of semiotics, can be understood as the dependency relationship between content and expression, which are semantics and form, respectively

In terms of content⁹, figuration materializes the meaning of syntactic categories such as person, time, and space. On the relationship between verbal and imagery, both image and caption manifest the same figurative path. An anchorage between these two aspects is shown. Considering a photograph

* No more bullying - Don't keep your mouth shut

7. TURNER BROADCASTING SYSTEM. **Cartoon Network**, 2012. Disponível em: <<http://www.cartoonnetwork.com.br/>>. Acesso em: 11 out. 2015.

8. HJELMSLEV, Louis. **Prolegômenos a uma teoria da linguagem**. São Paulo: Perspectiva, 2006.

9. PIETROFORTE, Antonio Vicente. O sincretismo entre as semióticas verbal e visual. **Revista Intercâmbio**, São Paulo, v. 15, p. 25-35, 2006. Disponível em: <<http://revistas.pucsp.br/index.php/intercambio/article/view/3636/2378>>. Acesso em: 12 nov. 2015.

10. WEISZFLOG, W. Michaelis dicionário eletrônico inglês/português. Programa UOL, 2008. Disponível em: <<http://michaelis.uol.com.br/moderno-portugues/busca/portugues-brasileiro/bullying/>>. Acesso em: 6 set. 2017.

11. FANTE, Cleo; PEDRA, José Augusto. *Bullying escolar: perguntas e respostas*. Porto Alegre: Artmed, 2008, p.63.

12. CATINI, Nilza. *Problematizando o bullying para a realidade brasileira*. Tese de doutorado em Psicologia. Pontifícia Universidade Católica de Campinas, 2004. Disponível em: <http://www.bibliotecadigital.puc-campinas.edu.br/tde_arquivos/6/TDE-2012-03-15T050938Z-1719/Publico/Nilza%20Catini.pdf>. Acesso em: 20 out. 2015.

13. FOUCAULT, Michel. *A ordem do discurso: aula inaugural do Collège De France*, pronunciada em 2 de dezembro de 1970. 14. ed. Trad. Laura Fraga de Almeida Sampaio. São Paulo: Loyola, 2006.

14. VEIGA-NETO, Alfredo. Prefácio. In: KRAEMER, Celso. *Ética e liberdade em Michel Foucault: uma leitura de Kant*. São Paulo: Educ, 2011, p.15.

15. BONINI, Luci Mendes de Melo; VALIM, Maria das Dores Cunha Alves; PRADOS, Rosália Maria Netto. Políticas culturais, processos semióticos: a bandeira e a Festa do Divino em Mogi das Cruzes, São Paulo. *PragMATIZES: Revista Latino-americana de Estudos em Cultura*, Niterói, ano 5, n. 8, p. 81-91, mar. 2015. Disponível em: <<http://www.pragmatizes.uff.br/index.php/ojs/article/view/89/80>>. Acesso em: 25 jan. 2016.

explained by captions, a semic redundancy is observed since the figuration in the content is expressed both in verbal as in non-verbal planes. In the case of the Cartoon, the image of one of the characters along with the verbal text demonstrate a figuration of the antibullying discourse.

3. BULLYING

Bullying is a term that comes from the English word *bully*, which means using the physical superiority to intimidate someone. It can also be used as an adjective, meaning ruffian or tyrant¹⁰. This term expresses a relational phenomenon commonly observed in groups – especially in schools –, which is characterized by the presence of aggressive, vicious behaviors, intentionally and repetitively adopted by one or more people against others, without evident motivation. The persistence of this behavior with intent to degrade others determines the *bullying*. It includes different forms of abuse: those of physical character (hitting, kicking, pinching); verbal (nicknames, cursing, mocking, insulting); moral (defaming, slandering, discriminating); sexual (abusing, harassing, implying); psychological (intimidate, threaten, stalking); material (stealing, breaking belongings); and virtual (mocking, discriminating, defaming through internet and cell phone)¹¹.

In Brazil, the first researches on the topic were initiated in late 1990s. We highlight the researches of Marta Canfield et al., developed in 1997 in Rio Grande do Sul; of Israel Figueira and Carlos Neto, conducted between 2000 and 2001 in Rio de Janeiro; and of Cleo Fante, carried out in schools of the São Paulo State, in 2002¹².

Context must be considered in discourse analysis and, therefore, the system of material relations that forms it cannot be discarded¹³. If we observe that bullying takes place in schools because this is a coexistence environment, then it must be considered on this scale; and to fight this practice, deeper changes than the apparent ones are needed, thus understanding it as a historical construction.

We must educate children and adolescents to coexist with the other, knowing that the struggle against disciplinary power shapes the individual and “there is no power relation without resistance [...] every power relation implies, therefore, at least virtually, in a fighting strategy”¹⁴.

4. METHOD

French semiotics, protagonized by Algirdas Julien Greimas, studies the complexity of signs, but not just that. It also deals with signification. Thus, it is not possible to study it without considering the cultural environment and the influence of the context¹⁵. Such perspective aims the signification and the meaning structures that outline social and individual discourses. The subject of semiotic exercises is not exactly the empirical sign and its codifications, but the meaning triggered by the sign, which permeates the discourse compositions¹⁶.

The discourse manifested in that non-verbal text of the SEE-SP campaign is a political-educational discourse. This is an object of analysis of socio-semiotics, which is a specificity of the Greimasian approach and examines, within social life, the functioning of semiotic processes or signification systems that are part of social practices and their respective discourses¹⁷. Such analysis is based in the semiotic methodology of description of discourse stages, from enunciation to enunciate, from fundamental and deep structures to their expression in text. It deals with the following structures: narrative, or the level of discursive action; discourse, related to intersubjective and spatiotemporal relations; and deep semantics, which is the level of value systems or ideologies within the discourse. Text, according to this perspective, is the result of a process of meaning production, which is the discourse.

5. SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF THE CAMPAIGN “NO MORE BULLYING: DON’T KEEP YOUR MOUTH SHUT”

The narrative of the discourse expressed in the campaign slogan “No more Bullying: don’t keep your mouth shut” consists of actantial relations.

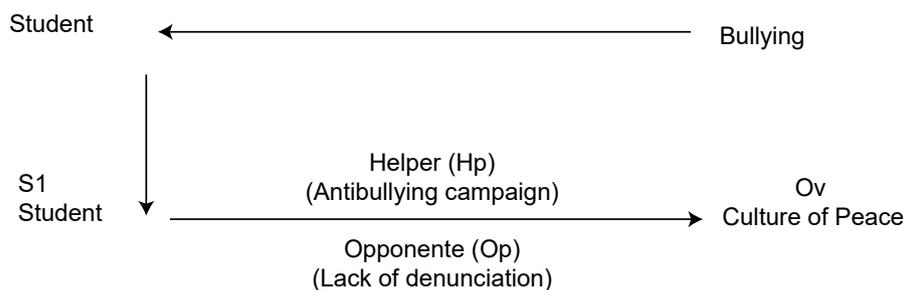


Figure 2: Actantial relation – Students

The sender: Bullying determines the receiver: Student as Subject 1, searching for the object of value: the culture of peace. Manipulation happens through seduction in the wanting mode: if you denounce, there will be no bullying. In this search, the Subject 1 will count with ‘antibullying campaign’ as helper and, as an opponent, the lack of delation.

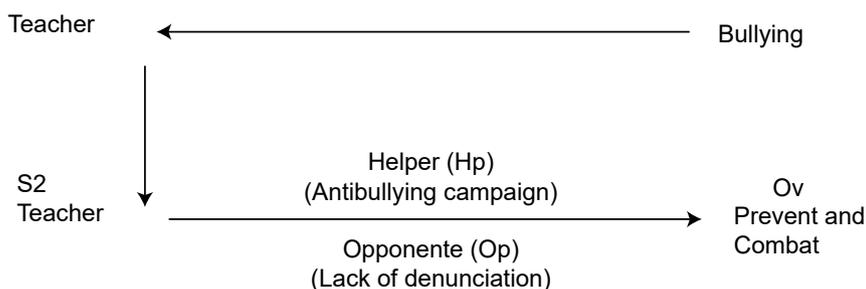


Figure 3: Actantial relation – Teacher

16. BERTRAND, Denis. *Caminhos da semiótica literária*. Bauru: Edusc, 2003.

17. PRADOS, Rosália Maria Netto. *Linguagens e construção do sentido no universo literário: discurso e paixões*. In: MELO, Eliana Meneses de; GARCIA, Wilton; PRADOS, Rosália Maria Netto. *Linguagens, tecnologias, culturas: discursos contemporâneos*. São Paulo: Factash, 2008, p. 67.

The sender: Bullying determines the receiver: Teacher as Subject 2, searching for the object of value: the culture of peace. Manipulation happens similarly to the actantial relation among students: if you denounce, you will contribute to identifying and combating bullying. In this search, also, the Subject will have ‘antibullying campaign’ as helper and the lack of delation as opponent.

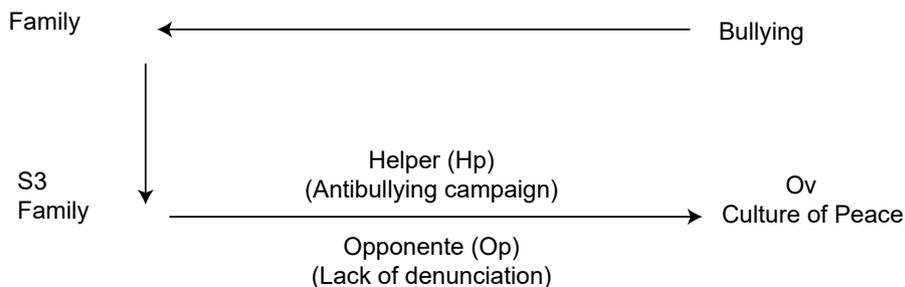


Figure 4: Actantial relation – Family

The sender: Bullying determines the receiver: Family as Subject 3, searching for the object of value: the culture of peace. Manipulation, here, is anchored in the same idea as the other actantial relations. As stated by Fante, the opinion of several experts on the role of family regarding bullying is that the parents should seek to raise their children self-esteem, always pointing out their qualities and abilities, try not to blame them for what is happening nor encourage them to fight back, as this would only increase violence¹⁸.

Bullies can be members of the own family, including overbearing parents, spouses or siblings, who are manipulative and perverse, able to destroy the physical and mental health, and the self-esteem of their favorite targets¹⁹.

The SEE-SP, through a partnership with the School Protection System, disclosed the discourse of the campaign for prevention and fighting bullying. As the campaign is conveyed, the discourse expressed calls to responsibility, at the same time, the school community and the family, offering a mechanism for reporting and delation, through which the Subjects (students, teachers, and families) can achieve certain objects of value.

The Sender-Manipulator determines in the discourse narrative the Receivers-Subjects: students, teachers, and family; hence, a Narrative Program (NP)²⁰ is established, in which the Subject, to the extent it uses this delation and collaboration instrument, comes into contact with its object of value, the prevention and fighting against bullying, aiming at a culture of peace.

Consider that the main Narrative Program (NPm) presents implicitly, in the search for its main object of value, an auxiliary Narrative Program (NPa) for “preventing and fighting bullying” and reaching the “culture of peace”.

Thus, it is verified that these Subjects of the discourse have specific narrative programs and objects of value. The <<student>> searches, in principle, [not to

18. FANTE, Cleo. *Fenômeno bullying: como prevenir a violência nas escolas e educar para a paz*. Campinas: Verus, 2005. p. 75-76.

19. SILVA, Ana Beatriz Barbosa. *Bullying: mentes perigosas nas escolas*. Rio de Janeiro: Objetiva, 2010, p. 22.

20. PAIS, Cidmar Teodoro. *Conceptualização, denominação, designação: relações*. *Revista Brasileira de Linguística*, São Paulo, v. 9, p. 221-240, 1997.

be bullied] [+friendship]; and the <<No More Bullying campaign>>> encourages [students, teachers, and family] not to remain silent.

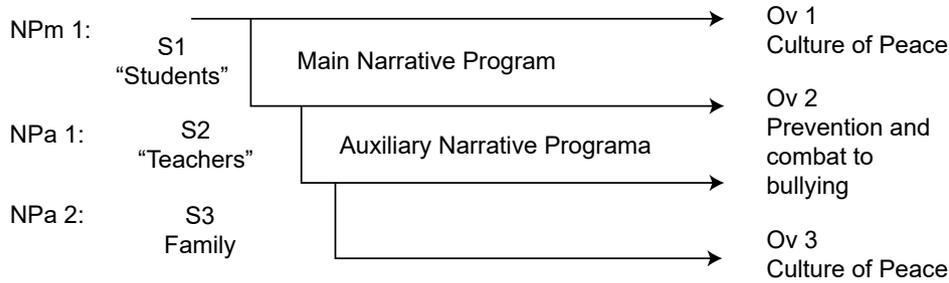
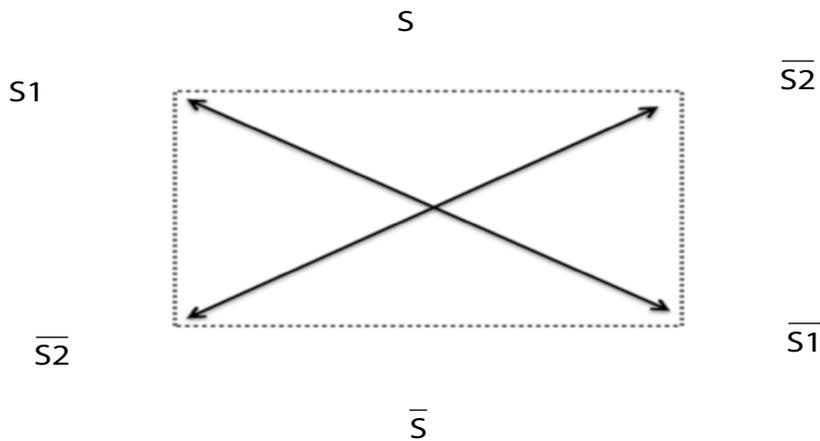


Figure 5: Narrative program

6. DEEP STRUCTURE OF DISCOURSE

Deep structure comprises the values subsequently presented, whose fundamentals are proposed as the first stage in the processes of generating discursive meaning. From there, the construction of the discourse is performed.

We will use here the understanding brought by the semiotic square, which describes the elementary semantic structure; this, in turn, is based on a relation of opposition²¹.



The signification (S), the universe and significant as a whole, or any semiotic system in a semantic axis, is opposed to an absolute absence of meaning – the contrary (\bar{S}). In the semantic axis, the Substance of the content is articulated in the level of form into two contrary semes (S1 and S2) that, when taken separately, indicate the existence of contradictory semes ($\underline{S1}$ and $\underline{S2}$).

In “No More Bullying: don’t keep your mouth shut”, we have a figure semantically filled with fundamental contents of the campaign text, as shown in the following semiotic square and the relationships it represents:

21. PRADOS, Rosália Maria Netto. Linguagens e construção do sentido no universo literário: discurso e paixões. In: MELO, Eliana Meneses de; GARCIA, Wilton; PRADOS, Rosália Maria Netto. *Linguagens, tecnologias, culturas: discursos contemporâneos*. São Paulo: Factash, 2008, p. 78.

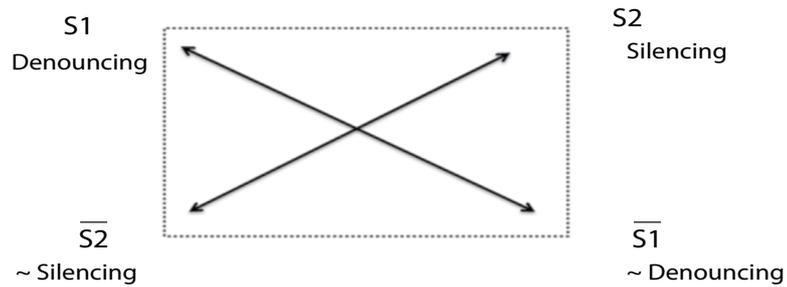


Figure 7: Semiotic square of the campaign slogan

The discourse underlying the campaign text elaborates different readings from the opposition between silencing and denouncing, oriented in the meaning of the passage from the first to the second action. “No More Bullying” is the initial determination of the text, but to achieve such end is necessary that diverse actants manifest themselves, not being able, therefore, to keep the mouth shut.



Semantic categories such as denouncing x silencing, whose relations are presented and operationalized in the semiotic square, form the starting point to generate the discourse. These categories suffer axiological modification, also, in the level of deep structure, when determined by the category to which they counteract, producing a relation of compliance or noncompliance with the contents represented²². In this specific case, silencing is “noncompliance” and denouncing is “compliance”.

The deep structure that underlies this discourse consists of the following values:

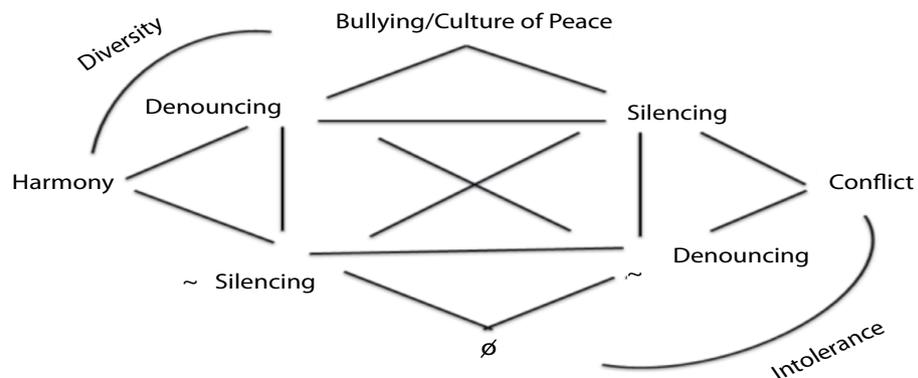


Figure 8: Semiotic Octagon. Source: Produced by the authors, based on the model by PAIS, C. T. *Conceptualização, denominação, designação: relações*. In: *Revista Brasileira de Linguística*. Sociedade Brasileira de Professores de Linguística. v. 9, p. 221-240. São Paulo: Plêiade, 1997.

22. BARROS, Diana Luz Pessoa de. *Teoria semiótica do texto*. São Paulo: Ática, 1999, p. 38.

Processes between denouncing and silencing, visible by the dialectic paths of the campaign, show the ideology of co-responsibility of students, teachers, and parent, as indicates the discourse implied in the slogan.

In the axis of contraries, denouncing and silencing are the meta-terms that express the dialectic tension of the antibullying discourse. The contrary of denouncing is not denouncing, and of silencing is not silencing. Relationship denouncing x not silencing define the harmonic relations. On the other hand, in the negative deixis, silencing and not denouncing define the conflict. Not denouncing and not silencing determine the neutral term in the semiotic octagon.

7. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The campaign slogan is an example of how the text discourse presents values and features of the context in which the bullying occurs. The result intended by the enunciators will be achieved as the calling to denunciation is accepted by all possible subjects, which become also responsible for the establishment of a culture of peace.

This campaign is currently conveyed by the media. Such slogan appeared during the programming on the television channel, in addition to being materialized in kits with seven publications, having as target audience elementary and high school students, as well as teachers, parents, and administrators of educational institutions.

A political-educational discourse is expressed, characterized by values which are present in media and contemporary culture discourses about citizen education. In communicational situations, several discourses on citizenship, equal rights, social justice, democracy, political will, among others, are produced, which are part of a signification network constructed by the subjects in the educational context.

This political-educational discourse features combinations of can-make-want modalities, that is, that can make someone wanting something. The educational discourse is over-modeled, as it presents several combinations of modalities: can-make-want→, can-make-know→, and can-make-duty/believe. There is a “political will” which is defined by a can-make-want, that is, can make someone want something; a “knowledge” determined by the can-make-know, i.e., can make someone know something, to install a duty that, according to this discourse, is denouncing the bullying, to configure the educational discourse for a culture of peace.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

BARROS, Diana Luz Pessoa de. **Teoria semiótica do texto**. São Paulo: Ática, 1999.

BERTRAND, Denis. **Caminhos da semiótica literária**. Bauru: Edusc, 2003.

BONINI, Luci Mendes de Melo; VALIM, Márcia das Dores Cunha Alves; PRADOS, Rosália Maria Netto. Políticas culturais, processos semióticos: a bandeira e a Festa do Divino em Mogi das Cruzes, São Paulo. **PragMATIZES: Revista Latino-americana de Estudos em Cultura**, Niterói, ano 5, n. 8, p. 82-91, mar. 2015. Disponível em: <<http://www.pragmatizes.uff.br/index.php/ojs/article/view/89/80>>. Acesso em: 25 jan. 2016.

CATINI, Nilza. **Problematizando o “bullying” para a realidade brasileira**. Tese de doutorado em Psicologia. Pontifícia Universidade Católica de Campinas, Campinas, 2004. Disponível em: <http://www.bibliotecadigital.puc-campinas.edu.br/tde_arquivos/6/TDE-2012-03-15T050938Z-1719/Publico/Nilza%20Catini.pdf>. Acesso em: 20 de out. 2015.

DELORS, Jacques. A educação ou a utopia necessária. In: ORGANIZAÇÃO DAS NAÇÕES UNIDAS PARA A EDUCAÇÃO, A CIÊNCIA E A CULTURA. **Educação um tesouro a descobrir**: relatório para a Unesco da Comissão Internacional sobre Educação para o século XXI. Unesco. São Paulo: Cortez, 1996. p. 11-34. Disponível em: <http://dhnet.org.br/dados/relatorios/a_pdf/r_unesco_educ_tesouro_descobrir.pdf>. Acesso em: 6 set. 2017.

FANTE, Cleo. **Fenômeno bullying**: como prevenir a violência nas escolas e educar para a paz. Campinas: Verus, 2005.

FANTE, Cleo; PEDRA, José Augusto. **Bullying escolar**: perguntas e respostas. Porto Alegre: Artmed, 2008.

FONTANILLE, Jacques. **Semiótica do discurso**. Trad Jean Cristtus Portela. São Paulo: Contexto, 2008.

FOUCAULT, Michel. **A ordem do discurso**: aula inaugural no Collège de France, pronunciada em 2 de dezembro de 1970. 14. ed. Trad. Laura Fraga de Almeida Sampaio. São Paulo: Loyola, 2006.

GREIMAS, Algirdas Julien. **Del sentido II**: ensaios semióticos. Madri: Gredos, 2001.

HJELMSLEV, Louis. **Prolegômenos a uma teoria da linguagem**. São Paulo: Perspectiva, 2006.

MINAYO, Maria Cecília de Souza (Org.). **Pesquisa social**: teoria, método e criatividade. 16. ed. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2000.

PAIS, Cidmar Teodoro. Conceptualização, denominação, designação: relações. **Revista Brasileira de Linguística**, São Paulo, v. 9, p. 221-240, 1997.

PIETROFORTE, Antonio Vicente Seraphim. O sincretismo entre as semióticas verbal e visual. **Revista Intercâmbio**, São Paulo, v. 15, p. 25-35, 2006. Disponível em: <<http://revistas.pucsp.br/index.php/intercambio/articulate/view/3636/2378>>. Acesso em: 12 nov. 2015.

PRADOS, Rosália Maria Netto. Linguagens e construção do sentido no universo literário: discurso e paixões. In: MELO, Eliana Meneses de; GARCIA, Wilton; PRADOS, Rosália Maria Netto. **Linguagens, tecnologias, culturas: discursos contemporâneos**. São Paulo: Factash, 2008. p. 70-92.

SÃO PAULO. Secretaria da Educação. 2012. Disponível em: <<http://www.educacao.sp.gov.br/portal/institucional/a-secretaria/>>. Acesso em: 14 out. 2015.

SÃO PAULO. Campanha Chega de bullying: não fique caldo. Sistema de Proteção Escolar. **Secretaria da Educação**. 2012. Disponível em: <<http://www.educacao.sp.gov.br/chega-bullying>>. Acesso em: 1 out. 2015.

SILVA, A. B. B. **Bullying: mentes perigosas nas escolas**. Rio de Janeiro: Objetiva, 2010.

TURNER BROADCASTING SYSTEM. **Cartoon Network**, 2012. Disponível em: <<http://www.cartoonnetwork.com.br/>>. Acesso em: 11 out. 2015.

VEIGA-NETO, Alfredo. Prefácio. In: KRAMER, Celso. **Ética e liberdade em Michel Foucault: uma leitura de Kant**. São Paulo: Educ, 2011.

WEISZFLOG, Walter. **Michaelis dicionário eletrônico inglês/português**. Programa UOL, 2008. Disponível em: <<http://michaelis.uol.com.br/moderno-portugues/busca/portugues-brasileiro/bullying/>>. Acesso em: 6 set. 2017.